

MARIA POLIS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

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In Syria
**The precious
art of
starting again**

New set-up
A network of the
EoC in Eastern
Europe

Objective
Zero Hunger
The new generations
in the frontlines

The most powerful social revolution



Rome 20 march, 1983. Chiara Lubich at the PalaEUR

[...] **Vivere secondo la Buona Novella**, scatenare nel mondo la rivoluzione evangelica è sinonimo di scatenare anche la più potente rivoluzione sociale.

Ci sono oggi dislivelli sociali nel mondo? Ci sono ancora, su due fronti, i ricchi e i poveri?

14 March, 2018. 10° death anniversary of Chiara Lubich, dedicated to the actions of her charisma as the motor for social change

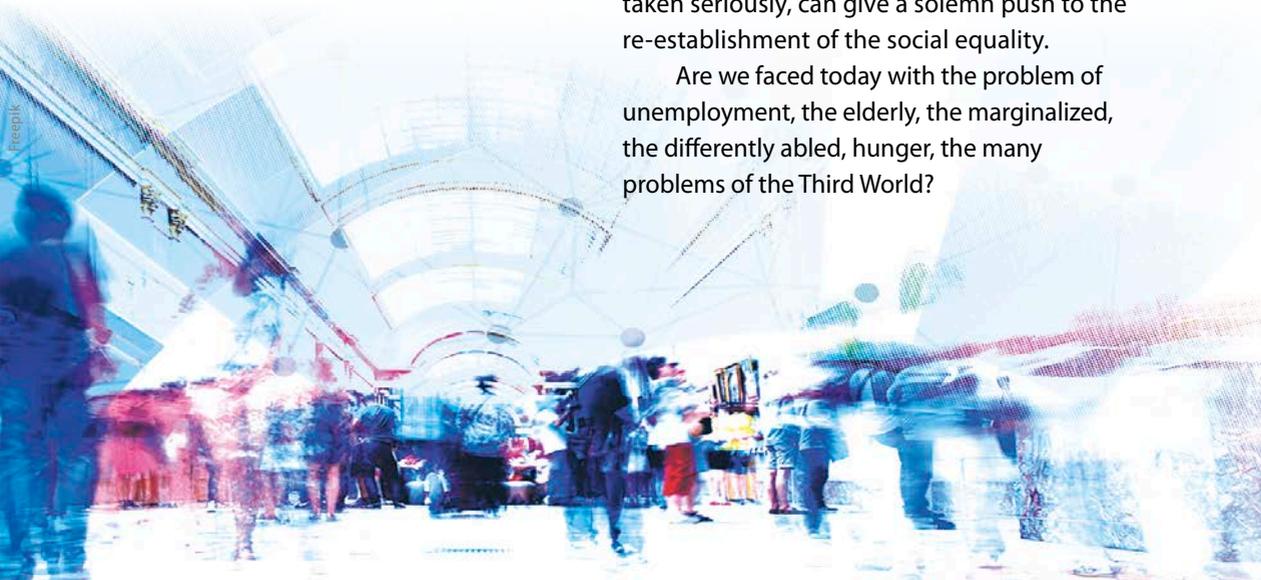
[...] To live according to the Good News, to unleash the evangelical revolution on the world is synonymous to unleashing also the most powerful social revolution.

Are there social inequalities in the world today? Are there still the rich and the poor on opposite sides?

We believe, like Mary – and we have seen this happen in many places on our planet through the grace of God – that the law of the Gospel lived can truly enrich with goods all those who are hungry and «send away the rich empty-handed» (Lk 1,53).

We are witnesses of how the beatitude of poverty (cf Lk 6,20) and the threat of the «woe to you, rich people» of Jesus (Lk 6,24), when taken seriously, can give a solemn push to the re-establishment of the social equality.

Are we faced today with the problem of unemployment, the elderly, the marginalized, the differently abled, hunger, the many problems of the Third World?



Doesn't the entire history of Christianity warn us that the pages of the Gospel regarding the final exam of every Christian: «I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...» (Mt 25,35 ss) has offered extraordinary solutions?

Haven't we also experienced ourselves that, when put into action, with a daily commitment, according to the needs of the times and with the methods suitable to our times, they can resolve many of these problems?

And the «give», which the Gospel demands («Give and you shall be given») and which assures the promise of «a full measure, pressed down and overflowing» (cf Lk 6,38), that our Movement has experienced many times, is also a concrete attitude that can comfort whoever is destitute, hungry, lonely, in need of everything?

It is a daily experience then that when one «asks», as the Gospel teaches us, one receives (cf Lk 11,10); that «the rest» (and this can also mean for someone: health, for others: a job, and still for others: a house, or a child, or whatever he or she needs) comes in addition (cf Mt 6,33).

[...] Man, in building the terrestrial city, can right now build something that will not pass away, because he can contribute with his labours, with his work to the «new Heavens», to the «new earth» (2Pt 3,13), that await him. Christ has in fact, redeemed human activity also with the cosmos, rather: he has redeemed also the work of man.

The universe will not be destroyed but transfigured. There will be no break between here and there but a continuation. Even the good fruits of nature and our industriousness (what we build day after day) will not disappear but rather we will find them new pruned, illuminated and transfigured¹.

It is an exhilarating truth; a consoling and sublime vision of man's vocation called

1 Cf *Gaudium et Spes* 29

2 Cf *Gaudium et Spes* 38

«A surprise» Pope Francis will be going to Loppiano

As we are closing this issue, we received the news about the visit of Pope Francis to the little city of Loppiano on May 10, 2018. «The announcement elicited surprise and a profound joy within me», Emmaus Maria Voce spontaneously commented: «It is a great honour for the Focolare Movement to welcome a Pope among us, in one of our little towns. But above all it is a push for us to live love and unity rooted in the Gospel. It is this whiff of the Gospel lived that we hope Pope Francis will find when he arrives in Loppiano».

Up-to-date news and the video with the announcement of Emmaus to the communities of the Focolare can be found in: www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli

to transform the earth through his own work. But there is a condition so that all this will happen. The works of man will remain, if they have been built in the world according to the commandment of love².

Now who will guarantee that our labours were done in this way, who will tell us that we are truly building on the rock of love, assuring us that all that we are doing will not perish? It will be Jesus in our midst. Jesus in the midst, who will exalt every small or big society, who will make it come to life, make it at the same time, a cell of the terrestrial city and a cell of the celestial city. [...]

Chiara Lubich

From the message during the Meeting of the New Humanity Movement, Rome PalaEUR, 20 March, 1983
(Archives Chiara Lubich)



14 march 2008 – 2018

Ten years after the departure of Chiara Lubich for Heaven

An important anniversary, focused on the social renewal that the charism of Chiara brings about. Celebrated not only on March 14, but during the year in a variety of ways in which each community of the Movement would like to express itself.

A year to relive and to highlight – a small «*magnificat*» to the generativity of her charism – the social action of Chiara and the countless experiences of how, in following her footsteps, one can interact within one's own environment and bring about change.

At the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo an event will be held on March 3, entitled: *The great attraction of the present time*. With this, through the reflection on the numerous life experiences that will be presented, an attempt will be made to give an answer to humanity today which now more than ever yearns for equity, social justice, peace, hope.

Those who will present this particular face of the Movement are the different non-profit organizations that have started in various parts of the world, but also individuals, who, thanks to the social dimension of the

charism of Chiara, have become agents of transformation. It will draw from the cultural heritage of the Movement, but above all from the figure of Chiara, who, since the early times, bent down towards the wounds of humanity and who, with passion and creativity was able to convince entrepreneurs, youth, families and ordinary people, to give life to a world-wide network of social actions. Real and true construction sites of development, support and welcome that, in the reciprocity with its beneficiaries, work towards the human and social promotion of the most disadvantaged. Small steps towards the realization of the prophecy of Jesus: «that all may be one».

prepared by Anna Friso

The event of March 3 will be transmitted via *streaming* from 16.00 to 19.00 (italian time) in english, spanish, french and portuguese, aside from italian. The material (photos and texts of Chiara, videos) will be made available in a special blog !
As soon as it is ready you will find the instructions on how to access it in Mariapolionline
www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli

Moviments in the Church

Charism and Institution

A study-Day held in Rome dedicated to the relationship among the hierarchical gifts and charismatic gifts for the life of the Church

The theme of the relationship among charisms, gifts of the Spirit, and Institutional forms is at the center of the Day programme organized by the Sophia University Institute – *Evangelii Gaudium* Center– under the patronage of the Italian Canonistic Association. The event was held in the Main Hall of the Palace of the Chancery in Rome, generating much interest as evidenced by the strong response to the invitations sent.

Maria Voce gave a talk, as the representative of the organizers: Focolare Movement, New Horizons, Family of Hope, Shalom Catholic Community, Emmanuel Community, and Pope John XXIII Community. «The gifts that God has given to our Movements and ecclesial Communities – she underlined in her opening remarks – are such, inasmuch as they are recognized by the Church, in the Church, for the Church and they pour out their perfume in service to her».

«Just as in a parish there are many families, each one with its particular characteristic and home, and on Sunday they all go to church, we can also say that every Movement lives in its own reality but then it goes out and meets with the others in the Church» – this was how card. **Francesco**



Rome, 18 January, 2018. Maria Voce greets card. Kevin J. Farrell

Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council of Legislative Texts, moderator of the first session, imagined the multiplicity of the Movements that converge in the Church.

The interventions

The topic was presented in the light of the document of the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* of May 2016. Card. **Kevin Joseph Farrell**, president of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, highlighted the co-essentiality of the hierarchical gifts and the charismatic gifts: «The presence of the institution guarantees that the Gospel proclamation will never be lacking, while the presence of the charisms guarantees that those who will receive it



with an open heart will never be lacking» – indicating great horizons for the Movements in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

«It is still an open question – noted **Piero Coda**, theologian, dean of the Sophia University Institute – regarding the nature of the ecclesial Movements, which on the strength of their founding charism, they demand not only a



Piero Coda, dean of the SU

new juridical form of association, but also some distinctions of a juridical nature that are appropriate, so as to be able to better support the wealth and charismatic specificity of each one». The Movements, he con-

tinued, «are halfway across a third phase, in which the charismatic effervescence is committed to finding the right channels for a balanced institutionalization [...] with the aim of better expressing one's own specific contribution».

Mons. **Christian Hegge**, auxiliary bishop of Münster (Germany), observed that «in the Church there is a need to create "venues" where synodality is lived according to the model of the ecclesial Movements, with a style that is spiritual-comunal made up of reciprocal listening among the sacred ministers and the baptized Christians». But is it necessary «to integrate it also in the ecclesiastical laws, in Canon Law. Being synodal is not only a law but a life».

