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# MARIAPOLI

Notiziario del movimento dei focolari



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*In Lund, Sweden*  
**After 500 years,  
a new beginning**

**Algeria  
and Portugal**

The deep roots  
of the charism  
of Chiara  
Lubich

**Trip to the  
Southern Cone**

Little towns and  
their surroundings  
vital centers  
for unity



## The dream of that Infant

Christmas is the Invisible made visible, the Word made flesh, the uncreated appears in the created, the light shines in the darkness.

This is why the lights, the colours, the gifts, the greetings, nativity scenes, decorated trees, songs music... are meaningful.

Nevertheless, Christmas cannot be reduced to just these things.

This unique Christian celebration must elicit from the heart, a conviction, an undoubted faith, a glaring proof that: if God came down from Heaven to come here on earth for us, there is no doubt that He loves us. And if someone loves us, or rather if God loves us, everything becomes easier for us here on earth, we understand everything better: behind all the dark areas of existence one can discover His loving hand, a reason which is often unknown to us, but nevertheless a reason of love.

Everything is more bearable. And everything is more imbued with joy, if it is joy we are dealing with. Because beyond the sweet moments of life, like a beautiful love that flourishes, the birth of a child, a small unexpected fortune, the Providence of a Father is present.

Everything becomes possible. If one believes, and if one believes in a God who loves us, every impossibility can be broken, even the impossibility – sometimes so evident

– that this our cradle, the planet which is our home, can live in peace.

Yes, everything is possible.

Or better still, if the Omnipotent came among us, our faith can rise over and beyond. We can believe that, if we hope and ask with all our heart, our world may start to move towards unity: to the union among generations, among social categories, among the races, among Christians divided for centuries, among the faithful of other religions, among peoples.

Unity, an idea of unity is in the air in these times.

Many young people in the world believe this with the vehemence of their youth and work towards this goal with the strength that characterizes them. Let us allow them to dream and to act.

That Infant whom we celebrate did not dream of anything less. He came here on earth so that all may be one. He gave his life so that his dream could become a reality.

*Chiara Lubich*

from *E torna Natale... (Christmas returns...)*,  
Città Nuova, Rome, October 2007, pages. 30-32



Paris, december 1996. Chiara Lubich receives the Unesco Prize

Personalities from the world of culture, politics, science, together with all those who work daily for peace through developing good practices, came to bear witness to how peace is the fruit of choices that are courageous, shared and persistent.

«The Focolare Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich, never stopped working, together certainly with other associations and in collaboration with UNESCO, for peace, reconciliation, friendship among peoples and among members of different religions». These are some of the words of the message that Pope Francis addressed to Marco Desalvo, president of New Humanity, on the occasion of the 20° anniversary of the awarding of the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education to Chiara Lubich. The Pope expressed his joy for this initiative «to continue and to deepen this work of peace

UNESCO

## After twenty years to re-invent peace

**400 participants in Paris for the anniversary  
of the awarding of the UNESCO PRIZE  
for Peace Education given to Chiara Lubich**

education for which Chiara had committed herself with strength and perseverance».

Meeting in Paris on November 15, in the prestigious headquarters of the UNESCO, in front of an international audience, to talk about peace, brought us back sixty years ago, when Chiara Lubich, in December of 1956, wrote to the newly born French community heralding with her prophetic words, a development that only reciprocal love and its maximum expression, unity, would have been able to do.

To the participants at the Convention, the message of the president of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, addressed to the president of the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce, was also read: «Peace challenges us to change, it requires a renewed spirit of dialogue and of fraternity, and invites the conscience of each one of us, it urges us to be its witnesses and pioneers».

Yes, only if one has the courage to face the changes imposed by the new



Intervention of Enrico Letta



challenges thrown to humanity, can one be always more capable to realizing gestures of peace, small or big actions that can save humanity.

To strengthen the structures of peace, therefore, because these are always more threatened by the wars that have taken on a thousand faces. Jesús Morán, copresident of the Focolare Movement, in his reflection underlined how the worldwide set-up throughout these years has profoundly changed: the destabilization of the Middle east, the political instability of many Countries, the irregular military powers, the victims of today's wars, not even aware that they are in a battlefield. The experience of the small community of Aleppo, which continues to believe and to live for peace in spite of everything, drew a moving applause from the participants. Morán recalled the prophetic words which Chiara Lubich said twenty years ago at the UNESCO which has brought the Focolare Movement to become a kind of stronghold of peace: «That which is impossible for millions of isolated and divided people, becomes possible for people who have made reciprocal love, mutual understanding, unity the essential motivation of their life».

The intervention of Maria Voce goes back to the roots of where this experience started, all the work brought ahead by the various Christian Churches, in the encounter with the great Religions and with people of



L'intervention of Martine Levy, president of the international Conference of NGOs

non-religious convictions. A dialogue «based on welcoming the other persons, on profoundly understanding their choices, their ideas, giving value the beautiful, the positive, those things that we have in common, and which can form bonds». The «third world war in pieces», an expression coined by Pope Francis, is a reality that cannot and should not exclude anyone from working for peace through one's personal commitment: «Peace is certainly a gift of God, - continued Maria Voce - but it is also a fruit of the choices made by men and therefore it is something that also each one of us can contribute and build in our own small way, in our daily life because – as can be read in the Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO of 1945 – “wars originate in the souls of men, it is in the souls of men that we must begin the defense of peace”».

The very rich and articulated programme flowed quickly following a trail that passed through the many experiences that the Focolare Movement is living all over the world: in the schools, privileged venues for peace education, in the field of economics and human rights, in the ecological challenges, in art, in interreligious dialogue, in politics.

The day ended with a final declaration read by a young Pakistani student, Arooj Javed, who invited everyone to go out of their «comfort zone», to promote more venues and the citizens of this planet.

*Patrizia Mazzola*

L'intervention of Jesús Morán



In [www.new-humanity.org](http://www.new-humanity.org)  
e [www.focolare.org](http://www.focolare.org) gli interventi  
e i documenti della giornata.

# Assisi and the teens

## Peace takes off

**The «spirit of Assisi» welcomed also by teens. In Umbria a four-day workshop that had around forty adolescents as protagonists**

After the big event that brought together in Assisi religious personalities from different parts of the world to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the meeting in 1986 that John Paul II desired in this Umbrian city, a group of Teens for unity accepted the invitation of Bishop Domenico Sorrentino and the Franciscans of that place to bring their contribution, just like the adults, to keep alive and to realize the «spirit of Assisi». From October 27 to 30 they organized a workshop including activities, games, moments of prayer and meetings, such as that with the Imam of Massa (Tuscany, Italy), Youssef Sbai. A highly symbolic event that is inserted in the journey that was initiated by the Teens for unity in 2000 with their participation at the World Conference of teens held in Tokyo and followed by the one held at the UN in 2002 and successively at the international Supercongresses in Rome and India. The Muslim teens of Algeria and the Buddhists of Thailand were present through the messages they sent; there was also a link-up with the Hindu



teens of India and they received a message from the person responsible for the Arigatou Fondation of Japan, Reverend Keishi Miyamoto, and from the Rabbi Silvina Chemen of Argentina. «As you may know – Miyamoto wrote – I believe that teens have an enormous potential to be the trail blazers for peace. All the work that we are doing in the Arigatou International originates from this idea. We are not just a group of adults who help children and teens; but we also work to empower and encourage these children and teens so that they will be able to help themselves and others, to change the world. There are many moments during our work that we are amazed and surprised by the way in which these teens are capable of engaging in dialogue and building bridges that we adults are not able to do». And the female Rabbi, starting from the idea of the workshop as a «venue where one can study the reaction of different elements that unite with each other», highlighted how «at times they can work together, and other times it is more difficult. This is the process of peace. A space that needs much time. Try and try again, without getting tired of going so until the desired results are achieved».

To symbolize their personal commitment, an *origami* representing a crane: it recalls the story of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This also gave rise to the idea of: letting peace fly. It has been proposed in various Countries of the world, and is now involving groups and classes of teens who have joined this network.

Aurora Nicosia



Celebrating the 500 years of the Reform of Luther

# From conflict to communion

**This year of celebration for the 500 years of the Reform of Luther was formally opened in Lund, Sweden with important ecumenical events in the presence of the president of the World Lutheran Federation, bishop Munib Younan and of Pope Francis. A delegation from the Focolare Movement also participated.**



Pope Francis with Bishop Munib Younan (on the left) and with Rev. Martin Junge (on the right) respectively president and secretary general of the World Lutheran Federation

ceremony, together with a delegation of Bishops of various Churches who had just participated at the meeting in Ottmaring, together with a group of members of the Movement from Germany and Scandinavia.

Historically, the 31st of October, 1517 has been considered as the beginning of the protestant Reform, the day in which Luther «made public» his 95 Theses. According to him salvation cannot be assured in any way, but only divine grace can establish the salvation of each person. Luther would have liked to have an academic discussion on this. But the Archbishop of Magonza decided to denounce him to Rome. Thus began the spread of the 95 theses in a totally involuntary way, facilitated by the recent invention of the printing press. From here the history of the Reform was intertwined with religious motives and political interests. Europe was passing through a period of terrible wars. And so the anniversaries of the Reform did nothing but reinforce confessionalism rather than unity.

On October 31, 2016 in the silence of the Cathedral of Lund (Sweden) the bells announced the beginning of a new epoch among Catholics and Lutherans.

«It was a dream. And this dream has become a reality – Friederike Koller shared – that's why I felt an immense gratitude for having been present in such a historic moment wherein for the first time the highest representatives of the Lutheran and Catholic Churches were able to ask for forgiveness from God for what had happened, for the many offenses, the wars; but they were also able to celebrate together this feast for Christ». «The Pope himself - she continued - expressed his gratitude for the fact that Luther placed the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures as the central points in the life of Christians».

Friederike Koller and Ángel Bartol, went to represent Emmaus who had been invited for the



This year for the first time, the anniversary is celebrated in an ecumenical spirit, also thanks to the more than 50 years of international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. A particularly important document was the «Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification», signed in Augsburg in 1999, a «milestone» in the journey towards unity.

In 2013 the document «From conflict to communion» – prepared by the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on unity - and the invitation to hold a common commemoration of the Reform in 2017, laid the foundation for reconciliation and the purification of the memory. The news that the bishop of Rome would come to Sweden to open this five-hundredth anniversary together with the president of the World Lutheran Federation, Bishop Munib Younan and the secretary general Rev. Martin Junge, surprised the ecumenical world, but also appeared as the logical consequence of the ongoing dialogue.