Mons. **Luis Navarro**, professor of Canon Law and rector of the Holy Cross Pontifical University, presented his intervention which consisted in emphasizing that law does not force or limit a charism, but its function is that of conforming itself



to what the charism expresses and to highlight this. «There is no unitarian juridical solution that will satisfy all the charismatic Movements. There must be a comparison and come face to face with the reality of each individual Movement. We must sew a tailor-made garment». Nevertheless, some elements «are non-negotiable, because whenever they are not respected many serious problems arise».

Fr. **Gianfranco Ghirlanda** talked about the quality of the governing responsibility of the «lay moderators». «Based on history and doctrine we cannot rule out that the responsibility and power of the moderators of ecclesial Movements are, at its roots, of the same nature as those of Bishops and clerics, which are clearly limited to the offices of the Movement». An affirmation which, for example, regards realities which by their statutes are guided by laity, and which also include many presbyters among its members. In a discussion among canonists coordinated by atty. **Carlo Fusco**, they studied specific open-ended technical questions.

The meeting – Maria Voce declared in an interview at the conclusion of the event – was the occasion for «a greater openness, a realization of the value of these Movements for a journey not only experiential in nature but also of legislation and of clarifications of what a charism can do in the Church».

prepared by the editorial board

Focolarine and focolarini

The focolare «house of Mary»

The varied and colourful annual retreats

From november to february, the focolares agreed to meet – as Big Zones, by nations or groups of nations or, simply, among the zonette that were more or less close to one another geographically – to have their annual spiritual exercises together. These were held in the most diverse places: Amman (Jordan), Lima (Perù), Dresden (Germany), Melbourne (Australia), Lahore (Pakistan), Kotobi (Ivory Coast), Marienkroon (Netherlands), just to cite some of them. And in the most varied compositions: separate, together focolarine and focolarini, or also, as what happened in Quito (Ecuador), with the participation of the apostolic nuncio, mons. Andres Carrascosa, «focolarino» in the midst of the everyone. A variety of styles but just one aim: to deepen the union with God by immersing oneself in the theme of the year, rediscovering the focolare as the «house of Mary» made up of her daughters and sons who like her want to let Jesus be born and reborn in the world.

The common characteristic was a lively and fruitful communion where each



one made the experience of sharing everything in reciprocity, to feel encouraged to live the Word more intensely following the example of Mary.

The final intention expressed by the focolarine of East Africa gathered at the Mariapolis Piero was emblematic: «We want to relive Mary and to have, like her, a heart of flesh».

The most numerous (1,800 total participation) were the two retreats held in Castel Gandolfo with a big presence from the continents outside Europe, and wherein Emmaus Voce and Jesús Morán participated respectively in the entire programme with the members of their focolare. In both retreats it was the President and the Co-president who shared in the communion (see box). Agnes van Zeeland and Flávio Roveré, shared about

| Kotobi (Ivory Coast)





Castel Gandolfo

the focolare centers they visited during the year, citing some life experiences, often heroic in nature. In Asia, a land of great cultural, climactic and religious diversity, the two persons responsible of the Sections saw the decisive contribution that they give to the realization of «That all may be One». The experience in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) was a typical example, where a men's focolare center was recently opened, surrounded by a flourishing community especially of young people. Since the house still lacked many necessities, Flavio thought of leaving an amount of money for a microwave oven which made the focolarini very happy since it would make the preparation of their meals quicker. But then they had second thoughts: they preferred to use the money to buy a photocopier to be able to reproduce the *Word of life* and formation material for the community.

Each retreat was «built with the contribution of everyone and lived as a body – wrote the focolarine of the Msoamerican

Zone gathered at the Little town El Diamante in Mexico – with a programme that helped us to learn from Mary how to live as focolarine. In this context, the video of Jesús on «Creative faithfulness» was a strong invitation to be consistent, a call to purity, to individual sanctity and to the sanctity of our focolares». In Lahore, in Pakistan, the retreat of the men and women focolarini was unforgettable because of the departure

for Heaven of Margaret (see p. 37). The retreat concluded in the darkness of the evening, lit up by the candles that illuminated the carpet of rose petals that covered her tomb.

The 480 focolarini and focolarine and the married focolarini of the DACH zone met at the Boulevard-Theater, the former center of formation of the socialist party (SED) of East Germany, in Dresden, a city whose population is still largely made up of people without any religious convictions and with a strong Lutheran presence. This «reminded us of the specific aim of the Movement» – they wrote.

From Lima in Perù, the focolarine of the Andine Zone said: «It was a moment to know each other in God, which highlighted the «golden thread» of our personal stories and that of our peoples. The theme on discernment was very interesting and how our Andine peoples live this, which helped us to understand certain signs of impending crisis and how to overcome them. During the Mass of the vows and promises,

Dresden (Germany)



The indispensable «incarnation»

The interventions of Emmaus and Jesús during the retreats in Castel Gandolfo recapture and develop, in different tonalities, the lively communion during those days



Emmaus: «We must aim at “That all may be One”, at universal brotherhood, but it is useless to think that we will be able to achieve it if we truly do not love one another in the focolare, if we are not able to forgive each other, to listen to each other, to accept one another profoundly, to understand the differences. [...] We must discover the gift that there is in each one. Then the focolare will become a powerful torch, that burning flame that attracts. To be “going out” means to be a burning flame. So, when we go to the communities, or to the gen3, etc. we continue to burn and we also burn the others».

Jesús: «In the last pages of *Paradise*, that were written in the '50s, Chiara makes a comparison between the experience of *Paradise* and the Work of Mary and says that the first profile of the incarnation is precisely the focolare. Therefore it is the first thing that we must incarnate, which is the premise for all the forms of incarnation of the Movement [...]. The most particular experience, by intensity – because we live together 24 hours a day by vocation – is precisely the focolare, it is there where it must shine. Without this priority [...] there may be other types of incarnation but not ours, therefore we cannot be incisive, we cannot be of service to the Church and to society, if we disregard the unity of the focolare.

We make an experience of God through our humanity, and so it is logical that all the dimensions of love must be included. For example, let's take the communion of goods: we cannot not do it, because the relationship with material things is part of our humanity. Then relationships. Then there is also our prayer life, which is something physical: silence, kneeling and there finding the foundation. The Blue speaks to us of our house and all the social dimensions of every colour. We cannot make an experience of God without taking care of the Blue because it would be like removing a dimension of our humanity. Then there is health and sickness: these too are part of our humanity. Studies: if we don't study, if we don't go in-depth we do not develop a part of our humanity, therefore we impoverish our experience of God. Then communication. And so it means all the life of the colours».

Emmaus: «When one has been in a focolare even for just two days, and he or she has made this experience, they become another person. And when one goes out, even if he or she is alone, they bring this experience of communion also to the others. The others feel that we have an experience that coincides with the demands of humanity. And so we become multipliers, we become like magnets which attract others to this life. If we are able to live like Mary, [...] we will let her, who is in us, act; we will let her be the one to tell us: step aside and let me take over, I am the mother of Jesus, and therefore also the mother of Jesus in the midst. I am the one who can help you to generate Him in the focolare, I can show you how to present Him to the world».

the apostolic nuncio, Mons. Girasoli underlined our “ought to be” which is Mary in the Church and for humanity».

«We too, in sharing our experiences with each other – continued the focolarini who were also gathered in Lima – we kept in mind the three “F”: *Frase, Fatto, Frutto*, (Phrase, Fact, Fruit) so as to easily grasp the essence of the experience itself: to mention the “phrase” from the Scriptures that one tried to live, to share the “fact” wherein one tried to apply this phrase and then to highlight the “fruit” that emerged».

Thanks to this small common format, there was a myriad of simple yet extraordinary stories shared in the various retreats



In Amman in Jordan they were 135 coming from various Countries in the Middle East.

all over the world. Experiences ranged from an Italian focolarina who accepted to teach in a prison so as to live «going out», which led to motivating many prisoners to change their life; to the news of a serious illness of a focolarino from the USA that mobilized the reciprocal love in the entire community; to the struggles of a mother to reconcile work and family that led her to discover the infinite occasions to love in the midst of her intense daily routine.

The experiences on the New Set-up were also significant. «In Panama – Beto, mar-

ried focolarino shared – only the focolarine are present, theirs is a focolare whose door is always open: the house of Mary. It is there that the intern members also the men, find support and strength; it is there where the joys and sufferings of the gen, the families and also of us married focolarini are shared». «For several years now, also in Panama – a focolarino from Costa Rica continued – we focolarini have a temporary focolare and during that period the focolarine leave their house for us. Every Tuesday we link-up with the married focolarini for our focolare meeting, a method which is in harmony with the changes that the life of the Movement asks of us today». In Birmingham, the most

multi-cultural city in Great Britain, with a high percentage of youth, there is now a focolare which opens for a few days each month made up of three focolarine who belong to three different focolare centers of the zonetta. «We tried to think “outside the box” – one of them shared. In 2015, the Catholic Archbishop offered a house, happy

to have us even for just a few days each month, simply to share our love for God with the people we meet. This coincided with the coming of the Gen Verde that involved Christian, Muslim, Hindù and Sikh teens, that led to many new contacts. Since then many roads have unexpectedly opened up. It seemed as if we were living “in the early times”, continuing to experience the power of the charism. Even if we are in Birmingham only for a short while, it is surprising to see the big number of people who come to the focolare and to see their joy after our meetings».

prepared by the editorial board

Syria

Those who stayed out of love

In Syria the situation after five years of harsh conflict remains heavy and uncertain also for the community of the Focolare Movement. We spoke about this with Robert Chelhod, Syrian focolarino, from Aleppo



Robert Chelhod, in the middle, with the focolarini ad Aleppo

The Movement is present in Syria since the '70s – Robert explained – and, just as in the entire Middle East, it is based largely on personal relationships. Among the people there is a family life that circulates and which links everyone; the contact with the populace is very direct and immediate. The men's focolare, opened in Aleppo in 1990, and the women's focolare which came a few years later, have always been at the center of the community. The social life among everyone is very much alive and the relationships that are created are very strong. This was emphasized especially during the war. All the activities that used to be localized in various parts of the city, in the parishes or in schools, continued but in the focolare which was considered as the safest place. This was true also in Damascus where the women's focolare transferred.

For the people, extremely exhausted, desperate and without any hope for the future the focolare is like an oasis of peace. We tried and continue to try all the ways to welcome them, listen to them and be with them. During the battles we could not do anything else. We tried to accompany each one morally, spiritually but also financially. Through the AMU we were able to support some projects to help families survive and to encourage them to remain inspite of everything. This was also the line of action of the Church: to do everything possible so that the Christians remain in their land. Many chose to leave, especially when bombs destroyed their homes and the children were traumatized, or because their young children would have been forced to take up arms.