In the Arena of Malmö for the second event of the day on October 31, also present were the many members of the communities of the Movement in Germany and Scandinavia. For me, as a Lutheran focolarina, it was truly a moment of great emotion. I entered the focolare because I felt that God wanted to make my life a sign that unity is possible. I could not but thank God, thank Chiara.

«Our contribution to the event was that of a silent service – shared Katharina and Patrick from the focolare of Stockholm. We began with the prayer of Jesus for unity in our heart, and we returned with the many voices in chorus together, saying the same prayer to the Father. After the event, with our two local communities of Stockholm and Visby, we had our first meetings, wherein we deepened our understanding of the document signed in Lund». In it, among other things, it underlined the commitment to grow in communion



© Mikael Ringlander

The ceremony in the Cathedral of Lund

and this appeal was launched to «all the Lutheran and Catholic parishes and communities, so that they may become courageous and creative, happy and full of hope in their commitment to continue the great adventure that awaits us».

The title of the event was «Together with hope». Ángel Bartol also spoke of hope in Lund: «I think that the first thing we can say is that hope is born from the fact that Jesus himself had asked for unity. Then we, also as a Movement, we were born precisely to give our contribution for unity». Referring to Pope Francis who, when talking about our brothers of various Churches said: «You can feel the fraternity. There is Jesus in the midst, For me they are all my brothers», he commented: «During a particular moment in the cathedral during the liturgy my thoughts went to Chiara, who began the first ecumenical contacts precisely with the Lutherans. Therefore there is a great hope that is based on life, on experience and above all on the plan of God».

Heike Vesper



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# In Algeria A prophecy in action

**50 years from the arrival of the Ideal of unity in Algeria, Muslims and Christians of the Focolare Movement bear witness to an experience of true sharing on many levels**



The Mariapolis Center of Tlemcen was host to the international Congress of Muslims of the Focolare Movement (28-30 October) promoted by it together with the international Center for Interreligious Dialogue of the Movement. The 90 Muslim and Christian participants came from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Greece, Tunisia, France, Italy, Switzerland, Burkina Faso, Canada and Algeria. To highlight the importance of the event, the archbishop emeritus of Algeria, Mons. Henri Teissler, a profound connoisseur of Algeria and Islam, was always present.

Four themes were presented: suffering seen in God's light; the divine inspiration on unity of Chiara Lubich; the present day challenges for Muslims; how to be builders of universal brotherhood.

As they shared in a true brotherhood, it was impressive to see Muslims and Christians ready to know the experience of Chiara of '49: the pages of *Paradise* explained deeply by Jesús Morán, the answers of Chiara at the Hindu-Christian Symposium on the reality of Jesus Forsaken, the experience that has matured within the Focolare Movement in contact with

the different religions: everything was shared in an atmosphere of profound listening, followed by a spontaneous and sincere communion.

Immersed in this dimension of unity born in a Christian context, accepted together as a paradigm for universal brotherhood, attention was turned towards the Muslim reality. There were interesting themes presented by Muslim professors Adnane Mokrani, Algerian, and Amer Elhafi, Jordanian, conducted through *skype*.

Emmaus, who was not able to be present for health reasons, expressed her participation at the event through a message delivered by the co-president Jesús Morán, in which she stated how hope has grown after an experience like this. It was in fact not just a matter of establishing relationships but of being one, of living the same experience of God, of sharing the deepest part of ourselves.

Mons. Jean Paul Vesco, bishop of Orano, explained that friendship based on spiritual communion is the apex of dialogue among religions. In 2011 Tlemcen, «capital of Islamic culture», offered the opportunity to immerse oneself in



Mons. Teissler with Fayçal





Tlemcen, november 2016. Some of the pioneers. From the left: Gérard Denis, Rosi Bertolassi, mons. Henri Teissier, Farouk Mesli, Morad Brexi, Pierre Le Vaslot, père Thierry Becker



the Muslim spirituality and culture through the visit to the mausoleum of the patron of the city, the mystic Sidi Boumediène, introduced masterfully by the Algerian scholar Dr. Sari-Ali Hikmet, followed by a visit to the El Mechouar Museum, an edifice belonging to the Zianide Dynasty, and to the great Mosque. In different stages, the visit to the Andalus Study Center also opened up new pathways of knowledge and reflection.

The gen boys and girls animated the gathering with music and songs showcasing real talent, especially in performing Andalusian music.

«Together» was the most common term used during the Congress. It was evident that the experience that matured within the Movement has gone beyond the forms of dialogue experienced up to now. The Ideal of unity is lived together according to the charisma that God has given to Chiara, passing through the acceptance and welcome of the respective differences.

reached the heavenly Mariapolis, the stories of some of the pioneers of the early times, the experiences of those who half a century ago brought ahead faithsully that which Jesús Morán defined as «a prophecy in action». Thank to the presence of the central delegates Olga Maria Rodriguez and Dorival Spatti, and of the delegates of the Zone of the Middle East, Arlette Samman and Philippe Ehrenzeller, there were stimulating presentations on the life of the communities of the Movement in the Countries of that geographical area and an interesting vision of the whole.

The participants enjoyed moments of joy with insightful music and dances, precisely according to the Algerian tradition of celebrating the most important events of life. In the evening, two white horses, bearing cavaliers in costume, accompanied by musicians with the *darbuka*, the *kouitra*, the *nay* and the *naqarat*, made their entrance, eliciting much enthusiasm all around. A DVD prepared for the occasion, filled with experiences of ato per l'occaspast and present testi-

monies, gave voice and image to this experience with a prophetic flavour. A series of panels presented the photos of the persons and events that have studied the 50 years of the

life of the Focolare Movement in Algeria. Faces of all ages, above all of young people. Images of families that show the numerical increase of its members, but which also reveal above all their belonging to a shared Ideal.

Rosi Bertolassi



Arlette Samman and Philippe Ehrenzeller present the Zone of the Middle East



Some gen

## The Commemoration of the 50° anniversary of the Focolare Movement in Algeria

November 1 and 2 were lived in a particularly evocative way: the remembrance of those who had firmly believed that the Ideal of unity would establish itself in this Country and who had already

# Portugal

## The Movement 50 anni dopo

**The community in celebration to commemorate the arrival of the Ideal of unity in Lusitanian soil. Flourishing communities, many youth; more than 100 vocations to the focolare born in these years**

An artistic filigreed heart, logo of the event, represents quite well the interweaving of meanings – light, love, unity, gratitude – of a heartfelt and choral commemoration, which began last February and ended in November with a celebration that was truly spectacular. Saturday, November 5 was dedicated to the closest members of the family of the Movement, 800 among intern members and adherents who gathered in Fatima, also with the presence of Maria Verhegge and Henri-Louis Roche, delegates for western Europe, to trace together the golden thread of these fifty years of the Movement. In the meantime, from various parts of the world, many focolarine and focolarini who in the past 50 years had played decisive roles in the development of the Ideal of unity in Portugal were arriving at the Little Town Arco-Iris.

In the afternoon, a chorus of thanksgiving to Mary, with the mass held in the Chapel of the Apparition, followed by a series of experiences, in person or through a video message. «We cooked on a small electric burner – Gehilda Cavalcanti, Brazilian, shared in a video, who with Conceição Lins, also Brazilian, started the first focolare center in Lisbon. We prepared the coffee after we had heated the milk, which in the meantime had become cold again while we



were preparing the coffee. But the presence of Jesus among us was such that we didn't even realize it». Glória Macedo, one of the first among the one hundred or so Portuguese focolarine and focolarini spread all over the world recalled: «We were under the dictatorship. I had to go to Italy to start my formation, but being a teacher

they told me that I could not leave the Country. After three days of futile pleading with the various officials, I was going down the steps of the Ministry with a very heavy heart. I was about to leave when, passing in front of the guard, I forgot my suffering in order to love Jesus in him and so I greeted him with a smile. In reply he asked me how it went and so I told him that it didn't go well. He advised me to go directly to the Minister and explained to me how to go about it. So I went to speak to the secretary and I was able to obtain permission to go as if it was the simplest thing in the world». The experience of Vasco, a father of three children was also touching: «I considered myself an atheist. My first encounter with the Movement happened in 2002 during an activity of the Youth for a united world: four days of sports, 200 young people from various Churches and religions, convictions, races and nations. Fascinated by the harmony that reigned among everyone, I tried to live for a united world and I was baptized at 23 years old».



## New publications

# Faithful creativity

Città Nuova is publishing a book of Jesús Morán, *Fedeltà creativa (Faithful creativity). The challenge of bringing a charism up to date.* We offer here some excerpts of the preface made by Card. João Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life

[...] «A charism is not a museum piece, that remains intact in a glass case, to be contemplated and nothing more. Faithfulness, maintaining the purity of the charism, does not mean to enclose it in a sealed bottle, like distilled water, so that it may not be contaminated from the outside. No, a charism is not conserved by setting it apart; it must be opened up and allowed to go out, to come in contact with reality, with persons, with their anxieties and their problems. And so, in this fecund encounter with reality, the charism grows, is renewed and also reality is transformed, transfigured through the spiritual power that the charism brings with it». This is what Pope Francis expressed in his talk to the participants of the general chapter of the priests of Schönstatt on September 3, 2015, calling the



attention of all those, who in one way or another, find themselves in or participate in a charism in the Church, a question of crucial importance: the ever new, necessary, and at the same time, the never accomplished updating of every charism born throughout the centuries in the Church, in faithfulness to its origins and the source of its «founding core». It is an arduous and at the same time exciting task because it deals, always more with «feeling the pulse of time» to use one of the 6 typical expressions of Pope Francis<sup>1</sup>, not ordinary nor without ambiguities, but certainly very evocative. And it is precisely around such a question that this brief and concise book of Jesús Morán, present co-president of the Focolare Movement, unfolds. Starting from some of his conversations, the Author carries out in these pages a concise recognition of some of the more urgent challenges within and outside the Movement itself, fine-tuning above all the vision of a horizon that the Holy Spirit opened wide to the Church through the election and the first years of the pontificate of Pope Francis.

*prepared by the editorial board*

1 In reality the expression was used by Gustavo Alonso (Superior General of the Claretian Missionaries from 1972 to 1985) in F. Ciardi, *In ascolto dello Spirito. Ermeneutica del carisma dei fondatori (Listening to the Spirit. Hermeneutics of the charism of founders)*, Città Nuova, Rome 1996, p. 242.