What is your relationship with the local Church?

A relationship has always existed between the Focolare Movement and the Bishops. In Aleppo there are six Catholic Bishops of different oriental rites. With the other Movements present in the Country we have organized a day meeting after Pentecost '98. All of them, just like us, try to do something. With the local Caritas, we have fully im-

mersed ourselves in working with them.

The majority of the zones that have been destroyed were occupied by Muslims; they have fled to the Christian neighbourhoods where there were no battles and the Christians helped them. The Bishops said that many Muslims say: «We understood who you Christians are by your love». The Church and her charitable institutions help everyone without regard of their religious beliefs.

Unfortunately there are also prejudices: when terrorists are mentioned one immediately thinks of Muslims, but we know that they are not real Muslims. There have been persecutions when the ISIS occupied some Christian villages and the churches were burned, the inhabitants sent away, fleeing to Aleppo or Damascus. In those zones there are no longer any Christians left.

But the problem of the Christian exodus does not depend on their fear of Muslims, but on the lack of work, the uncertainty of the future and on the results of the war.

What can we do concretely?

The first help is certainly to pray for peace. And then to be well informed, not depending only on what the mass media presents, which at times are superficial. There is no longer the impending threat of armed conflict, but now there is all the work of rebuilding after a war to be done that is awaiting. This means to provide education

The Christians are in a particularly difficult situation. How is the Movement living these trials?

The persons of the Movement in Syria are mostly Christians. There are families who have decided to remain, for example a married couple of Volunteers, who before the war had established a school for children who are deaf and mute. They understood, through prayer, that God was asking them to remain because otherwise those children would not receive the necessary support. They themselves have four children. It is not easy to make such a heroic decision.

In Syria, just like in other Countries in the Middle East, there have been Christians since the time of Jesus, and therefore there is a strong sense of belonging and it is heart-breaking to leave. Among the members of the Movement, those who have chosen to stay or to leave have made their decision according to their conscience and in all freedom. A young couple recently decided to leave for Sweden to ensure that their children can have a future. They were the gen4 assistants. For us it means to live for the community without having any sense of security, always ready to start again from zero.

Over and beyond the big or small number of Christians present, we want to remain for Syria, for all its people, Muslim and Christians alike.

to peace, to dialogue and human formation. There is also the work of moral and psychological accompaniment for those who have experienced traumas. There is so much material needs that have to be addressed: those who used to earn 600 dollars, but now because of the devaluation of our currency, now earn just 60, while the cost of living has increased ten times. The majority of the people are not able to support themselves and are asking for help from Muslim, Christian institutions, from the Churches, from the Movements. On our part, also thanks to AMU, we are at present supporting 300 families annually, which means around 1,500 people. We help them to pay for heating, and the acquisition of food stuff or to provide for their medical or educational expenses. For the children, there is the support at a distance project, that has already been in action even before the war, taking care of some Syrian families. With the economic crisis, this assistance was no longer continued, so now we are starting a collaboration with AFN. We must therefore thank everyone outside Syria who sent their concrete love.

Then there is the aspect of rebuilding. A city like Aleppo, or Homs in the center of Syria, are half destroyed.

How do you continue the life of the community of the Movement?

The life of the Work of Mary has never stopped. Even if many intern members have already left, others have come thanks to a new awareness. For some years now we have not been able to hold a Mariapolis because it was too dangerous to meet, but in 2016 we have started again to hold this event and 145 people were present. For next summer we foresee the participation of around 300 people.

prepared by Gianna Sibelli

Aleppo. Preparing Christmas gifts for those in need

AMU Projects in Syria

www.amu-it.eu

- Support for families in Damascus, Homs, Kafarbo and in Aleppo. 195 families directly assisted / around 780 indirect beneficiaries
- Educational support: 2 centers in Damascus and Homs. 170 children assisted / 26 jobs / 785 indirect beneficiaries.
- Support for the chronically ill in Homs and Kafarbo. 60 cases directly assisted / 240 indirect beneficiaries
- Professional training: arts and crafts course in Aleppo for refugee families. 20 teens in formation / 11 new job positions created / 132 indirect beneficiaries
- EHS School of Aleppo: support in the management and the activities of the school for deaf-mute children. 47 children / 19 jobs / 264 indirect beneficiaries

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FOR Progetti Siria



Palermo

Memory and relevance today of a pledge

The county seat of Sicily celebrated the anniversary of the awarding of honorary citizenship of Palermo to Chiara Lubich, on the 20th of January 1998

The ceremony for the 20° anniversary of the awarding of honorary citizenship to Chiara Lubich was held in the same historical hall of the town Council in the Palace of the Eagles. Mayor Leoluca Orlando (who was the one who conferred the award in 1998, now on his fifth mandate) underlined that it is not just a remembrance of a past event, but it is to recall a pledge that was strengthened in time and lived in the present. Chiara expressed it like a prophecy: «Palermo is a land with an extraordinary design, a project that unfolds and is revealed in the course of its millenary history», she hoped that «because of the audacity and the courage of its citizens, (Palermo) can become a model for many cities of Italy and outside as a true “city on a hilltop”».

The archbishop of Palermo, Corrado Lorefica, in his message underlined «the profound harmony between the city of Palermo and the values contained in the Charism of Chiara» and he hoped that «the step taken today will be a further encouragement to go towards the goal prophetically indicated by her».

Emmaus in her letter invited everyone to reflect on the fruits of that programme: «I encourage you to share the many fragments of fraternity which, in consonance with your roots and with the pledge and commitment of many, have been strengthened and reinforced during these years».



Palermo, 20 January, 2018. Mayor Leoluca Orlando (on the left) with people of the Focolare Movement

Domenico De Luca, Volunteer, outlined the life of the members of the Focolare Movement in this way: «Following the style of Jesus – humility and detachment – and having Jesus Forsaken as the only point of reference, they immerse themselves in the social fabric, sharing the life of everyone. They help one another and listen to each other’s worries, they collaborate in times of need, they commit themselves to building a new world, side by side with the others». In this way, spaces were opened up where the «culture of giving», the «culture of unity» flourished, bringing with it the consequent commitment in different ambits. These include the collaboration in the Center for Assistance to Life of the Institution «Cradle of Life» that works for the defense of the unborn; collaboration with the volunteers of AvULSS in presenting

formation courses on voluntary service and in assuring the presence of volunteers in the hospitals in the city; the meeting of doctors to organize a common action in the field of social medicine; the support given to some families and teens in the neighbourhood of Ballarò. Aside from these, there have also been meetings for the world of art, with subsequent shows for charitable purposes. In the field of education and schools, the coordination among teachers has given rise to numerous projects such as: the prevention of school drop-outs, courses on interculturality or other formative experiences. The Movement has been involved also in ecumenical and interreligious Dialogue. And many other things.

Palermo, designated as the Italian capital of culture 2018, would like to present itself to the Nation and to the world not only by showcasing its scientific, historical and artistic profile but above all by showcasing its culture of values, among which welcoming, acceptance and unity stand out. In the well articulated speech of Mayor Orlando, what emerged was precisely the welcome and acceptance that the city is giving through their notable efforts towards the numerous migrants and refugees that continue to disembark in the Sicilian ports. A welcome that is closely linked to the practice of universal fraternity (refer to the «charter of Palermo 2015» regarding the international human mobility).

For this reason the City Council of Palermo has decided to join the Association «Cities of fraternity», inspired by the charisma of unity of Chiara Lubich. The ceremony on January 20 was also the occasion to highlight this membership and the commitment made by the entire City Council of Palermo.



The following personalities came on purpose to openly honour this new member: Pasquale Boccia, mayor of Rocca di Papa, founder of the Association, and Stefano Cardinali, mayor of Montecosaro (Macerata), member of the executive council of said Association. They spoke of its diffusion in numerous Italian cities and of a promising expansion in some cities abroad.

They were intense moments concluded with the presentation by Cristiana Formosa and Franco Monaco, persons responsible of the Focolare Movement in Palermo, of a series of events that the Movement is organizing for this coming May, with the aim of sharing the culture of dialogue, of unity and peace which are in line with the celebration of «Palermo city of culture 2018».

In the evening there was the theatrical presentation taken from the book *Vento di scirocco a Palermo* (Sirocco wind in Palermo), by Roberto Mazzarella, journalist and writer of Palermo, who was working in the field of legality and active citizenry, who died unexpectedly. His work makes us relive the travails of a city that is committed to the redemption of its own values.

Rosi Bertolassi



With the young consecrated In the light of the *Via Mariae*

From december 27 to 30, 2017 Loppiano welcomed a meeting for spiritual formation of 39 young men and women from 10 different Congregations, religious Institutes, Associations. 14 nationalities were present

«Mary: in her design is mine, ours», this was the title of the meeting. Among the participants, some have had the chance to attend meetings of the Focolare Movement, while others were meeting it for the first time. «I too, like all of you, would like to be a person who builds uni-

ty. I met the Movement just by chance and I immediately asked myself: "Who are these people? Why do they love precisely me?"... I wanted to know more about them..." – said Maria Annunziata from Nigeria.

Very few knew about Loppiano and all its varied realities. They were curious and attracted. Through the experiences shared by the inhabitants of the permanent mariapolis, the dialogue with the gen boys and girls, the gens (through *skype*), the Mass held at the Theotókos and dinner in the different focolares, they were able to enter into the various realities and in the life of communion that builds relationships. Among the themes tackled, all of them profound and supported by incisive experiences, was that on «Mary» which was developed in three points: «Mary Church», the «*Via Mariae*» (Way of Mary) and «Mary in Paradise '49». The *Via Mariae* further illuminated the journey of those who are already living the spirituality of communion, but it was above all a source of answers to the ques-



tions that each one asked in front of the small and big difficulties throughout one's journey. «Contemplating Mary, totally the Word lived, brought me back to the origins of my vocation which started when I began to live the Word of life. [...] To know the *Via Mariae*, specially Mary who lost Jesus, made me understand that the dark moments must come and they serve to reinforce and strengthen my vocation and to be able to experience a new union with God. [...] In the charism of unity I saw the beauty of the charisms, many flowers in the flower bed of the Church, and I saw once again the beauty of my specific charism and of my founder». (OMI, Italy)

To understand that crises do not mean failure but are important steps in spiritual life, was for many a turning point to start the journey again with God and to strengthen one's own calling.

Aside from the interior dialogue with Jesus, they were also able to go in-depth in the encounter with Him in the brother, the

concrete way to share and to walk, in the enormous richness of being Church together. It was the best preparation for the Synod on the youth, which was concretized by the answers given to a questionnaire that will be handed over to the synodal Bishops.

The three texts of *Paradise '49* on Mary presented by Fr. Fabio Ciardi, was something completely new for many of those present, and was welcomed in an atmosphere of interior silence and contemplation.

A way for everyone

These are the stages of the *Via Mariae*:

- 1) **the annunciation**: God is incarnated in us after our «yes» to his call;
- 2) **the visit to Elizabeth**: to launch ourselves to love and share with others the discovery of the divine;
- 3) **the birth**: Jesus is born and grows in us, and among us;
- 4) **Simeon announces the cross**: to be aware of this and to prepare oneself;
- 5) **the light to Egypt**: to safeguard the new life born in us;
- 6) **the loss of Jesus**: it is the moment of trial, one has the impression of losing God, but have we chosen Him or his gifts?;
- 7) **the life in Nazareth**: an extraordinary coexistence, day-to-day and hidden life of Jesus, true God and true man;
- 8) **the public life**: to go out, incarnating our charisma;
- 9) **on Golgotha**: the passion of Mary and the triumph of her virtues, to be powerless, but to remain there, in silence and in hope;
- 10) **with the apostles in the Cenacle**: like Mary, to become spiritual mothers and fathers in the «feeling *cum Ecclesia*», to become experts of communion.

Novelty – Formation

A precious instrument



Four DVDs and two CDs with the relative texts, in six languages: italian, german, english, spanish, portuguese, chinese. This is what is contained in the «box set» of conversations of Chiara Lubich on «Mary», **which accompanies the formation of the communities of the Focolare**

Movement during this year. This material serves to deepen the point of the spirituality that is focused on this year, in the way that it was understood and conveyed by Chiara.

The «box set» may be ordered at: cscmedia.admin@focolare.org

«Like you I want to become a person who builds unity», «The reality of unity is a light in order to live in community. May Mary help us in this journey» – they said.

prepared by the centers of the consecrated women and men religious



Fruits of the New Set-up

An EoC network for Eastern Europe

The first steps of the new Zone of eastern Europe from the perspective of the Economy of Communion

Foto © Dominik Sepp x4

The latest to be constituted, the new «Violet» zone is facing the challenge of putting together 28 states with faraway roots, diverse in history, religion, language (25 different spoke languages), economy, etc. Forcibly kept together for seventy years by the communist ideology, it is now a great

just one Zone represented an unpredicable novelty and thus created a certain resistance. Time was needed to experience new dynamics and to encourage each other. The questions that arose during the waiting period – What will happen? How will it be? – were transformed into joy when the Zone finally took off¹.



Luigino Bruni

There was the surprise of starting something new together where in everyone could say: «Everything depends on me, not on the state, nor on the systems. It depends on me inasmuch as I am able to be in communion with the others. In this way

we will heal our wounds. Communism which was imposed on us no longer exists, even capitalism has failed, there is nothing left therefore but to try to live "communion" among us, among Countries linked by a "negative" past».

¹ See *Mariapoli* 6-7/2015

On this basis we asked ourselves what does our Zone expect from the EoC.

Initially we thought of proposing a meeting with around twenty people committed in the project so as to get to know each other and reflect together. But we felt that this was not enough. We had the possibility of building a new «home», a new Zone together, to open ourselves up to a more profound listening, to love one another simply as in a family wherein we take care of each other. The EoC has much to do in our Countries where those in need are as numerous as

challenge to erase those invisible barriers that inevitably exists among the various peoples, that are rooted in historical wounds and prejudices. The unity among these countries was just an ideological label.

So it is not surprising that the project to form



the entrepreneurial potentialities that can be awakened; we need to launch ourselves with courage and reciprocal trust in finding the right paths, where there are many young people who want to commit themselves for change.

We contacted all the commissions in the places where the EoC had taken root. Some since 1991 and which are still active today, others which have died in the meantime due to the wounds and misunderstandings that they experienced, others are just beginning. Varied realities with different dynamics, but all of them already aware of being in the same boat and of wanting to start to pilot the ship and to chart a path together, hoping it is the right one. Otherwise experience itself would redirect them. What was important was to be together in reaching the goal for which the EoC was born,

not for «us» but for the poor in the world. It is a gift, not a duty; a proposal, not an obligation. It is based on freedom, not on coercion. We also included in this journey those people who take care of the aspect of economy in the zone. All those who in one way or another follow or participate in (or have participated in) the communion of goods in the territory and who experience its vitality.

This group of people met in Bratislava, from December 8 to 10, 2017, with the support of the International Commission of the EoC, represented by Luigino Bruni, who came precisely for this. A meeting that had 70 participants from 15 Countries. For an entire afternoon, they studied in-depth the pillars of the EoC: poverty, entrepreneurship and culture.

In the meantime, among the participants they began to build networks, they planned to communicate with each other more often and to journey together also on a formative



Maja Calfova, economist of Košice, married with four children, her youth was spent with passion for her studies, research and the development of the Economy of Communion; she is a member of the International Commission

level. Joy, life, the desire to do something was felt by everyone.

They felt that they were not just members of the Commission of EoC or operators in various ways in the field of economics, but all equally citizens and builders of this great part of Europe, committed so that around them there will no longer be poor people. United in «local teams» they launched this challenge, with the charisma of unity in their hearts and with the desire to lose themselves in the crowd of people around them. It is a beginning, we still don't have «a story», but here we are!

Emmaus accompanied this journey encouraging it, so that: «Jesus, also through each one of us, can surround humanity today with "that" communion that has its roots in Heaven».

Maja Calfova



The focolare in Istanbul

A bridge spanning 50 years

The Work of Mary in Turkey can be defined as a seed or better, a prophecy.
Going back to its beginnings, 50 years ago



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Patriarch Athenagoras with Chiara Lubich and some of the first members of the Focolare in Istanbul. On the right Aletta Salizzoni, and beside the Patriarch, Fr. Angelo Beghetto

There were around 200 persons present on the 12th of January in the church of St. Anthony in Istanbul, formerly called Constantinople. It was a chorus of thanksgiving to God for what He has done in these 50 years, since the Focolare Movement arrived. Among those present were Olga Maria Rodriguez and Dorival Spatti, councillors at the Center of the Movement for the Middle East.

The Mass was solemn and well participated, presided by the local Bishop and concelebrated by the Nuncio, by the Corbishop of the Syro-Catholic Church (one of our first gen), and by other priests.

Various Churches were also represented: the Great Archimandrite, delegate of Patriarch Bartholomew, a Armenian apostolic Bishop and a Syro-Orthodox Metropolitan.

Then in the adjoining hall a programme followed, leafing through the photo album of our history. Muslims, local Christians and those just passing through alternated in different voices of a harmony that expressed gratitude to God and to the Charism.

The joy of the present is also a recognition and gratitude for many... «As direct witnesses of this experience – Emmaus wrote to us – with a lively joy, emotion and gratitude – I am united with the chorus of thanksgiving [...]. It is an achievement that contains within is sufferings, fatigue, but above all joys and surprises of the Love of God that has always guided a sincere dialogue and every fraternal relationship».

Thank you in a very, very special way to Chiara, who had personally wanted this focolare, and to many other protagonists.

«On the morning of December 7, 1967 – Aletta Salizzoni¹ shared – I went to greet Chiara in her focolare in Rocca di Papa. [...] When I arrived in Istanbul it was snowing and it was very cold». This was how she described the day of her arrival in Turkey. But how did this moment come about? Let us take a step backward in time.

«Being the superior of the conventual friars for some time now at the church

¹ Aletta Salizzoni one of the first companions of Chiara.

Patriarch Athenagoras – Chiara Lubich

The Athenagoras – Chiara Lubich Chair, opened on December 14, 2017 at the Sophia University Institute in Loppiano is an unicum in the international academic panorama, inasmuch as it was instituted jointly by the Catholic Church, in the person of the archbishop of Florence, Card. Betori, and by the Orthodox Church in the person of the Orthodox Archbishop of Italy and Malta, Gennadios Zervos.

The aim of the Chair is to deepen the legacy of these two prophetic figures, their common «passion» for Christian unity, analyzing in-depth the doctrinal and social implications of the ecumenical journey towards full unity and offering a qualified formation course for those who would like to make their own personal contribution in the promotion of full unity, at the service of the encounter among peoples and cultures.

At the opening on December 14, the Metropolitan Gennadios Zervos defined Chiara and the Patriarch Athenagoras as «protagonists and initiators of a new ecumenical era»: they «opened the door and now no one can close it: all we have to do is to enter», declared the Orthodox archbishop. If Athenagoras told Chiara Lubich that, after the first ten centuries of dogmas and ten centuries of division, now a third epoch is beginning, that of love, «this is the epoch in which we want to move forward» – affirmed the dean of Sophia, Piero Coda – «walking together with responsibility and decision, open to all the surprises of the Spirit».

The idea of the Chair was born during another historical moment, in October 2015, when the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I received in Loppiano, the

first doctorate h.c. in the culture of unity given by the Sophia University Institute.

The cycle of the lessons of the academic year 2017/2018, will begin in March and has as its theme «The ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church and the journey of ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Church», among the professors are the Metropolitan Maximos Vgenepulos, of the ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Loppiano, 14 december, 2017. The metropolitan Gennadios Zervos with mons. Piero Coda at the inauguration of the ecumenical Chair



of St. Anthony in Istanbul, Fr. Angelo Beghetto, also called Fr. Nazareno, had the chance to get to know the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras I who, upon hearing him talk about Chiara [he had already previously read some articles about the Movement], he confided to Fr. Nazareno: "I would like to meet her". Chiara accepted the invitation immediately and left almost at once for Istanbul. On June 13, 1967 their first, historical encounter took place [...]. The Patriarch wished that in Istanbul one could breathe this new atmosphere and for this reason he asked for a focal center there, so as to share in his great desire for unity with the Church of Rome», Aletta continued.

She was one of the privileged witnesses of the first contacts between the Work of Mary and the ecumenical Patriarch, a seed that today we see as a tree with marvelous, unexpected developments and new openings. Of this, the last one in chronological order, is the Athenagoras – Chiara Lubich Chair (see box).

It is a surprising interweaving of relationships and of encounters, in a growing mutual respect and communion, which made us experience many times that unity is already a reality.

Chiara returned several times: she had twentyfive meetings with Athenagoras. «he was a great charismatic - she wrote - the greatest one I have ever known beyond the Catholic Church. An, as such, he is also a prophet, and so he could see the future and suffered that the present was still just a period of waiting».