Sunday, the 6th, the celebration was opened to include 1,400 people among whom were various personalities, local authorities, members of other Movements, relatives, friends. It began with the Holy Mass, concelebrated by priests and 4 bishops among whom was Mons. Jorge Ortiga, archbishop of Braga, who had met the Ideal of unity as a young priest and who invited everyone during his homily to a renewed enthusiasm and drive to bring the charism of unity everywhere. A recital followed which related the history of the Movement in the Country through music and personal and collective experiences. Developments

which, through the establishment of «Together for Europe», the Economy of Communion and the Little Town, expressed very well the fecundity of the charism in this land.

The celebration concluded with the youth, teens and children who invaded the stage and courageously launched the challenge to become, as Chiara had suggested, «a generation of saints». They assured us: «We want to assure you of the next 50 years!».

*Angela Albuquerque, Paulo Bacelar*

# New focolare centers in India and in Tanzania

## Testimonies of love in this humanity



### At Kalimpong

The opening of the men's focolare in the **northwest of India** was a moment of celebration with the Bishop and with the community



In the background is the picturesque profile of the city of Kalimpong and around it are mountains. This is the scenery that can be viewed from the doorway of the new men's focolare that was opened in the Indian city of Kalimpong, in the district of Darjeeling, northeast of the Country. The inauguration and blessing took place in the presence of around fifty people, among whom was the bishop Mons. Stephen Lepcha, various priests, men and women religious, two focolarine who came from Delhi, some families and various friends of the Movement. They received many messages and greetings both from the Center and from all over India. The apostolic Nunzio,



bring to life one of His works in the Church, the chosen person does not know what he will do. He is just an instrument». His wish is that the «new home of the focolare be "just an instrument" in the hands of God to realize the ideals and the spirituality of the Focolare Movement». After the welcome with some songs, greetings according to the local tradition and a short video on the Focolare Movement, the Bishop blessed the house and warmly welcomed the two focolarini, Ray and Vivek, to his Diocese, expressing his appreciation for the contribution of the Movement in the field of interreligious dialogue and in bearing witness to the Gospel through life. A dinner together concluded the celebration.

### At Iringa

The men's focolare center was opened in **Tanzania** with four focolarini. In October, together with the community they held a day meeting on Chiara Luce with around a hundred young people.



Salvatore Pennacchio, in his message cited what Chiara Lubich said at the Eucharistic Congress of Pescara in 1977: «The pen does not know what it will write, the brush does not know what it will paint and the scalpel does not know what it will sculpt. When God takes in hand a creature to

«It was noon and the bells of the parish were ringing when our car stopped in Iringa in front of the house of the new focolare», this is what Jacquot from Madagascar, Sem from Thailand, Chris from Kenya, accompanied by

Claudio Amato, central delegate for East Africa shared of their arrival in Tanzania. «We left by car from Mariapolis Piero (Kenya) and, after two days and a half, we reached our destination. None of us had ever taken that route. Everything was new: the panorama, the religious who welcomed us for the first night and the policemen who would stop us once in awhile in various checkpoints along the road. In the meantime the people of the community who were waiting for us, once they understood that we would be arriving later than planned, made a video of dances and songs which they sent us. The celebration had already begun!».

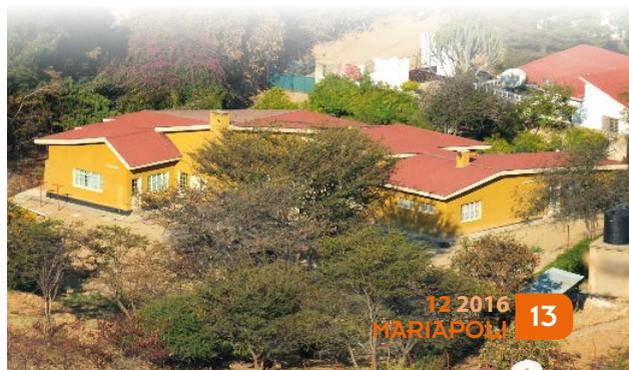
The first photo we made in Iringa was with some women Volunteers who work in a school run by the Movement in the campus where they lived quite near to the women's focolare. After a delicious lunch, the children of the school offered songs, dances and poems. This was just the beginning of the celebration that was awaiting us the next day with the whole community. «I had the impression – Chris said – that Jesus was telling me that this is the portion of humanity to which He is calling me to bear witness to his Love». «I understood that the challenge for me – Jacquot added – is to see to it that Jesus is always present in our midst and to let Him be the one to act». On October 29, one of the appointments that involved the focolarini, focolarine and the whole community was the day meeting dedicated to Chiara Luce Badano held on the day that the Church remembers all the Blessed. Present were 100 teen and youth boys and girls from the ages of 8 to 25. The Salesians gave us free use of their hall and a bus

for transportation. During the Mass, Fr. Fidelis, a priest of the Movement, encouraged all those present to be grateful for the gift of life and to pray so as to maintain a deep relationship with God just as Chiara Luce did. He also invited everyone to be vigilant with the things that the world around offers, reminding them that their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Then the video «A Luminous Masterpiece» was shown translated in *swahili* to get to know Chiara Luce better. «What touched me is the patience of Chiara Luce – one of the participants said. She accepted everything of her illness living every moment without complaining». And another: «I was impressed by how she was not closed up in herself, but she was always ready to give herself to the others inspite of her situation».



After some experiences shared by the gen, the hall «exploded» in a spontaneous celebration: the youth were happy to learn the dances presented during the programme. «I learned many things – commented one of them – for example that i have to love the one beside me. I saw that we can live together in love inspite of the differences». Greeting us, many asked to remain in contact, so we started a *WhatsApp* group to keep us all linked up.

*Prepared by Anna Lisa Innocenti*





## Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo «Our home»

**More than a million people have participated in the meetings in this edifice offered by St. John Paul II and renovated thanks to a worldwide communion of goods**

As soon as you enter the main gate of the Mariapolis Center, along the walls of the historical summer residence of the Pontiffs in Castel Gandolfo, one is immediately captivated by the fresh elegance of its lines and the wide open spaces that express functionality and harmony. A home that was built from the former Papal audience hall that could contain up to 30,000 people every year and with a history that truly deserves to be remembered.

The hall was originally made for the summer audiences of Pope John XXIII. Paul VI also made use of it, but with the continued influx of pilgrims it became totally insufficient and for a long time it remained unused. In the beginning of the '80s, an idea started to grow to revive the use of the hall and Pope Wojtyła, learning that the Focolare Movement was looking for a solution to increase the number of meetings at the



Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa, decided to offer it to Chiara Lubich. She ran immediately to see it and so the first ideas were born on how to begin a project of restructuring. The task of transforming those formless spaces into a Mariapolis Center was given to Carlo Fumagalli, a married focolarino who was an architect, who would often consult Nunziatina Cilento, among the first focolarine of Rome, who was entrusted at that time with the management of the existing Mariapolis Center.

They were able to gain 8.900 square meters distributed in three levels, with three halls equipped with twenty translation booths and which can contain 2,000 people: these halls are the heartbeat of the edifice. The hall which houses the self-service canteen on the ground floor is an additional space of communion with the wide gardens reminiscent of a past era. There is also a part of the structure built as a hostel that can accommodate around a hundred beds. All the members of the Focolare spread all over the world, from the gen4 to the Volunteers, the adherents and the families, contributed for the enormous expense of the renovation. Everyone felt that this Center is their home and, without considering the



sacrifices needed, they started a thousand initiatives to be able to contribute their «brick». The goal was reached on December 5, 1986 when the Mariapolis Center started its activity.

In these thirty years, more than a million people of all ages and nationalities came to the Center to participate in congresses or events. They would come to deepen the charism of unity, to get to know it and to live it in an atmosphere of global awareness which is a prelude and a pledge of «*that all may be*



one» towards which all of us are journeying. Among the more frequent visitors are the new generations (gen2, gen3, gen4), with 153.000 participants. Also significant are the 185.000 participants to the formative events in the social and cultural fields, while those in the ecclesial world (priests, religious men and women, parishes) were 93.000. There were also ecumenical meetings (6.000 present), interreligious (3.500) and those of persons of non-religious convictions (5.500). The events of other organizations were also welcomed.

Sunday, October 9, the Mariapolis Center opened its doors to all those who would like to celebrate its anniversary. Aside from the mayor of Castel Gandolfo, Milvia Monachesi, there were more than 700 persons from the surrounding area, for whom the bishop of Albano, Mons. Semeraro, celebrated the Thanksgiving Mass.

There were numerous international celebrities who in these thirty years came to the meetings or just to visit the Center. Among these we remember the many visits, some of them surprise ones, of St. John Paul II and successively of Benedict XVI, in which they sometimes chose to hold meetings they had organized. Who knows if Pope Francis would like to come one day too...

*prepared by the editorial board*

## Loppiano

# Inaugurato il Centro Evangelii Gaudium

On november 11, the inauguration of the «*Evangelii Gaudium Center*» (ECG), a center of formation, study and research that takes its name from the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*, defined as the «*magna charta*» of the renewal of the Church in general, and in particular of her social pastoral work and of her evangelizing spirit, was held in Loppiano.

The Center is promoted by the Sophia University Institute (SUI), in collaboration with the center of presbyters and deacon focolarini, presbyters and deacon Volunteers, the gen's Center, the international secretariat of the religious and of consecrated women and the central secretariat of the parish and diocesan Movements. «In this Center – Mons. Piero Coda, dean of Sophia explained – we would like to make a contribution in these trying times for the proclamation of the Gospel. And we would like to do this by placing the charism of unity and the theological and pastoral experiences that arise from its dialogue at the service of everyone, together with the magisterium of the universal and local Church and also through the seminars and courses of formation, meetings, publications which, we hope will be able to identify methods and initiatives that will contribute towards answering the challenges of today».

*prepared by the editorial board*



## Little towns and their surrounding areas

# Vital Centers for unity

Diary of the trip of the two councillors at the Center for the aspect of harmony and environment. Various stages in Argentina

It began with the idea of only visiting the Mariapolis Lia (O'Higgins), and enriched by the suggestion of Emmaus to take advantage of the visit to get to know more profoundly the Zone of the Southern Cone. And so our trip to Latin America became a quick and wide-spread tour throughout the whole Argentina. From August 8 to 17 we in fact went to Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Tucumán, Santa Maria di Catamarca and Paraná and ended in O'Higgins. It was a trip that was not limited to seeing the houses and buildings, Mariapolis Centers and Little Towns, but it was also to come in contact with the cultural and social realities of the Zone. Chiara, looking at the world, saw an aspect that was evident in each continent and which could be the specific contribution of the people of that region to be shared with the others who are also journeying towards a united world. In Latin America she had seen the

aspect of harmony and the environment. A trip therefore with a particular significance for us to whom precisely this aspect has been entrusted.