After his death, the relationship continued with his successor, Patriarch Demetrius I, and then from 1991, with Patriarch Bartholomew I, whom Chiara had known as a young deacon.

And now, 50 years after? Thousands of contacts, within the tiny Catholic community, with Christians of the various rites and the different Churches present, with lay people, Metropolitans, Bishops, Patriarchs that show how much the charism of unity has made these lands bloom. And not only in Istanbul, but also in the different regions of Turkey. If we think about the variegated world of Islam, from sufism to a diffused practical secularism, we can see a mosaic coming to life which is the characteristic of the people of Turkey today.

What are the surprises awaiting us in the future? Fr. Luigi Iannitto, one of our pioneers, extremely happy in his 97 years, made an appointment with us after another 50 years, to celebrate the new achievement!



Chile. A million and a half chileneans and pilgrims from the surrounding Countries were involved, three cities visited which showcased the diversity of this Country; unexpected official meetings, closeness to the people in all their variegated traditions and a patrimony of talks and gestures that only in time, focusing on the commitment to unity, will we understand the preciousness of all these. This is a summary of those three days spent in Chile by Pope Francis. The day after his arrival, the O'Higgins Park was full since dawn. There the Pope, in a Mass celebrated before a crowd of 400,000 people, called each one of us to «sow peace by nearness, closeness! By coming out of our homes and looking at peoples' faces, by going out of our way to meet someone having a difficult time, someone who has not been treated as a person, as a worthy son or daughter of this land ».

In Temuco, in the south, with the presence of indigenous peoples who had experienced «serious violations



Pope Francis in Chile and Perù

«You are artisans of unity»

Santiago del Cile, Temuco, Iquique and from there to Perù in Lima, Trujillo and Puerto Maldonado, where for the first time a Pope has set foot in the amazonian zone. The last trip of Pope Francis in latin-american soil left a profound mark in the community of the Focolare.

of their human rights», the Eucharistic celebration included mapuches symbols in a prayer for the earth and for life. «The art of unity requires true artisans who know how to harmonize differences in the "design" of towns, roads, squares and landscapes. Unity is not "desk art", or paperwork; it is a craft demanding attention and understanding. That is the source of its beauty, but also of its resistance to the passage of time and to whatever storms may come its way.» Francis said.

Iquique, in the north, with its variety of cultures and the challenge of migrant peoples, was the final step of this journey, marked by a colourful and multicultural celebration in honour of the Madonna of the Carmelo, held on the beach of Lobito.

Pope Francis found perfect harmony with the youth during the meeting held at the Shrine of Maipú, where he invited them to put in their smartphones the password of the Chilean Saint Alberto

Hurtado: «What would Christ do in my place?».

«He gave us the example by showing us that it is necessary to start again from the beginning after having committed a mistake», commented Pablo; «Now it is up to all of us to understand his message and to act accordingly», Consuelo, a gen, said. Focolarine and focolarini participated in the meeting with priests and consecrated in the Cathedral of Santiago and in different moments at the Nunciature, where the

Pope expressed a great affection for the Focolare Movement.

On the airplane that was bringing him back to Rome, he confessed that one of the more emotional moments during his trip was the meeting with the prisoners of the jail in Santiago.

It was a visit that leaves behind a legacy for this Country that is facing enormous challenges in front of the rapid decrease in the number of believers.. A visit that was considered «difficult» but that

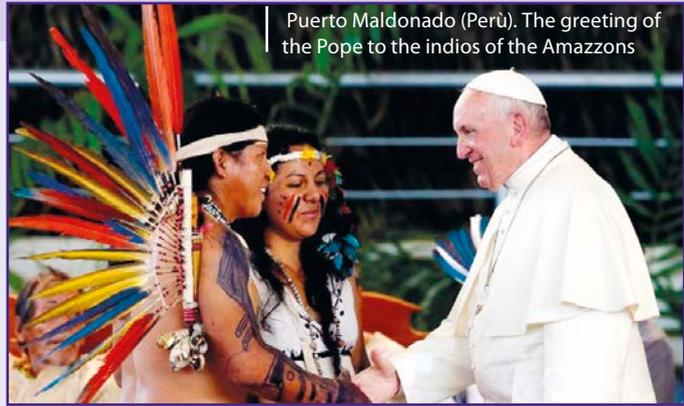
Santiago del Cile. Alt the Parque O'Higgins



Pope Francis has described as «stupendous», tipping the balance because of the closeness of the people and their conviction to follow the teachings of the Gospel.

Santiago Mampel

Perù. A new pathway is possible. With a poverty index that is more than 20%, social discrimination that affects women, children and the elderly; peoples that live at 4,000 meters above sea level, thus practically isolated; political division and widespread corruption: these are just some of the aspects of Perù, not just among Catholics, that was awaiting Pope Francis. Side by side with all these is something which the Pope has praised several times: the very rich popular religiosity, that has led to encounters with masses of people who flocked to the city especially from the provinces. In this land that Francis has called «*Ensantada*» (land of saints), «to walk», another key word that he left us, means to find the elements of the Verb that should be valued and promoted in the andine world, including among the amazonian peoples, and within the context of their religiosity.



Puerto Maldonado (Perù). The greeting of the Pope to the indios of the Amazzons

Now, after his departure, one experiences a «fullness of joy», which is that of a people who has expressed their affection for him by coming in droves in every moment of his visit; on the streets, in the meeting places and in the private and public Masses, generating unimaginable emotions.

Aside from his physical presence, the radio and television stations played an important role because they allowed millions of peruvians to follow and accompany the Pope generating an extraordinary harmony with his person and his words.

What we have experienced these three days with Pope Francis in Perù confirms that the peruvian people are profoundly Catholic and we were reminded that Jesus continues to walk along our roads, like before, knocking on our doors, touching hearts so as to inflame them with hope and plans.

Today the Lord invites us to be missionary disciples, Christians without fear, happy because the Lord is always with us. It is now our responsibility to do this, with the help of the Holy Spirit who has given, through Chiara, a Charism for the Church and for humanity.

Among the many strong words that Pope Francis left us, these questions called us to conversion: «How can we ignite hope if there are no prophets? How can we face the future if there is no unity? How can we let Jesus reach the many corners if there are no audacious and courageous disciples?».

The theme of this trip was: «United for hope». Unity and hope, things that are very dear to everyone. We want to make them our own so that the Ideal can be, in Perù, an instrument of unity and a sign that a new pathway is possible.

Lidia Erbetta, Walter Cerchiaro

Families

Two destinations, one objective multiply the focolares

Among the many temporary focolares realized in 2017, here are the experiences in Bielorrussia and New Caledonia of two family-focolares «going out», who were invited precisely because they were a family

From the Alps to the Pacific

This is the adventure lived by Patricia and Jean-Michel Besson, Swiss family-focolare, goat farmers with an adjacent creamery and cheese factory, four children and five grandchildren. They answered with joy to the invitation to go to New Caledonia also because of the use of French in the island, to share a part of the journey of this flourishing community ten years after the closure of the focolare of Noumea. The community is made up of a hundred or so people, among whom several come from

the nearby islands of Wallis and Futuna, which are also overseas French territories.

Here the culture hinges on the family. That is why they wanted the presence of a family-focolare in order to deepen the beauty of the family within the sacrament of matrimony. «This is what we tried to do – the Bessons shared – taking full advantage of that moment of grace in order to live our vocation as a married couple as radically as possible in the light of the spirituality of unity. We were fully aware that it is only Jesus in the midst among everyone who could satisfy their expectations». In the more



Patricia e Jean-Michel Besson

than 50 days of their stay in that evocative corner of the world, the Swiss couple participated in a *week-end* which included the presentation of the Movement, prayer vigils, visits to civil and ecclesial authorities, meetings with youth and adults. They were also introduced to the president of

Con la comunità in Nuova Caledonia



the Muslim community, but above all they had many opportunities to be with the families. The Bishop the place congratulated them for the contribution that the members of the Movement give in catechesis and in the formation of teens through the initiatives of the Teens for Unity. He expressed gratitude for the actions of peace that they do among the different ethnic groups. «The most important activity – continued the Bessons – was the «mini mariapolis» in Pouébo, six hours from Noumea, where many catechists from the Kanak tribe participated. The experience of feeling like brothers and sisters with people who are culturally so diverse made us rediscover the power of the charisma that brings harmony among their tribes linked to ancestral customs, subject to decisions of the clan. We were also impressed by the great ability of the people to recognize the love of God even in situations of suffering. For us, having to detach ourselves from our habits and comforts, often even from the internet, was very healthy. We went home spiritually restored, having realized that, paradoxically, the bond with our children,



who felt challenged by our courage to answer to God, was strengthened».

From Andalusia to Bielorussia

«In filling up the information sheet we left the box indicating destination, blank. The news that they were waiting for us in Bielorussia left us speechless: we don't know the language, we did not have any specific skills, we didn't even know where it was, so much so that we went to look for it in a world map. All these fears, but, soon they gave way to a trust in God, certain that He would take us by the hand». This was Pilar Acero and Iberto Consuegra sharing. Both of them are veterinarians from Almeria (Spain) with two children in their twenties. Their departure was imminent so

they had to immediately get all the paperwork done to be able to get a working permit. But it was not a problem because they had already planned to use their vacation leave. Instead, when they learned that they would be going to Bielorussia, the other members of the College of Veterinarians thought that now would be a good time for an exchange between the two Countries. «Thanks to a project of international cooperation prepared and approved in record time, the days spent in Bielorussia also became a "scientific mission", with visits to farms and discussions on and comparisons of the respective methods of the nutrition of cows.



Temporary focolares 2018

A project that is open to all the members of the Work of Mary

The temporary focolares have generated a current of exchanges whether material or spiritual among the trans-regional and trans-continental members! Such marvels, such beautiful and incisive experiences, how much life of the Ideal they have brought to inconceivable places, as you may have read in the Mariapolis Newsletter. It was an important contribution for «*That all may be one*»!

For 2018 we would like to multiply these temporary Focolares inviting everyone to participate in the project. Even if not many will be able to make this experience directly, everyone can participate through prayers, looking for providence for the trips, and above all intensifying our life there where we are

With the temporary Focolares, the Movement is proposing to assist in the formation of the youth, families, etc.; to support the communities that are far-away from the focolare centers or to bring the Ideal to new territories; to open and to bring ahead the «Dialogues» according to our specific aim; to support the communities in Zones facing great challenges.

For those who would like to participate, it is necessary to plan this experience with their corresponding person in-charge. We are requesting that you fill up the form «Participants temporary Focolares 2018» on or before February 15, 2018 (northern hemisphere) or March 15, 2018 (southern hemisphere), which can be found in the website: <http://all-one.focolare.org> user name: *UserAll1* password: *FocTemp2018*

For any clarifications, please write to:
ut.omnes@focolare.org

Vania Cheng, Andrew Camilleri

A collaboration which generated interest in the media, with lengthy articles written in the local newspapers and in specialized magazines, which often also mentioned

the primary reason that brought us to Bielorrussia. We never imagined that this trip would have made visible our choice of life on such a vast scale».

For a couple of years now, in Minsk a women's focolare center was opened and there was great desire to have a married couple who could accompany, even if only temporarily, the growth of the community under the guise of «family». «What did we do? – explained Alberto and Pilar. We simply joined their activities: we participated in a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Budslaw, patron of the Country, where the focolarine organized an hour of prayer with meditations on Mary; we went to a gen3 camp, where we met teenagers who were really clever and good. But above all we spent time with the families and the local people. Beyond the social, cultural, linguistic barriers, we were able to understand each other, like for example with the cook of the residence where the camp was held, or the lady on the bus who shared with us her sufferings. We were able to create important bonds between the community of Andalusia and that of Bielorrussia, a people who will always remain in our heart».

*prepared by
Maria and Raimondo Scotto*

Zero Hunger Generation

Only those with great ideals will make history

The new generations of the Focolare Movement are on the frontline, beside Fao, in the project called «Zero Hunger» by 2030. A goal that is possible with the collaboration of everyone, with the involvement of everyone

The teens and youth of today can become the first generation that will be able to eradicate hunger in the world. It may seem like a utopian affirmation. And yet it can become a reality. This is what the 17 Objectives for Sustainable Development (OsD) says which on September 25, 2015 was approved by the 193 Member States of the UN committing themselves to realizing it in fifteen years (2015-2030). The second, «Objective Zero Hunger», is at the heart of the programme. To achieve this, interventions in the agricultural and food sector are needed with political and economic decisions to be made on a world-wide level. But this is not enough. In spite of the efforts, in fact, in the past few years hunger has been on the rise. A change of direction is needed. It was understood that hunger cannot be eradicated without the awareness and



participation of all the men and women on this planet.

The problem of hunger today is complex and articulated, linked to different factors: conflicts, climate change, migration, inequalities and injustices... According to the data given by FAO, the Agency of the UN for food and agriculture, there are 800 million people who suffer from hunger, and more than 600 million suffer from obesity. Malnutrition, micronutrient deficiency and obesity are interlocking problems. It is clear that to vanquish them a change in lifestyle is needed. A person's daily choices must be directed

towards this goal, which means to put love for the other and for creation as the foundation of these choices.

In order to reach this goal the FAO decided to target the new generations and for this reason, last September 8, during a meeting at its central headquarters in Rome, two of its executives made a proposal to the international Centers of Teens and Youth if the Focolare Movement to collaborate with them for this great objective. The gen3 and the TfU, who were informed through a letter, have said yes with great



Rome, 8 september 2017. The Focolare Movement's delegation at the Fao

enthusiasm. The Youth for a United World too took up the challenge inserting it as one of their priorities in building a united world.

The commitment to erase hunger and poverty has always been closely linked to the vocation of the youth sectors of the Focolare Movement. Chiara Lubich in 1967 told the newly-born generation Movement: «Where to begin? [...] Let us also look for the poor youth, the least, those whom the world does not consider, those who have known little joy in their life, but rather tears or hunger». Also at the birth of the Teens for unity, she explained that in order to achieve a united world they must walk along «coloured» paths, starting with the «red path» by going towards children and teens who suffer from hunger. It was a wholehearted commitment that was concretized recently. Emmaus Maria

Voce, speaking together with Jesús Morán at the meeting of the Secretariats of the Teens for unity and gen3 assistants in 2014 observed: «It seems to me that what has been emphasized in the world of the adolescents of the Movement has been the creation of relationships, building bridges, actions for peace, and much has really been done. Maybe they have done a little less for the problem of hunger. [...] Maybe now is the time to awaken the interest of these teens to this problem, [...] not just to fight against consumerism but to promote a culture of real communion of goods, to promote this through their activities, creating their own projects, in their own way, with their systems [...]».

In order to concretize their commitment to «Zero Hunger», the first step is that of involving their peers through a motto and

an Commitment (Pledge) card. They would like to spread a more simple lifestyle, imprinted with love for the other and to make many participate in a new culture based on giving and sharing. They also want to promote concrete actions with the sharing of experiences and gifts among those who live in situations of financial comfort and well-being and those suffering poverty. Magazines will be prepared and websites and social media utilized. The *Teens* magazine, written by and for teenagers, started a column dedicated to the goal #FameZero (#ZeroHunger) and the march-April issue will be dedicated to this topic.

The commitment to «Zero Hunger» will also be at the center of the United World Week (1-6 May) and the Run4Unity (May 6). The proposal of the coming Genfest «Beyond all borders» to go beyond all barriers on a personal and social level in order to transform life into something more beautiful, will also include this goal which will be deepened through a Forum in Manila with the participation of a representative of FAO.

Anna Lisa Innocenti

Ecclesial world

A trip to the Orient

The Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam the three stages of the trip made by some representatives of the secretariats of the parish and diocesan Movements and of the priests and gens centers, that led to the opening of promising paths in communion with the local Church of these Countries

In the «Orient» the proclamation of the Gospel began with the first Europeans who arrived in the beginning of the XVI century – the portuguese and the spanish – who had come primarily for commerce. Except for the Philippines, Christianity is in general a religion of the minority, in Countries primarily Buddhist, Muslim or Confucian. It is therefore not strange that the Focolare Movement, having arrived in Asia through religious men and women and missionary priests, inserted itself naturally in the Church and, in many areas it developed together with the local Church.

During the months of November and December 2017 we made a novel experience precisely by visiting some Asia Countries in synergy among three Centers: priests and deacon focalinari, parish and diocesan Movements, gens. Trips rich in relationships, encounters and prospects.



In the Philippines, our first stop was the «Center of the spirituality of unity Epi» located in the Little town of Tagaytay, whose participants are largely, seminarians – 15 of them from four nations. Several of them come with very little knowledge about the Ideal life but they embark on a journey of an always more profound communion. In the little Town, formation is done together with the new generations.

In Manila we stayed for two days in the parish of Moonwalk, entrusted to the Movement eversince the first years of the arrival

of the Focolare. It was very beautiful to see the life generated throughout these years and the fruits that it continues to bring. The youth group has 140 members and you can feel the importance of a specific formation for them in the parish because many would like to live the Charism totally while remaining to work within the structure of the parish.

Together with the women and men focalinari we were able to meet many priests of the Philippines and to go in-depth in the aspect of the incarnation of the Charism in the local Church.

In Thailand we went to the little Town «Golden Rule» with around ten priests who came from all over the Country, some even undertaking a 12-hour trip. They were days lived in an atmosphere of family and of joy, where the surroundings invited



us to relax and to share. We met priests who were involved in spreading the spirituality of unity in their environments, in unity with the focolare centers. We encouraged them to be protagonists, bearers of the Charism in seminaries, parishes, schools... To work more with the local Church, also through the priests of the Movement; this seemed to us the «path» for the spread of the Ideal in this nation due to the great distances and the vastness of the «harvest» to evangelize. The Mariapolis in Thailand this year was done in a parish with around 500 participants.

In Vietnam we were a «travelling focolare» visiting Bishops, rpeists, seminarians and some parish communities in the North of the Country. A trip rich in relationships above all with people who have met the Movement for many years and who have strived to remain faithful to it there where they are.

The meetings with the different parishes were very interesting and highlighted the importance for them of the accompaniment of the spirituality of the Movement with pastoral work and not to lose that many opportunities that present themselves. The vicar general of a diocese told us: «An occasion that is lost, could become a difficulty».

We received encouraging blessings and the invitation to continue the paths already started.

We continued on to Ho Chi Minh City where we celebrated December 7 together with the community. One of the highlights was the meeting with a nice group of families and, at the conclusion we were joined by the rest of the community and their friends to celebrate Christmas.

The visit to the venerable Thich Thien Tam, vice-president of the executive

committee of Busshists in Vietnam, touched us deeply due to his profoundness and the many similarities of his words with the Gospel: «you are all Buddha» and «all children of one Father» – he repeated to us.

Some important realities and concrete actions of the Movement in Vietnam are the two schools for street children run by persons of the Movement. Even if there is great and visible development, Vietnam still calls out to us due to its many situations of poverty and marginalization and also for its commitment in finding the answers. The presence of members of the Movement in this field gives a credible witness.

On the last evening at dinner with the focolarine and the focolarini, it was a very beautiful moment of communion which closed with a «golden key» these days that were so intense and rich of promise and prospects. It seemed as if we had always lived as brothers and sisters in just one focolare.

We updated mons. Kriengsak, cardinal of Bangkok, about our trip and of the many roads that were opened in communion with the local Church in these nations.

centers of the priests, gens, secretariat of the parish and diocesan movements



The Focolare Communities meet From Switzerland to Arab Emirates

In november 2017 Beatrix Lederberger from Switzerland went to Abu Dhabi to prepare a report for a magazine in Zurich. It was an opportunity to meet the local community of the Focolare Movement in the United Arab Emirates

We sat in an open-air bar in Abu Dhabi. The hot desert air surrounded us, the buildings around us touched the sky. Melissa and Angela, two young filipina friends, spoke to me enthusiastically about the beauty of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Everything is so clean and safe. The married couple Ghadir and Hisham – jordanians living in Abu Dhabi for 20 years – also affirmed that here no one steals the things you leave behind. As they share with me their life as overseas foreign workers, they also get to know each other more profoundly. Melissa and Angela are speechless when they come to know that Ghadir and Hisham, are Christians of many generations, even if they are arabs. They thought that all arabs are Muslim.

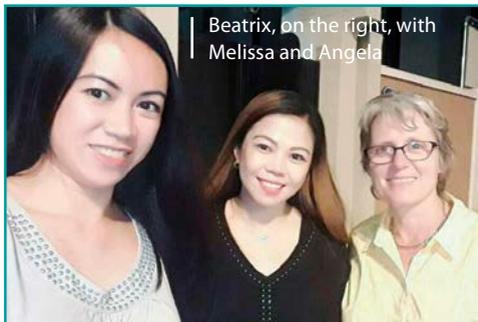
Life is beautiful and safe in the Emirates but it has its price. Leizl works

in Dubai, she does a lot of overtime work, her health is affected. But she cannot complain because migrants receive their visa from their employer and so they can be laid-off after their two-year contract ends. If this happens they will be without a salary and a work permit, without healthcare and unemployment compensation. They must return to their country of origin where there is no work.