We landed in **Buenos Aires**, where, after a tour of the famous Plaza de Mayo, we visited the focolare centers, the Zone centers and the office of Città Nuova. We spoke of sales, purchases, renovations to reduce costs and to maximize the use of space. Our stay in Buenos Aires gave us also the joy of a dinner with «Sumá Fraternidad», the organization which accompanies the social projects of the Zone, creating a network and forming administrators with the aim of eventually founding a sustainable future. They are also doing the same with the Mariapolis Centers. Two of these were our next destinations: the center of **Alta Grazia**, 35 kilometers from Cordoba, and that of **Paraná**. Here we also met the focolarine who manage the six Mariapolis Centers of the Zone (three in Argentina, one in Paraguay, one in Uruguay, one in Chile). It was a day of work and of communion, tracing the journey made and still to be undertaken, in view of the new set-up and the challenges of sustainability of these structures which this year have hosted more than 20,000 people, many of whom met the Movement for the first time. What emerged was that the Mariapolis Centers are venues of dialogue, of formative and cultural activities of the territories. In close relationship with them are also the small social projects.



At **Santa Maria di Catamarca**, the majestic environment of the pre-Andine region, made us dive into the centuries old culture of this «land of Mary» which was the venue of the first Mariapolis of Hispano-America. An experience of contemplation and life in the midst of a people who incarnated the ideal of unity into two social projects, jewels of inculturation with the indigenous peoples: the «*Scuola Aurora*» (Aurora School) recognized by the Government for its contribution to the *quechua* culture and the Tinku Kamayu fash-



During the visit to the Mariapolis Lia

not only. Protagonists and very active in the various aspects, the youth are in fact those who welcome visitors sharing with them the present and the past of the Little Town which they feel belongs to them. Work in the various enterprises and activities is also an integral part of their formation: from woodworking to the production of sweets at the «*Sorriso*» (Smile). The maintenance crew takes charge of garbage collection and the youth consider this as a contribution to ecology; they themselves are the protagonists in the formation in the ecological aspect of all the inhabitants of the Mariapolis and its visitors and guests. A strong experience for most of the youth is that of renewal and change in their life, the healing of painful situations, choices for the future. Some of them would like to deepen their knowledge of the vocation to the focolare. For many, their stay in the Little town remains as a reference point in their spiritual and human formation, within the framework of a powerful and characteristic experience of inculturation.

There were moments of communion with the different realities of the Little Town, a sharing



With Silvia Escandel and Norberto Cartechini (in the middle) delegates of the Movement for the Southern Cone

ion house for its use of the traditional weaving method *calchaquies*.

From there we finally arrived at the **Mariapolis Lia** after travelling more than 3600 km! The Little Town is beautiful and harmonious, with the structures that are simple but with an architectural style that is well integrated with the environment, with a well-maintained park. On the whole it is an example of sobriety and harmony with the surrounding social context. There is a great potential for this place where one can breathe an atmosphere of family, of open relationships, of reciprocity among generations. More than 30.000 people visit it every year. We were impressed by the numerous and continuous presence of the youth, 85 this year coming from many latin American countries and



## Zone of Italy

# Sharing is a pathway to unity

A Castel Gandolfo il primo congresso nazionale delle e dei volontari d'Italia

The Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo was finding it hard to contain the almost two thousand men and women Volunteers, with a small delegation from Albania, who came from the whole of Italy. There were those of the early times, many of them, and others who were younger, they too were numerous. It is the first time for a national congress to gather together, nevertheless just a representation of the seven thousand (men and women Volunteers) present in Italy.

Needless to say, when it began, together with much joy there was also a good dose of emotion. «Sharing – A pathway for unity», was the title of the congress, which contained a strong desire: to read together the past experience inspired by the charism of unity and to extrapolate from it good practices to indicate a way for commitment for Italy.

Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement, was present through a warm message wherein she spoke, among other things, of her joy in seeing people who are ready «to bear witness to the charism in all its more concrete expressions» and she hoped «to study all the details» with the eyes of Mary Assumed into Heaven.

The work began with spiritual and cultural reflections. Unity of peoples as the horizon for one's daily actions, with a commitment that starts from the city and taps its roots in



of experiences of sufferings, past and present, together with the experiences of all those who commit themselves everyday and give themselves with joy, without counting the cost, with the few means available but with much creativity.

This trip to Argentina was very important also in view of the coming event that awaits us at Castel Gandolfo: from February 5 to 11, 2017 when the meeting of the representatives of all the Little Town of the world will be held. The aim: to see together the original design, the present and the future of each one that is being revealed more and more, which is what also emerged during the recent meetings of the Delegates, that the Little Towns are important instruments for the realization of «That all may be one».

*Vita Zanolini, Vitek Valtr*

## An award for the magazine

Friday, November 25, *Teens*

received an important recognition: during the XII edition of the National Award «Città di Chiavari», the only award in Italy given to publications for teens, the magazine received an honourable mention plaque for the best interviews and for the space given to writings by teens. The award is promoted by the Town Council of Chiavari and the Association of Ligurian Youth Literature.

The writer Annalisa Strada (on the right) as she presents the award to Anna Lisa Innocenti, editor in chief of the magazine *Teens*



«another» dimension: these are what emerged from the intervention of Pasquale Ferrara, Italian ambassador to Algeria, who concluded his intervention saying: «The Volunteers of God in Italy are called to intercept the great questions and, by being in the world "shoulder to shoulder", to transform the Country into a workshop of unity».

«Sharing or appropriation. Towards a new socio-economic paradigm», is the title of the report of Gennaro Iorio, sociologist at the University of studies of Salerno who, tracing the route of the revolutions that had profoundly marked the journey of humanity, he highlighted how the events of today with the technological innovations in action offers a greater possibility of implementing the paradigm of sharing which is collaborative, open, transparent, equal and democratic.

Certainly there were not only themes but also many concrete experiences. Someone shared about his encounter with suffering through a serious disability or the welcoming of refugees, students of many nationalities, foreign minors, the commitment to legality, solidarity. Experiences with a civil dimension of sharing that emerged in all its potentiality of becoming a system.

Two afternoons were dedicated to 150 working groups, divided into 38 areas, characterized by the joy of being together, of getting to know each other and of sharing one's experiences and



the many good practices in action. This led to concrete proposals, processes that have been initiated on a national level and of relationships that have been strengthened among people committed in the same fields, but who up to now were not sufficiently linked to one another.

The Volunteers who were gathered in these days wanted in fact to make their own contribution to an Italy that is changing, still undergoing an economic crisis, strongly involved in the management of the migratory waves, called by the need for legality, civic commitment, social inclusion, formation of the new generations. To be honest, many of them have already done so, but here new synergies were born which are capable of producing a multiplying effect.

And a congress entitled «Sharing» could not but end with a proposal for an instrument of sharing: an app – Fag8 – wherein objects, time, projects can be shared. Whoever has been in the Movement since the beginning knows that all those who became members of the Focolare Movement it was natural to put in common their own goods and needs. This habit, that has been ongoing ever since, has always been called the «fagotto (bundle)». This is where the app's name is derived, yesterday just among small groups and on a local level, today on a national level and not only: faithfulness to the origins, creativity of today. A present that is strongly rooted in the charism of unity and at the same time decisively oriented towards concreteness.

*Aurora Nicosia*





«Together for Europe»

## Where to?

**129 representatives of 39 Movements and Communities of various Churches from 13 European countries met at Castel Gandolfo to read from the «musical score written in heaven» the next step of «Together for Europe»**

The meeting held in Castel Gandolfo from november 10 to 12 was a follow-up of the big event in Munich last summer. Looking at the worldwide context, they saw the urgent need for a greater commitment. A year ago, in conjunction with the meeting held in Holland, the news about the bombing in Paris came; before the meeting in Munich, England voted for the Brexit; in these days there is the challenge of the election results in the USA. A question cries out: what is the contribution of «Together for Europe»?

Some proposals included the development of ideas already for 2017. It is foreseen to highlight the commemoration (March 25, 2017) of the 60 years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, considered as one of the more significant historical moments in the process of European integration. Political exponents will meet in Rome Campidoglio. «Together for Europe» would like to be present through a prayer vigil – international and ecumenical – to be held the evening before the commemoration and to present a document in which «we say yes to Europe». They are also working so that similar vigils will be held in the European cities where «Together for Europe» is present.

One could feel, among other things, the desire to «create venues of encounter» increasing the communion among Movements on a local

level, to offer a «programme for the city», and to deepen the «7 Yes» signed by «Together» (yes to life, to the family, to creation, to a fair and equitable economy, to solidarity, to peace, to responsibility).

In the journey of «Together for Europe» which began 15 years ago, around 200 Movements and Christian Communities from 32 European countries have joined it. With the Convention of Castel Gandolfo the participation has been widened and with the status of «Friends of Together for Europe», religious families and charismatic groups founded in the past were also added. «As a minor conventual brother of Assisi, I participated as a member of the Franciscan family and I understood that the mission of «Together for Europe» is of great relevance today», commented Fr. Egidio Canil ofm conventual, delegate of the «spirit of Assisi» for the Sacred Convent and for the Diocese of Assisi.

The unexpected departure for the House of the Father of Maria da Conceição Maia, married focolarina of Portugal, mother of six children (see pag. 26), who was present at the meeting and who was a passionate weaver of the journey «Together», strongly affected and united the participants bringing a renewed yield of light of the Risen One.

*prepared by the editorial board*

## In Istanbul

# Con Bartolomeo I on his 25°

Focolarine and focolarini of Istanbul were received for a long, friendly and informal audience. The gift of the Movement for the anniversary of his election as ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople

He is one of the few ecumenical Patriarchs who has reached the milestone of 25 years of patriarchy! One can imagine the joy and the celebration that surrounded him, aside from the significant events that highlighted his person and his magisterium illuminated in this quarter of a century, as the guide of his Church and as a leader whom many look to with regards to the care of creation, but also in matters of peace, dialogue, building fraternity. Of particular interest is the recent publication of two books: *Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew - Twenty-five Years of Patriarchal Ministry 1991-2016* and *Bartholomew: apostle and visionary*, this one with the preface of Pope Francis and a chapter on the Pope emeritus Benedict XVI.

The love, the reciprocal admiration, the closeness of the Patriarch Bartholomew with the Work of Mary has deepened throughout these years: he met Chiara Lubich still during the time of Patriarch Athenagoras, then, when he became the Patriarch, he received her in audience several times, and above all he went to bring his blessing to her at the Gemelli hospital just a few days before her death.



In Constantinople (Istanbul) he welcomed the participants to an ecumenical school and to the ecumenical meetings of Bishops that were held in this city. He hosted the meeting held last year precisely at the Orthodox Theological Seminary on the island of Halki, near Istanbul. How can we forget then, also in 2015, the two days he spent in the Little Town of Loppiano, becoming its honorary citizen and receiving the first doctorate h.c. on the Culture of unity granted by the Sophia University Institute?

For all of these and so much more, this anniversary was the occasion to express to him a heartfelt gratitude for what he is and does. And also to tell him how much the whole Movement is with him so that «all may be one».

Through a 20-minute video prepared for the occasion, members of the Movement who he knew personally sent him their greetings for his jubilee, in

Istanbul, 6 november 2016.  
The focolare members visiting the Patriarch



gratitude to God and to him. Aletta Salizzoni, Emmaus Voce, Jesús Morán, Piero Coda and the students of Sophia, Gabri Fallacara and the members of the present «Uno» Center, Card. Vlk and Card. Francis Xavier Kriengsak, just to name a few, were able to express with just a few phrases, their gratitude for this «long-standing, extremely profound friendship, that is truly harmonious», and for having made us experience many times «his fraternal openness, fraternal love» and they also told him of the prayers said everyday in front of Chiara's tomb also for his intentions.

This video was the most significant gift that we had brought to him on the 6th of November in the latest audience that the focolarine and focolarini of Istanbul had with him.

Visiting Patriarch Bartholomew is something that we do often. He personally knows all the members of the two focolare centers, following all the departures and the new arrivals... Our relationship, always keeping the highest regard and respect for his persona and that which he represents, is that of a family with their own father. Each time, we experience his profound affection for us and for the Movement (especially for Emmaus whom he knew personally when she was still here in Istanbul), as well as his passion for unity. He tells us with great simplicity of the work he is doing, of his untiring efforts on all levels, moved by an immense and boundless love for the Church of Jesus and for the whole of humanity.

This time the audience was especially long: an hour and a half! The most beautiful thing was being able to watch this video together with him, to feel his love, the

## For a culture of unity in diversity

A small volume has just been published for the series «The Chairs of Sophia» (Città Nuova) that is a collection of the documentation of the visit to Loppiano of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I, last October 26, 2015 on the occasion of the conferment of «Doctorate honoris causa» in «Culture of Unity», from the Sophia University Institute «for his service to the unity of the human family». An event that has marked a historical page of which this volume presents the first-hand documentation, in particular the intense congratulatory message of Pope Francis and *lectio magistralis* of the Patriarch.



attention and affection for each one of us, expressed in a phrase, a word, the living memory of many moments of encounter and of relationship. he was surprised and visibly happy!

And just as he has done before, he showed us with gifts, among which is an icon of the glorious crucifix, which we told him has a special meaning for us this year that we are dedicating to Jesus Crucified and

Forsaken. He also gave us a copy of the two books and we departed with a prayer, as he granted us his Patriarchal blessing.

Umberta Fabris



## Vittoria Salizzoni (Aletta)

*«Let us accompany with joy and immense Aletta's return to the House of the Father. We cannot have had a better model of one who "gave her life without counting the cost", just as the password of today suggests». This is how Maria Voce announced to all the members of the Movement the «departure» of Aletta*



Another of the first companions of Chiara, Aletta, has reached the heavenly Mariapolis, a few days after her 92° birthday. Born in Martignano, near Trento, and moving with her family to France for a period of time, at thirteen years old she felt the call to follow God, a call that Aletta tries to suppress knowing that she still too young and too lively. That insistent voice led her to entrust herself to Mary: «You help me to find my way which is not the convent», she prayed.

In Trento, on January 7, 1945 she met Chiara Lubich in a meeting of Franciscan Capuchin Third Order and was fascinated by the new life that was starting in the «casetta (little house)» of Piazza Cappuccini. She was sure that it was the answer she was waiting for. Vittoria received a new name during that meeting: «Ala di Gesù Abbandonato (Wing of Jesus Forsaken)». Chiara told her: «Give yourself a boost and never look back. You must fly, to go ahead, without being attached to the world, in spite of being in the world».

Aletta realized that flight in many ways, living with Chiara for twenty years during the founding

of the Movement in its various aspects, in particular that of the Green.

Once she asked Chiara what the Green really is: «Do you know what it is? – she answered - it is the entire humanity of Jesus; the life of Jesus as a human being. Jesus was born of woman just like us, he felt cold, he was hungry, he cried, he knew human affection ... He fed the hungry, multiplied the bread and fish, he cured the sick, he saved souls. But above all he had a great love for humanity and its sufferings... Suffering, death and resurrection are also expressions of the Green».

Seriously ill with tuberculosis, Aletta had to remain isolated for months on end. Her recovery was long and arduous. She shared: «Every evening – up to late at night – Chiara

met with all of us to share with wisdom about the developments of the Movement. They were special moments, full of light with which the foundations of the growing Movement were laid, among which were the seven aspects that were just born.

But for me, at 10 p.m. it was the will of God to "lose" these very important hours to go and rest in a house nearby. Once, alone on the street, I asked Jesus this question: "Explain this to me: Chiara is there with all the others and instead I am her, like a rag and unable to do anything. She gave me a responsibility, the aspect of the Green, and what can I do to bring it ahead?». Immediately a voice within clearly told



Tonalico, august 1952

Jerusalem, march 1956





me: "What do you think? A design of God is not preached, it is not brought ahead, it is generated».

Aletta, once she recovered, went to Istanbul in the 60s and 70s, and during her stay there she continued the relationship that Chiara began with ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras 1. From him she discovered the beauty of the Orthodox Church and of the Oriental Church, which both underline the need to transform truth into life and where charity is exalted. With the Christians of this Church, the reality of a new people journeying towards unity together began.

After the death of Patriarch Athenagoras, Aletta went to Lebanon and remained there till 1990. They were years tormented by the civil war. The community of the Movement lived unity. The war recalled the lessons of the early times in Trent: only God remains and He must be put in the first place. The difficulties and danger of dying during the bombardments did not stop the spread of the Ideal of unity throughout the entire Zone of the Middle East.

Aletta will later go to the Center of the Movement as the Central Delegate for the aspect of the Green and will remain beside Chiara for 17 years.

What Palmira Frizzera, another of the first companions, shared is precious and important to get to know the characteristics of simplicity and genuineness of Aletta that correspond to her Word of life: «Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God» (Mt 5,8): «With Aletta I have always had an immediate

rapport, ever since the early times in Piazza Cappucini when we would go two by two in the valleys of Trent to bring the Word of life to the people of the first community. When we would reach our destination Aletta would tell me: "You speak Palmira; I will make unity with you". She was like an angel and it is understandable why Chiara called her immediately Aletta and, just like

the wing of an angel, she was this for Chiara and for all of us in these more than 70 years of her life in the focolare. She didn't speak much, but what she said put us at once in the essential. She never created any problems; everything for her was centered on the Will of God. Her characteristic was simplicity, an innate serenity; an enviable psycho-

physical balance. It is understandable why Chiara saw in her the design of the Green, both in her human aspect as well as her spiritual one: Jesus in the midst, the health of the



Mystical Body. This is the legacy that Aletta leaves us».

Ten days before her departure, which was on November 22, Aletta sent a video message to the gen2 who were gathered for their congress: «I want to greet all the gen in the world for their 50° anniversary of the Ideal life. May you go ahead, you are young, you still have strength, you can do everything that you want, Go ahead».



# mons. Anthony Rufin

*A builder of communities and of churches*

Bishop of Islamabad-Rawalpindi (Pakistan), his encounter with the Ideal of unity goes way back during his first years as a priest. «Knowing the spirituality of Chiara - he declared in 2009 on the occasion of his episcopal ordination - was a turning point in my life. it was an answer to all my most profound desires and aspirations, but it took me a long time to understand it, because the life of communion is the life of the Most Holy Trinity».

As a priest and then as a bishop, Mons. Rufin worked with passion for the Church of Pakistan which he loved dearly. He built communities and churches, he wrote books in the local language (Urdu) on the Sacraments and on Mary, to inculcate the Gospel in the life of the people.

Two years ago he experienced a very strong psycho-physical trial during which, thanks to his great love for Jesus Forsaken, the gentleness and profundity of his soul, entirely anchored to the charism of Chiara was revealed. When he recovered, during summer this year, he participated in the meeting of Bishops held in Braga (Portugal – see *Mariapolis* n.7-7-9/2016 ) where his being and his constant smile expressed the light and the joy of the Risen One. He was also able to continue to guide his Diocese with the wisdom and humility that characterized him and which was a great example for many.

On October 17, at the age of 76, Mons. Rufin unexpectedly returned to the house of the Father. At his funeral, Mons. Joseph Arshad, bishop of Faisalabad, underlined his love for all the faithful: «He was a man with a great union with God, who fulfilled his pastoral service with all his heart as a parish priest and as a professor, rector and bishop. He live with a profound attitude of communion, obedience and faithfulness to the Church his entire life».

*Julia Tigges, Tomeu Mayans*



# Paola Bartola Fermani

*«Who will separate us from the love of Christ?» (Rm 8,35)*



On the 12th of November Paola, married focolarina of Rome, left for Heaven after a long illness. She was 54 years old.

Born and raised in Ancona, she met the Movement and committed herself to it with determination. She had a strong character, building every relationship on a supernatural level, having always in front of her the goal of reaching all humanity. In her job at the CONSOB (Commissione nazionale per le Società e la Borsa / National commission for Societies and the Stock Exchange) she was an untiring witness of the Gospel and when she was promoted as office manager she decided «to be only love». On the occasion of the Jubilee 2000, together with a religious who is close to the Movement, they organized a mission in her work place and from then on a good number of her colleagues meet regularly for the Word of life.

On her 36th birthday she began to experience the first signs of the illness that will turn her life and that of her family upside down. Paola faced this illness with faithful heroism to Jesus Forsaken. She wrote: «I can already foresee God's design of Love. I saw that around me, many situations that seemed humanly impossible to solve were resolved». In spite of the treatments and frequent check-ups, she continued to work for the setting up of the Lionello Industrial Park of Loppiano, she took care of a group of managers and entrepreneurs of Rome, she promoted meetings for bankers and various parts of Italy, thus lending her support for many years to the development of the Economy of Communion.