Usually migrant workers remain and interact only among their own countrymen: indians, filipinos, pakistani, lebanese, etc. always by themselves. «We of the "focolare family" instead come from 12 different Countries» Leizl said. To understand each other we all speak English. Leizl met the Movement in the Philippines. When she left to work in Abu Dhabi, someone told her: «If you go, you will lose the charism

of unity!» – but this didn't happen. All those who can, meet once a month in Dubai, for the group of the Word of life. Recently another group was formed in Abu Dhabi that will save a lot of travel time for many. There are also two other groups that are less numerous in Qatar and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Leizl showed me a letter she received from Maria Voce, Emmaus, soon after she went to the UEA: «I want to assure you and all the gen in Dubai that I am close to each one and that you are all in my heart. It is a great comfort for me to know that you are all united and would like to bring ahead the Ideal of Chiara. I am counting on your contribution so that her dream, a united world, will become a reality. I wish for you much light and strength, a gift of the love you have among you. In the unity that knows no



Beatrix, on the right, with Melissa and Angela

distance, Emmaus». This letter is very, very precious, as it expresses the secret of her love and her will to persevere.

Last year the «focolare-family» organized together with Fr. Willy, a priest focolarino who lives in the Ras al-Khaima emirate, the first Mariapolis with 65 participants. On that occasion Lenie and her husband met the Movement where – they shared to me full of joy – «we found a new family».

Now, the «focolare-family» is preparing a New Mariapolis which will be held on february 22 to 24, preceded by and followed by a temporary focolare, with members coming from diifferent Countries all over the world, while Jenny and Leizl will spend a week of their vacation in

Manila to help in the preparation of the Genfest.

When I returned to Switzerland I received a *WhatsApp* from Dubai: «On December 15 we will meet for our Christmas celebration». Just by coincidence the Focolare community of my city Adliswil, will meet that same evening. So I wrote to my new friends about this. They replied with a video: 60 people, children, youth, adults all greeting us and shouting «Merry Christmas from Dubai!». We were deeply touched. In the middle of the desert, in a society where material goods occupy the first palce in life and everything must be higher, mosre, beautiful,

grander than anywhere else in the world, in the midst of Muslims, the people of the Focolare live their faith with simplicity, open to encounters with the others and overcoming barriers among their nations, the various Churches to which they belong, religions. Laura is Italian, her husband works here and their children go to the English school. She wrote her masteral thesis on: «Cross-cultural analysis of Italy and UAE». This gave her the opportunity to have splendid contacts with the collaborators of the Catholic Bishop of Abu Dhabi and to contribute to the dialogue among cultures in this Country that is so special.

Beatrix Ledergerber-Baumer

The community of Abu Dhabi during the first Word of life meeting held there



Gisella Calliari (Gis)

The heroic faithfulness of Gis

Among the first companions of Chiara and one of her closest collaborators for almost sixty years, Gis left us on January 19 at 97 years old. «In the midst of this suffering for such a great loss – Emmaus wrote – we remain with her, one heart and one soul, grateful for the example of her heroic faithfulness to her design».

Gis was the third of three sisters, after Livia and Ginetta, who would also become a focolarina, Gis was born in Lavis (Trent) in 1920. Her father, who worked at the train station, died prematurely. The religious education they received at home and in school, gave them a deep sense of the values of honesty and moral uprightness. The mother brought the family ahead, but remaining without financial support they had to leave the lodgings that were provided by the father's work. With much sacrifice the three girls continued their studies during which an illness forced Gis to be confined in a sanatorium. «They were difficult months - Gis recalls – I was very ill and thought I would die. But later on, I understood that God had begun His work, he was preparing me...». When she recovered the second world war just broke out and with Ginetta they moved to Veneto to work in managing a vast estate of land. Quando guarisce, è appena scoppiata la seconda guerra mondiale e con Ginetta si trasferiscono in Veneto per lavorare nella gestione di una vasta proprietà terriera. «At that time, a classmate of mine was still in Trent, and she wrote me occasionally, just a few words but very meaningful ones for me. God was watching over me, and at a certain point, she wrote: "Only God matters, only Him in life. The rest is nothing." At a certain point, those words pierced through my soul more and more. One day, after Mass, passing by a nearby river, I sat down at the water's edge, and felt called in a certain way, as if [someone was saying] "Choose me" as "I am". I think that it was a turning point».



From then on, every opportunity was good to go and see Chiara. Gis's life changed completely. «It was an ever new discovery of the Gospel, which Chiara took with her to the air raid shelters. Her words were words of fire, words that changed circumstances, places, people, everything, everything! There were no problems, no tiredness, there were no obstacles».

Gis in the meantime began a new job. «We lived a few kilometers from the "casetta" of Piazza Cappuccini, and the road was all going up. I would wake up to go to Mass at seven with Chiara. Then, I would run to work. During my lunch break I would go back to piazza Cappuccini». One morning Ginetta asked her point blank: «Where are you going?». Not knowing what to say, she invited her to the "casetta". Ginetta sees and understands that this was also her path, her way.

Due to the war, all the basic necessities were lacking in the city and Gis wondered how she could provide the «casetta» with the basic commodities. The family owned an allotment about 15 kilometers from Trent, which yielded good fruit and vegetables, but how could they go and fetch it? The only traffic on the road was tanks. «I stood by the side of the road, saw one and put out my hand. The driver stopped and said, "What do you want?" "I want to ask for a lift." He looked at me, very surprised. I do not think anyone had ever asked him that. "Ok, where do you want to go?" "I want to go to the allotment we own". That is how it was. When we were near

the allotment, I asked him to stop and got out. I filled my bag with as much as it could hold and on the way back I hitch hiked with another tank". That was not the only time, Gis admitted. She admitted too that she never had the courage to tell Chiara about it. She did not want her to worry about her lack of prudence. This just goes to show that difficulties did not stop her.

The war ended and both Gis and Ginetta asked their mother if they could go and live with Chiara in piazza Cappuccini. At that time the permission from the parents was a necessary condition even if one was already an adult. Ginetta obtained the permission but not Gis. It was Igino Giordani (Foco) who found the solution. Knowing that Calliari was a fan of his writings, he wrote a letter to Gis using the letterhead of the House of Representatives saying that he had a secretarial position for her. On December 6, 1949 the mother, happy to oblige Giordani, allowed her to leave for Rome. Then in Rome, with Chiara, Giosi, Graziella and Marilen they strated the first focolare in the capital city. Since then, Gis practically remained beside Chiara, in her focolare, except for brief periods wherein she was sent to assist in the beginning of the Movement in some Italian Zones: Trent, Rome, Milan, Florence. For several years Gis was also the person responsible for the section of the focolarine.

Of her life with Chiara, she herself confided this in 2005: «It was very simple, clear and deep.

I lived with her for many years, although there were gaps because I went to several zones. I feel as though I have nothing of my own, as though I have been transferred into her. All that is hers is mine. All that is mine is hers, apart from my shortcomings of course, which were certainly mine. Life with Chiara is very deep and very simple. Supernatural life is natural. Chiara is the most normal person on earth and the most supernatural».

Chiara herself in an entry in her diary dated 26th May 1971 described the life of the focolarine in her focolare, including Gis. «Their 'self' is of little importance to them. They suffer for the Movement, for every detail and live for it, truly». And in 2002 Chiara, speaking about her focolare



affirmed: «The philadelphia [love among all] (...) in my focolare is more than a reality. It is there that I draw strength to face the daily crosses, after my personal union with Jesus."Here, each one is concerned about the other, depending on the present need. Here, we go from wisdom, communicated spontaneously, to practical tips on health, clothing, the house, on food; to continual daily help and service, often at the cost of countless sacrifices. In other words, here, you are convinced that you will never be judged, but loved, forgiven, helped. Here, even the slightest betrayal is inconceivable. Here, the blood that circulates is that of a family, but a heavenly one (...).



From the left: Palmira Frizzera, Gis, Oreste Basso, Aldo Fons Stedile

«From her office – Gabri Fallacara, formerly responsible for the Centro “Uno” recalls – Gis began phoning from at seven in the morning, sometimes earlier, calling all the people linked with her. She enabled a network of love that was alert, effective and fully comprehensive. Gis trusted everyone absolutely; she gave dignity to the supernatural in us, meaning the amount of the Gospel of unity we lived. She put us in the best possible position to understand from within what the charism was asking of Chiara and of us». «Around ten years ago – Fr. Hubertus Blaumeiser, priest focalario and member of the Abbà school shared: I met Gis for a brief mo-



ment in the house of Chiara. With solemnity she told me: “To be one with Chiara you must have only Jesus Forsaken”».

One of her typical characteristics was her docility to the will of God, which Gis always tried to live throughout her life and which became more evident after Chiara’s death in 2008. If before she lived for her, now she lived for and with the entire Movement as if in front of Chiara herself, continuing to be a source of flowing affection, warmth, tenderness, sharing. Over and beyond her cognitive abilities of this last period, she continued to build a greater unity with her continuous love.

Last Spring Gis found out she had a very serious type of cancer. She lived this new chapter in her Holy Journey by staying put, in her own characteristic way, deeply rooted in “the will of God”. At the start of July, she became much worse and it seemed then that she would leave us, her death only a matter of days or even hours away. Then she recovered and got better. However, several times since mid-July, it seemed she was at the point of leaving for the next life, but recovered

each time to everyone’s surprise starting from her personal physician. Her eyes spoke of Heaven and it seemed that her new task was to build a bridge between her room and Heaven.

Her room became the intersection of encounters that spoke of paradise, bearing witness of how much Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate have become her whole being and of how much from her sickbed she continued to generate the Movement. The focalario who accompanied her tenderly from day to day collected her words: «I am going to Chiara». «You have loved me so much, I ask for your forgiveness». «I am ready. Jesus Forsaken knows what to do now. I want to go to Him and nothing else». «I am not able to die because my body doesn’t want to follow me». They asked her: «Would you like to go to Paradise?». She replied: «I am not able to go». «I am waiting for Jesus, Jesus in my heart. Jesus can come in any moment». They told her: «Gis, let’s keep Jesus in the midst». And she: «Jesus in the midst is not a small thing, it is everything». «Gis greeted many people, now she is resting». And she specified: «Greeted and loved».

Palmira, one of the first companions of Chiara testified: «Gis was truly the personification of her Word of life: “Men of little faith, why do you doubt?” (Mt 8,26) ». And Emmaus, concluding the reading of her profile during the funeral mass added: «I have witnessed how up to the end Gis gave her whole being to make Chiara live in the Movement today. She has given me a great lesson in living the essential, being radical and trusting in God’s plan, of unity with everyone».