After a period of respite, her illness returned in a more aggressive form. «After having overcome the first moment of once again facing the abyss – she wrote - I recognized the Spouse who was wearing his most beautiful attire and I threw my arms around his neck to embrace Him». In December 2010 she experienced serious complications: Paola is confined to a chair and unable to speak correctly. She confided: «It is an excuse of Jesus to subject

me to the scalpel so as to smoothen the rough edges» and she repeated to Him: «Make me die alive». Beside her to accompany her in this final stage of her «holy journey», were her husband Roberto, who took turns with their children, Giulia and Valerio, her mother Bianca, the focolarine, the focolarini and many friends, edified by the sacredness of her witness.

## Maria da Conceição de Araújo Maia (São)

*A great councillor, a great sister, a great married focolarina*

São received the heavenly Mariapolis of November 11 at the age of 57. She came to Castel Gandolfo for the meeting of «Together for Europe» where she unexpectedly experienced a heart attack. «She was a great councillor – the person in-charge of the Zone said - a great sister and a great married focolarina . She never held back, she gave everything and this is the legacy she left us». Mother of six children, together with José they formed a beautiful family-focolare, open to the Movement and to humanity. She was truly a focolarina who lived for the Movement and her family too was the same.

While she was still young, São discovered in the Ideal of unity the revolutionary power of the Gospel and she became a person all inflamed by the love of God. When she married José, they already had three children when they were asked to transfer from Braga to Lisbon to take charge of the development of the New Families: «A new stage began for me - São wrote to Chiara. It is rooted in the life of the Word, with the intensity of the early times, in an always more perfect life both in the focolare and in the family, in that complete nothingness of myself filled by love, I live so that, in spite of everything, the world will continue to walk towards “that all may be one”».

In 2002, always in agreement with their six children, São and José leave Lisbon to reside in the newly born Little town Arco-Iris, in a house that maybe was not even big enough for eight people, but «all of us recall that period with immense

joy – their children said. «It was a decision made by the whole family. We were very happy to make a new choice of God and to be able to contribute to a strong presence of Jesus in the midst in this very beautiful Mariapolis».

When she was expecting her fifth child, Paola felt that society did not understand nor looked favourably on those families with many children. «She suffered because of this, but – her children continued – she confided to us her joy and the grace she felt at having another child, transmitting to us a great peace. When there were discussions at home, it was always our mother who spoke with each one of us, calming us and pointing out the positive in the other. She took in as



her own, our sufferings, our doubts, our anxieties and uncertainties».

Her life was constantly guided by her Word of life: «He must grow and I must diminish» (Jn 3,30) with the explanation given to her by Chiara: «Imitating Jesus Forsaken in his annihilation of self out of love, you will all Him to transform you into a little Mary who embraces everyone, bringing them to unity».

## Carlos Martínez

*Untiring builder of the Work of Mary*



On October 25, we received the news that Carlos and Thomas, focolarini in the Mariapolis Lia (Argentina) and their physiotherapist were injured by an explosion caused by a gas leak, and suffering from serious burns. Carlos had to be brought immediately by helicopter to a hospital specializing in burn trauma. On November 5, he flew to Heaven at the age of 70.

Argentinian from Córdoba, he was brilliant in his studies and a tennis ace. At 22 years old he was conquered by the light and the radicalness of the Ideal of unity and decided to help in the construction of the newly born Little Town of O'Higgins (now the Mariapolis Lia). After a few months he felt the call to the focolare and in march '71 he was already in Loppiano. After his formation, in order to finish his studies in Engineering, he moved to the focolare of Córdoba, but his soul was wide open to the infinite. Jesus had placed in his heart a fecund and pure seed. He wrote in his diary: «I woke up today with the desire to look for You everywhere, and I wasn't able to do anything! How beautiful you are Jesus Forsaken, everything is in you and I feel that I do not lack anything». In his first years in the focolare he confided to Chiara: «I arrived from Loppiano with Paradise in my heart. I threw myself in loving every person who passed by and I could not but see how much Jesus suffers in humanity. The Paradise which I felt within was transformed in a total love only for Jesus Forsaken, and not to look for anything else. . . for the first time I started to truly love Him with pure love. . . In this relationship with Jesus that is completely new what remains in me is Love, true Love and in it I find all of humanity».

In '85 he continued to give himself to God in Buenos Aires and then in the Little town of Argentina, where he takes up the responsibility for it. In those 10 years, his desire was that of building relationships, setting aside everything that would make him appear like a manager, he was a true friend, a brother for everyone.

A new adventure then brought him to Rocca di Papa as a councillor at the center of the focolarini. Here he discovered a strange illness that cause him much difficulty in moving. While he was on the way to Argentina, he had a stroke after which, in spite of his recovery and physiotherapy, he continued to feel pain in his limbs sometimes even unbearable. At the end of 2014 he returned for the third time to the Mariapolis Lia. But even if the strength he had was less than before, he worked for translation and regularly did the prescribed physical exercises. Twice a week he would go to a place where nearby for his physiotherapy assisted by Alejandro, who aside from a professional who took care of him, became

his friend to whom he would share experiences and doubts just like to an older brother. It was precisely during one of these sessions that a big explosion engulfed the clinic and seriously injured Carlos, Alejandro and Thomas, the focolarino who had accompanied him. The burns and the damage to his kidneys and lungs were so serious that in a matter of a few days he returned to the house of the father. Numerous and touching messages immediately arrived from all over the world, which express gratitude, friendship, unity built, love for Jesus Forsaken who made Carlos more and more similar to Him.

## Erminio Longhini

*«Whoever lives my  
Word will never die»  
(Jn 8,51)*

Married focolarino of Milan (Italy), on November 4, Erminio left us at the age of 86. After graduating in Medicine, he married Nuccia, his classmate and three children are born. In 1966, he met the focolare and found his vocation in the spirituality of the Movement of which he appreciated its Marian characteristic.

Due to his great involvement in research, the medical division which he headed became the best in the territory, both in terms of human relationships as well as technical expertise, producing hundreds of publications. Thanks to a donation made by an entrepreneur, he was able to set-up a Department of Internal Medicine with the latest equipment where youth from Italy and the developing Countries could be formed.

Erminio understood more and more that it was not enough to cure an illness, but the patient was important. In collaboration with the Catholic University he made a research which showed that the greatest discomfort of the sick is that of losing their independence or autonomy. From a first group of volunteers and with the untiring support of Nuccia, in '76 the AHV (Association of Hospital Volunteers) was born, which today has 25.000 volunteers in 250 hospitals all over Italy. The initiative



is encouraged not only by Chiara but also by the past Cardinals of Milan, Giovanni Colombo and Carlo Maria Martini, and by Saint John Paul II, who during an audience with 7.000 volunteers of the Association said to Erminio: «I am happy, tell this to your collaborators and friends and continue like this». In 2004 Erminio was awarded with the Gold Medal for Merit in Healthcare by the President of the Italian Republic.

After the departure for Heaven of Nuccia and the beginning of a progressive illness that refined his soul, a new phase began for Erminio wherein he intensified his abandonment in God, his filial devotion to Mary, grateful for the gifts he had received, the unity with his focolare. During their retreat last June, his communion of soul was almost like his spiritual testament: «I have received so much more in my lifetime than I have ever expected. I thank Mary and every night I conclude my prayers saying:... if You will be the one to come and fetch me it will be perfect joy. I will hear you and I will see you».

also took care of her family, and in unity with her husband she followed with great love, the growth of her children and grandchildren. She spiritually supported many people among whom were her ex-colleagues and when she was entrusted with the ecumenical dialogue, she was able to personally follow the members of Ecumenical Committee of Panama.

She dedicated herself with passion to the study of the UPM, attracted by the wisdom and light which she was able to incarnate in her daily life: a concreteness that is also expressed whenever she shared her experiences of the Gospel lived. For 19 years she experienced a serious illness. To her strong and courageous character, simplicity and humility were added; she took everything from the love of God and transmitted serenely to other people who were suffering the same illness. In spite of the pains she continued to love everyone with an always new measure. At her departure, there were many echoes of gratitude, as witnesses to the many seeds of love she had planted in her land, which will certainly continue to bloom.

## Esilda Esther Rodríguez de Casal (Essi)



*«Lord to whom shall we go? Only You have the words of eternal life» (Jn 6,68)*

On October 26, at 67 years old, Essi (= Jesús sí (Jesus yes) – name given to her by Chiara), from

Panama, concluded her race towards God, adhering to His will and repeating «yes» to Jesus Forsaken, a true model of strength and consistency. Ever since the first years of the arrival of the Ideal of unity in Central America, thanks to her son who was a gen3, she came to know about the Movement and remained fascinated by the charisma of Chiara Lubich. She immediately launched herself in living it, grateful to God for the call to be able to serve Him in the Movement as a married focolarina. From then on she actively participated in the life of the focolare, always on the frontline in preparing the Mariapolises and in collaborating in all of the activities of the Movement. With the same energy she

## Mercedes Muruaga (Mecha)

*«Above all maintain among you a mutual and continuous charity» (1Pt 4,8)*



Among the first focolarines of Argentina, she left unexpectedly for Heaven on October 25 at the age 75. Since she was

a child she was always attentive to the needs of others, and she was always searching for something. After many discussions with one of her classmates in the University regarding religion, she was finally convinced to attend a Mariapolis. And so at 21 years old Mecha found what she had been searching for. Soon after she understood that Jesus was calling her and so leaving behind all her dreams and projects, she left by ship for Italy together with other young Argentinian girls to begin their formation to the focolare. After the School she went to Portugal and then to France. They were years full of enthusiasm and apostolic concreteness, as her soul fixed

itself more and more in Jesus Forsaken. In 1979 she returned to Argentina, where she continued to live for «that all may be one» in the focolares of Tucumán, Córdoba and Mendoza, making her talents bear fruit and contributing with passion to build the Work of Mary. She is a person without half-measures, a lover of art and of nature; very humble and sensitive to the needs of society. In Buenos Aires she took care of the adherents and passionately supported the magazine *Ciudad Nueva*.

In June '84 Mecha shared a delicate moment she was experiencing in her soul: «I can feel a solitude that should lead to a more profound union with God but it is not always easy to achieve it. I see myself as climbing an enormous mountain that becomes more and more arduous; I look up and I still see a long way to go, I look down and I am just halfway to the top. In this circumstance the Desolate sustains and encourages me». And in 2003 she confided: «In my heart I have the strongest conviction that the call is a gift freely given to me by God to remove me from darkness and mediocrity and to make me an instrument to bear witness to His Light and His Love». In 2012 she wrote to Emmaus «I am certain that in unity I will be able to go up to the end and not to miss the encounter with the Spouse».

At 54 years old he had a heart attack from which he was able to recover. He continued to work with great passion, from the early morning up to late at night, but he also intensified his prayer life which helped him to maintain an interior freedom in any circumstance. The meditation was his strength. In front of each neighbour he had a tender love and gratitude, as if he were the beneficiary and when he spoke one could feel that he spoke from the heart. The many chocolates which he gave out in big quantities on every occasion to thank those with whom he had built unity were proverbial.

In the last period of his life, he realized that he now had to depend on others and this was quite difficult for him, but he did not make it a heavy burden, rather! Up to the end he continued to be concerned of the others. Those who asked for his advice he suggested two loves: the Eucharist and Jesus Forsaken whom - he said - «never disappoints you». On October 19, at 69 years old, Fero left this world. For all those who knew him, he remained as a model and an example of that sanctity which is expressed in silent and concrete service for the neighbour and the weakest.

*Pino Tasca*

## Frantisek Petrik (Fero)

*Give and you will be given: a good measure, pressed down, full and overflowing will be given to you (Lk 6, 38)*

Volunteer of Nova Lubovna (Slovakia), Fero, after finishing his studies in Medicine, married Maria, who is also a doctor. They have five children. A priest friend spoke to him of the Ideal of unity and Fero, became a Volunteer and one of the pillars of the Movement who was for many years responsible for a nucleo. Because of his empathy and his great ability to understand others,

his fame as a psychiatrist grew beyond the borders of Slovakia. Trusting in divine Providence, he often did not ask those less fortunate to pay for his service. His house was always open to welcome everybody.



## Fr. Sempliciano De Paoli

*Witness of the great love of God for all humanity*

Franciscan Capuchin, for 45 years he lived the charism of unity with the whole Work of Mary: a consecrated who lived a journey of profound communion, especially with religious of many Families, loving the Order of the others as his own, having foremost in his heart the unity with the brothers in his community. «An authentic Capuchin – wrote his confidant and penitent – a true son of St. Francis: simple, direct, free, merciful, a lover of creation. He was always so much in the essential that you



could immediately feel his union with God and his readiness to love the neighbour beside him».

Born in Alano di Piave (Belluno) on September 6, 1930, he graduated in Philosophy and for many years he taught in the high school of the young Capuchins who were inclined to the priesthood. He met the charism of unity in 1972 in the Mariapolis of Merano (Bolzano) and, at the end he exclaimed: «I will never let go of this Ideal!».

For many years he rendered his service in the confessional: «It is much more tiring than one expects – he said. You must always be up and to know how to make yourself one with everybody, to be attentively patient and ready for anything. A week doesn't go by when I don't meet someone who leaves the confessional full of peace and an unheard of joy and, as they dry their tears, they thank the merciful Father, because they have finally experienced the joy of his forgiveness».

On October 9, a few hours before his sudden death, he told a religious who reminded him of an appointment set a few days before in his convent with some brothers who also shared with him the spirituality of unity: «I am aware and am ready. It is alright to meet here in our convent. Already united in the Pact with all of you». And there were definitely no obstacles to that appointment: for on that day, in the same hour and the same place, his funeral was celebrated, as many of his brothers and friends accompanied him with their prayers to the house of the Father.

*Fr. Mariano Steffan*

## Fr. Calogero Milazzo

*He dreamed and lived for a Church-Mary*

Fr. Calogero, priest focolarino of Sicily, returned to the House of the Father, on September 10 at 73 years old. Since he was a child he made the experience of being in the Minor Seminary and in 1967 he received his priestly ordination. Then, in Rome, he pursued a licence in Biblical Science and in Palermo



he graduated with a degree in Letters and Philosophy. He met the Focolare Movement through an invitation: «One afternoon – he shared – in June 1974 while I was taking a walk with some priests of my hometown, Fr. Salvatore Paruzzo, who is today the bishop of Diocese of Ourinhos in Brazil, proposed to me to participate in a meeting of priests of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa». After this first experience and after having participated in a school for priests he said: «I found myself at a crossroad: on one side God Love, but it meant that I had to start again from the beginning, and on the other side was the choice to remain closed up within myself which meant the end of my life as a Christian. I renewed my choice of God, and thus I embarked on the road with no turning back». Active in ecumenism, he brought mature fruits in the many relationships with brothers of various Churches. Two days before he died, whoever asked him if he was ready, no longer being able to speak, he nodded, saying his final «yes» to the will of God.

*Fr. Vincenzo Genova*

## Winifred Llewellyn Lewis (Win)

*A phenomenal ability to see the good*



A native of Cardiff, Win was a part of the Focolare Movement for more than 40 years. She was the point of reference of the Movement in the south of Wales and was the heart of the local community in her city. A person of great wisdom and generosity, her observations were profound and always appropriate, not lacking in humour. When she was already 85 years old, she bought a computer so that she could receive the Password everyday. A lover of beauty, art and literature, it was surprising to hear her recall up to the last day of her life – on October 24 at the age of 96 - the details of the events she participated in or the spiritual physiognomy of the persons she took care of with great love. At her funeral mass one of her friends said: «Win was wise, she had compassion, she forgave, she

penetrated every reality, she had a phenomenal ability to see the good».

The root of Win's life was a profound love for God. As a young girl she entered a community of Anglican nuns, but after 17 years due to health reasons she was forced to return to her family. While she was taking care of her elderly father, she came to know the Movement and remained fascinated by the reality of Jesus in the midst that is lived in the Movement. A few years later, following a profound period of discernment, she became a member of the Catholic Church. Win had an always more profound love for Jesus Forsaken whom she learned to embrace in the many difficulties that she met, always maintaining a great dignity, always ready to welcome whoever needed her help.

For more than 4 years she was the point of reference of the local community of Cardiff and for 11 years she was responsible for a nucleo of women Volunteers. For everyone Win was a friend, a confidant, a counselor.

*Noreen Lockhart*

## Arnaldo Lugli

*The «precious pearl» that he had always searched for*

Arnaldo welcomed the Christian values transmitted to him by his family with joy. He lived his youth involved in religious, political and social activities. He married Vanna who like him was also involved in the business of knitwear.

During a trip to Loppiano, he came into contact with the spirituality of unity and immediately he felt that it was the «precious pearl» of the Gospel that he had always been searching for. Soon after he became a Volunteer of God. Vanna too felt the call to live for unity and together they became an example for many.

When he retired, Arnaldo committed himself even more to social actions, becoming a member of the Association of diocesan volunteers called «Porta Aperta (Open Door)». With his profound spiritual life, rooted in the choice of God Love, he knew how to



accept and safeguard the work that God did in him and in the others. His most frequent prayer was the Rosary. And Mary certainly must have welcomed him into Paradise on the day of his departure, on May 22 at the age of 89.

*Paolo Mottironi*

## Noemi Nepi Lucaccini

*An availability and helpfulness without limits*



On July 11, at the age of 92 Noemi, a Volunteer of Montevarchi (in the surroundings of Loppiano) left for heaven. Towards the end of the Sixties, with her husband Giovanni they began to attend meetings with a group of New Families, committing themselves with generosity and enthusiasm, together with their three children – Chiara, Francesca and Lorenzo - expressed in concrete actions of welcome, of listening and of accompaniment, as was the case of a young girl and her daughter whom they took care of for many years.

Noemi wrote in 2001: «Our house has welcomed single mothers, ex-drug addicts, children of families in difficulty. And this happened for long or short periods of time. Some former terrorists also stayed with us; Lorenzo would only tell me afterwards what their problems were».

In the meantime their son followed the way of the focolare and was sent to Zagabria: it was during the years of the Balkan wars. Noemi continued to share: «In these 10 years, with Lorenzo living in a war zone, we organized the collection of all kinds of goods for the refugees, helped by many friends of the Movement and we continued to welcome into our home teens and young couples that he would send from Zagabria and Lubiana. When the beds at home were not enough, other Volunteers and adherents would help out».

Thoughtful and caring, even in the smallest things, attentive to the – she was a seamstress – Noemi was always available and ready to see to every necessity. In their house there was a place

also for her mother, who was ill and needed constant attention. She remained with them for seven years.

Through her life and from her sharing, one could see how the great love she had for children. Then her illness, living every moment of it with solemnity, with the wealth of a wisdom distilled through the years and together with it her ability to welcome every visit, every piece of news, like a child in front of something new, with joy, free and ready to let herself be surprised with an incredible freshness up to the end.

*Aurelia Nembrini*

## Lino Rinaldi



*«Share the love of God to the persons we meet*

At 28 years old, during a visit to Loppiano, Lino – Volunteer from the province of Modena (Italy) – discovered the immense love of God and, another big novelty for him, he decided to «transfer» the love of God which he felt, to all the people he would meet. From that moment on he lived in a new way his responsibility as the secretary of his political party and in his commitments in the parish. Together with others he founded a section of blood donors. After an accident at his workplace, he became the doorkeeper in a hospital, developing relationships with many people. He married Silvana who soon after began to experience health problems. Lino, took care of her for more than 30 years, sustained by the unity of his nucleo, together with the daily Mass which gave him the strength to carry the burden of his situation.

From November 2015 he was confined in the hospital several times and then eventually he went to a home for the elderly, experiencing alternating moments of sickness and health. He was always ready to do the will of God, and welcomed with a smile all those who came to visit him. Encouraged by his enthusiasm, after thirty years of being far from God, one of his relatives came back to the Sacraments. His last words, whispered before he totally lost consciousness «Hail Mary full of grace». He left for the heavenly Mariapolis on May 7 at the age of 76.

*Silvio Berti*

## Fr. Luigi Peressuti

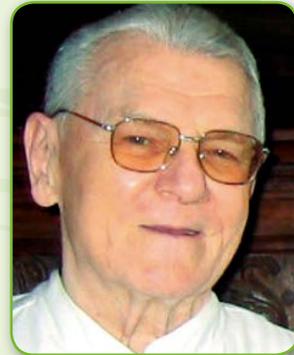
*Disciple of the Risen Lord*

Fr. Luigi, returned to the House of the Father on March 28 at the age of 92, he was a priest focolarino who exercised his ministry in various parishes in the Diocese of Udine (Italy) and for 30 years in two hospitals as chaplain. Chiara Lubich suggested as his Word of life: «The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve» (Mk 10,45).

In '62 – when the Movement was not yet approved – he was summoned by his Bishop who told him to stop his contact with the Movement. It was like a cold shower for him. He recollected himself for a moment and then replied: «I will not hesitate to say my “yes” immediately because I have always loved the Church; this is what the focolarini have always taught me, because a fundamental point of their teachings are the words of Jesus: “who listen to you, listens to Me”. But, for the glory of God, I cannot but express my sincere gratitude to Him for this new light that has been lit in the Church and which has made my priesthood more beautiful and full of». After a brief silence the Bishops said: «If such is the case, then continue what you have been doing so far».

During the funeral Mass, the present Archbishop of Udine, Mons. Andrea Bruno Mazzocato, said among other things: «His simplicity and goodness were the fruit of a profound and faithful spiritual life, nourished daily by the Word of life. Conquered and transformed by the love of Jesus, Fr. Luigi made Him present and visible and he gave Him to his neighbours with his characteristic gentleness, serenity, respect for others, illuminated by a profound faith and filial love for the Church».

*Prepared by the Center of priest focolarini*





## Leopoldo (Poldo) Gallingani

*A complete Volunteer of God*

In a canteen where he used to go for lunch (the Card. Ferrari in Milan - Italy),

Poldo came to know that famous group of first focolarini (Piero Pasolini, Oreste Basso, Giorgio Battisti, etc.) who in the '50s invited Ginetta Calliari to share with them about the experience of the Gospel of the first focolare in Trent. Like all of them, Poldo was conquered, and with all of himself he launched himself in building the newly born Movement in Milan. The charism of unity revolutionized his way of life. His passion was to work in the world and to bring Christ to it and when in 1956, following the event in Hungary, the Volunteers of God were born, Poldo a «naturally» became one of them, giving a strong witness wherever he went.

In love with Mary, Poldo strived – like her – to give that Jesus to the people, that Jesus who, in time, became more and more his friend, brother, confidant and companion in the holy journey. He was on the front line when the refugees from Albania arrived in Milan to help them find jobs, or also in offering his service as a technician in the works being done in his parish. Following his example, many people were able to find their vocation in the Work of Mary. He made numerous trips to Rome to accompany many to their congresses and to some meetings in the Zone.

Poldo is that child of the Gospel who configured his entire life on the choice of God, always in joy, even if sometimes he met various trials, which he was able to overcome without complaining. When he was asked: «Poldo how are you?» he always answered: «Everything is fine!». A few days before his «departure» - on June 21 at 91 years old - he was visited by a Volunteer. Poldo removed the oxygen mask and pointing to the crucifix he said: «Jesus Forsaken!». His wife Santina confirmed: «... he is ready and we are too!».

*Paolo Mottironi*

## José Ribamar Freire Martins (Baixinho)

*A peace maker, a man of God*

Volunteer of God, pillar of the Movement in the small zone of Piauí and Maranhão (Brazil), Baixinho left this world on March 17 at the age of 67. His encounter with the Movement changed him literally and his life became a constant giving to God and to the neighbour. After five years of separation, he returned to live with his wife Maria de Fátima and married her in church, choosing as the community of «Magnificat», a social project of the Focolare, as the venue of this celebration. Together with an adherent, he transmitted the Word of life through the city radio station; he joined the Liturgical Commission of the parish



as a representative of the Movement; because of his precision and transparency he became the treasurer of the Rural Labour Union. Town Council secretary, he became well-known in the city (Itapecuru-Mirim/MA), a passionate follower of the world of sports, Baixinho is a peace-maker in situations of conflict. He asks for and obtains Providence for the poor, for the projects of «Magnificat» and «Amazonia» and for the formation of the youth. Often he would offer the use of his car for the Movement even with a driver.

He was a passionate advocate of *Cidade Nova* (every year he was able to obtain 20 renewals and new subscribers), thanks to him many people came to know the Movement, among whom was Anderson, his adopted son who died at 19 years old of cancer. Many young people were edified at how Baixinho lived his illness and the death of his son. Last March, aside from his ongoing cardiac problem which was nevertheless under control, he contracted a virus which became incurable. And so he flew to heaven. During the mass on the seventh day, everyone spoke of him as a man of God.

*Francisco Lima*



## Iole Balbo

*«The Holy Spirit will come to aid us in our weakness» (Rom. 8,26)*

Volunteer of Padua (Italy) Iole met the Movement through her daughter who was a gen, which made her discover and put into practice an unexpected ability she had to «give» and to «give herself», also through the window of the Post Office where she worked. The mutual understanding with her husband Arduini became more profound. With her three children she understood that she had to keep the door of her heart always open, having learned how to «make one» out of love.

She supported the project of the Economy of Communion since its birth becoming a shareholder of the Lionello Industrial Park of Loppiano. A representative of the parents in the school of her children, she brought ideas and proposals that later became a part of New Humanity, involving also the gen and adherents in her city. In her apartment building, she worked to bring solace to the elderly and support families in need. She set-up booths to promote and spread *Città Nuova* and to collect funds to sponsor subscriptions for prison inmates and missionaries. Through the telling of parables she let her grandchildren know about Jesus. Her advancing age and the precariousness of her health do not stop her great ability to proclaim and until she could still manage, she attended daily mass and her nucleo meeting. On April 30 at the age of 85, Iole left for Heaven.

*Paola Rita Soccol*

Su [www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli](http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli) i telegrammi completi di Emmaus e i profili dei seguenti mariapoliti celesti che per motivi di spazio non sono su questo numero: Rinaldo Levaggi, Bruna Pillon Turco, Anzaldi Concetta, Najat Jaoudè Abou, Bruna Bridda Corsino, d. Laurent Perotto, d. Policarpo Delgado Perdomo, d. Firmino Ferro, Maria Segato, Antonio Rotteglia, Anna Marfella Cartasegna, Alba Lippi Penna, d. Marino Gambaletta.

## Frantisek Fedor (Ferko)

*A man always at the service of others*



Ferko's life, as a Volunteer of God of Stara Lubovna (Slovakia), was humanly difficult, but spiritually very rich. He, who valued the unity of the family a lot, was passing through a serious difficulty in their relationship and in spite of the help of his friend who was also a Volunteer, his wife wanted a divorce. It seemed as if everything crumbled, but in the meantime Ferko began to attend the meetings of the Movement and while he was preparing to become a Volunteer, he would often bring with his two children also to prepare them secretly to receive the sacraments for Christian initiation. After an intense period of prayer shared also by his companions of the nucleo, Ferko was allowed to go back to live with his family. Everyone was happy.

An entrepreneur, gifted with intelligent humourism, he gave his high quality service at more affordable prices, placing his trust in the Providence of God and he never wanted to enrich himself at all cost. Before going to work every day he participated in the Mass so as to be able to be strengthened by Jesus in the Eucharist. Active in the parish, he was a peace maker in his nucleo.

On September . due to an unexplained incident at sea during a vacation in Croatia, at 52 years old Ferko suddenly left for the heavenly Mariapolis. During his funeral, it was said that there was never such an influx of people. There were many priests present, bearing witness to person who was always at the service of others without expecting anything in return, a person capable of staying beneath the cross, a man who knew how to ask and obtain everything from the Father.

*Pino Tasca*

## Our relatives

The following passed on to the Next life: **Inge, mother, and Fritz, father of Mechtild (Jemi) Grosse-Venhaus**, focolarina in Oslo; **Francesco, brother of Valerio (Lode) Cipri**, focolarino of Gen Rosso; **Michel, father of Alex Garel**, focolarino at the Roman Mariapolis; **Filippo, brother of Micaela Ottonello**, focolarina in Genoa; **Jozefa, mother of Anna (Ania) Skupien**, focolarina in Poznan (Poland); **the mother of Romany Botros**, focolarino in Beirut; **Herbert, father of Sabine Krammel** and **Giorgio, brother of Valeria Antonielli**, focolarine at the Roman Mariapolis; **Odette, mother of Geneviève Cardou**, focolarina in Marseilles (France); **Antonio, father of Barbara Passalacqua**, focolarina in Trent

## Ways to sanctity



### María Cecilia Perrín

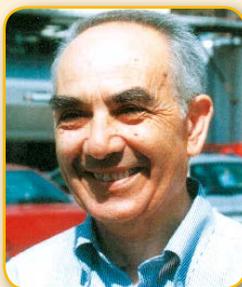
Punta Alta  
(Argentina),  
1957-1985

On October 20, the Diocesan phase of the cause for beatification of

the Servant of God María Cecilia Perrín in Buide, a member of The Focolare Movement, was held. While she was pregnant she was diagnosed with cancer, but she refused treatment convinced of the highest value of the new life that she was carrying. Ceceilia died at 28 years old, a few months after the birth of her daughter Augustina. Her body rests in the cemetery of the Mariapolis Lia, but her fame of sanctity continues to spread because of the heroism of her faith in God and the example of her Christian life. Numerous graces have been attributed to her intercession.

### Domenico Mangano

Viterbo (Italia),  
1938-2001



On October 29, in the presence of Fr. Andrea De Matteis, vicar of the Bishop and chancellor of the Diocese of Albano, the constitutive act with which the men Volunteers of the Work of Mary assume the responsibility of being the promoters of the process of canonization of Domenico Mangano, so that humanity and the Church will recognize in his journey, a true path of Christian perfection, was signed.

Domenico left behind a record of an exemplary Christian life. Extremely active, not only among the «Volunteers of God» of the Focolare Movement, but also in the Unitalsi, in the labour union, in prisons, in politics. He always lived immersed in the social realities with his soul «imbued» with the divine. The fame of his integrity grows and spreads..

## Words of life 2017

**January** | «For the love of Christ impels us» (cf 2 Cor 5,14).

**February** | «I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you» (Ez 36,26).

**March** | «Be reconciled to God» (2 Cor 5,20).

**April** | «Stay with us, for it is nearly evening» (Lk 24,29).

**May** | «And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age» (Mt 28,20).

**June** | «As the Father has sent me, so I send you» (Jn 20,21).

**July** | «Come to me, all you who are labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest» (Mt 11,28).

**August** | «The Lord is good to all, compassionate towards all your works» [Psalms 144 (145),9].

**September** | «Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me» (Mt 16,24).

**October** | «Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus» (Phil 2,5).

**November** | «The greatest among you must be your servant» (Mt 23,11).

**December** | «Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word» (Lk 1,38).

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