Argira Curci

«Look for discipline from your youth and you will find wisdom until your old age» (Sir 6,18)

Focolarina of the Roman Mariapolis, she was born in Bari, at 26 years old Agira, thus wrote to Chiara: «I chose the profession of a social worker to fill up the emptiness that for ten years I carried in my soul since the death of my father. I decided to give meaning to my life. Maybe it was the echo of the voice of God, of His call: He wanted to make Himself heard, seen, and He brought me to you. You introduced me to God-Love and how much my life would have meaning if lived for Him». The year after she wrote: «When I read your writing "I have only one Spouse on earth", Quando ho letto il tuo brano "Ho un solo Sposo sulla terra", I felt the call even more strongly, I understood the immense gift of the Ideal, I felt I was master of the world. It was then that I chose Him Forsaken; I told Him that I would look for him madly, always and everywhere».

After the school of formation (1961-62), Argira went to the focolare center of Trieste and then left for Argentina and Uruguay. There she worked as correspondent for the local RAi, much appreciated by her boss and colleagues. She was an example for many, who today still remember her with gratitude. She continued to write regularly to Chiara: «Your last diary was a matchless gift, it conveyed to me with a unique power your decision to become a saint and I assure you that this is now also mine, even if I feel hard and weak. I consecrated myself to Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate as never before».

She returned to Italy in the '70s and remained for a long time in Naples, working as a social worker and helping many people with her great sense of humanity filled with the life of the Ideal. For years she contributed also to



the branch of the religious women building numerous and profound relationships. At the end of the '80s she moved to the Center of the Movement in the Zone of Castelli Romani where, in spite of the evident signs of an invalidating disease, her limpid soul touched many hearts. Even with the limitations of her illness, she con-

tinued to give herself until she was able and had a great love for the other focolarine who were sick. In her last days, at 85 years old, Argira's condition rapidly declined. On December 10, feast of the Madonna of Loreto, she smiled beautifully for half an hour, then her breathing grew weaker and she peacefully left for Heaven.

Margaret Rose Anthony Herman Gill (Perla)

«I will betroth you to me forever» (Hos 2,21)

Margaret, focolarina from Pakistan, flew to Heaven on the 1° of January at 65 years old, precisely while she participated in the annual meeting together with the women and men focolarini of Pakistan gathered together in Lahore. For the upliftment of everyone, Margaret too – who was undergoing chemotherapy for a serious illness – was able to put in common the effects of her total «yes» to the will of God and the grace of being able to build an always more



– who was undergoing chemotherapy for a serious illness – was able to put in common the effects of her total «yes» to the will of God and the grace of being able to build an always more

profound relationship with Him. On the evening of December 31, she unexpectedly experienced intense pain. She spent the last three hours more concerned about the others than for herself. Then Mary, on her feastday, took Margaret with her. The retreat became an unforgettable one because of Margaret, and in concluded in the darkness of the evening, with the candles that illuminated the rose petals that covered her tomb.

Margaret was still very young when, thanks to her uncle Bishop Anthony Rufin (see *Mariapolis* n. 12/2016), she encountered the Movement and to deepen her knowledge about it she went to the Philippines for one year. There she discovered that God was calling her to the focolare and so she left for the School of Loppiano. She confided to Chiara: «I was asking Jesus: what can I offer You, I have nothing but my totalitarina "yes" and for always: accept me and help me to be a faithful spouse of Your up to the end». When the focolare center was opened in Pakistan she went back to her country and she gave herself with a delicate and untiring love, especially in difficult moments, and she was very much loved by her students and as well as by the people of the community. She returned again to Pakistan after some years spent in the focolare in Austria, she wrote to Chiara: «Jesus has worked a lot in my soul. I feel that He has taken something from me everyday piece by piece so that I can become more and more like Jesus, another little Mary. Now I feel free from everything, from every attachment, from every fear, from every difficulty: now I belong only to God!».

Her commitment changed many situations around her. With the faithfulness to Jesus Forsaken, placed as the foundation of her life, she was always able to overcome everything and to face the final trial of her health as an opportunity to prepare herself for Heaven, «to make up for all those empathy spaces that we all leave in our life and to fill them up with love». Her union with God grew to whom she offered everything with generosity as her physical sufferings increased. Those who knew her in focolare remember her as a real «Pearl», the new name that Chiara had given her.

mons. Juan de Dios Metaflorida Pueblos

Bishop with a big heart, a lot of patience and much charity

Both in the island of Bohol, in the south of the Philippines, the young Juan de Dios – Didi, to his friends – chose the way of the priesthood and with his ordination (1968) he carried out different ministries: assistant parish priest in some parishes, teacher and principal of the school which he himself had attended, parish priest, spiritual director and rector of the seminary. In '84 card SIn of Manila called him to work in the capital and knowing of his desire to study in Italy, sent him to the priest school in Loppiano. Even if it was not what he had in mind, soon the spirituality of unity made a breakthrough in his soul and Fr. Didi felt the desire to give himself to the Work of Mary as a priest focolarino. One day, while he was still in Loppiano, very much engrossed in doing the laundry, he received the news of his nomination as auxiliary bishop of Davao. He had to return immediately to the Philippines, but before doing so he asked Chiara for help in choosing his episcopal motto: «Per fratres ad Patrem». In '97 he would also be present as a Bishop in welcoming her on the occasion of the h.c. degree in Theology granted to her by the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

In '87 mons. Didi was nominated Bishop of Kidapawan, a place with much tension between Christians and Muslims, becoming an effective instrument of dialogue. He was then transferred



to Butuan and remained there until, on October 21, at 74 years old, he left us for Paradise. Many remember him as a man with a big heart, a lot of patience and much charity: a true child of Chiara.

Francis Xavier, card. Kriengsak Kovithavanij

Fr. Frank-Heiner Meyer

In Jesus Forsaken is the answer

On December 12, God brought to the heavenly Mariapolis, at 80 years old, Fr. Frank-Heiner, priest focolarino of east Berlino. He was just seven years old when, during the second world war, he lost his father. The mother, left alone with two small children, tried to escape to west Berlin, but during the journey Frank-Heiner was separated from her and roamed alone among the groups of refugees until he reached Baviera where, after four months, he miraculously found his mother and little sister. Returning to Berlin, after many years as he was preparing for the priesthood, he met the spirituality of unity and in the love for Jesus Forsaken he found the answer to his many whys. At 27 years old he was ordained a priest. He carried out his responsibility as chaplain with zeal, diligently attending, inspite of the great distance,

the meetings with sine priest focolarini of Herten. He shared the spirit of the Focolare Movement to many young people, among whom was Ulli Buechl, who later became a focolarina.

But soon the consequences of the trauma he experienced

as a child began to manifest itself and Fr. Frank-Heiner gave proof of his love for Jesus Forsaken accepting the ups and downs of his health with great patience. With the consensus of his Bishop he accepted the invitation of the priest focolarini to move to Herten where he could live a communitarian life with some of them. Fr. Gehrard Sievers shared: «We lived together for 13 years. He was always loving: often I would share with him my worries and he would advice me with great wisdom». Thanks to the medical treatment and the atmosphere of a family which surrounded him, Fr. Frank-Heiner continued to trust in God up to the end, supported by the love for Jesus Forsaken and the constant presence of Jesus in the midst.

Fr. Wilfried Hagemann

Emmanuel (Noel) Jesus

A protector of the Genfest 2018 in Heaven

Born in the Philippines, Noel (nickname for Emmanuel confirmed by Chiara with its meaning of «God with us») at just three years old already became a member of the Movement, climbing up onstage during the Mariapolis to dance while the band played. Its seemed just like a game for him and at six years old he became a gen4, he already had an act of love to share: he gave those little shoes that he had just bought to the children of a barrio where a fire had broken out and he did this, he explained, «because I saw Jesus in them!».

When he was a gen2, he realized his dream of attending the gen school of Loppiano, where he further refined his sipirt of giving. He



went back to his Country and there he became a point of reference for other young people, he encouraged them to persevere, to hope, to follow God alone. He was very gifted in drawing, he specialized as a graphic artist: one of his designs is displayed at the Café Mediterranean in Manila. His modern style, based on his knowledge of the great masters of the past, is appreciated by his colleagues and employers. also because He can be trusted, he is precise, respectful of deadlines. It was easy for them to forgive him whenever he fell asleep in front of his computer because of his nocturnal dyspnea.

Every time a design was needed or a graphic project for one of the activities of the

Movement, he offered his talents immediately. Just as during this last period when the preparations for the Genfest 2018 are ongoing. He was almost 38 years old, but the youth in the team felt that he was one of them. On the night of September 2, an unexpected respiratory complication brought him directly to the Heavenly Mariapolis in his sleep. Noel left behind a testimony of someone who truly gave everything of himself without holding back and expecting anything in return. Everyone remembers him as a friend, a teacher, a giant with a heart of gold and now as a protector in Heaven to whom we can entrust the success of the Genfest 2018.

Grace, Paul, Lela, Paula, Edith, gen of Manila

sr. Marie-Madeleine Vandenbempt

Not to speak about the Ideal, but to be it

The first contact with the Movement of Sr. Marie-Madeleine, Belgian religious of the Sisters of St. Anthony of Padua, goes back to 1968 when during a course for catechists she met a Volunteer who would often offer to accompany her back to the convent and who spoke to her about the Ideal. A short time after, her superior general participated in a Mariapolis and occasionally invited the focaline to share their experiences on the Gospel to all her nuns. Sr. Madeleine never doubted her choice to live the charism of unity. She understood that the Gospel was asking her to love everyone, in every circumstance, and so she began to make the joyful experience of this, affirming that this new life was making her «a better religious, even up to the small things. From Vale – she shared – I learned that we must be like a mirror that reflects God to the person in front of us, loving him or her with all of ourselves, without thinking about the person we just met previously and the one we will be meeting after.



Vale also told us not to speak about the Ideal but to be it, and to re-live our founder».

As she grew on in years she was no longer able to participate in the activities of the Movement but up to the end she was very happy about all the news she received

of the Movement that the focaline and other members of the community would bring her. In one of their last visits to her she confided: «I thank Chiara for having said her “yes” to God in 1943! And I want to thank all the people with whom I have lived the Ideal, I am happy for the life that I have had». On November 9, at the age of 95, Sr. Marie-Madeleine peacefully goes to meet her heavenly Spouse.

Colette Le Tolguéec

Piera Del Bello Balduzzi

*A living stone of the little
city of Loppiano*

At 11 years old Piera left her town of origin in the province of Bergamo to work with a family in Milan: a very difficult experience, that formed her humanly and morally. After a few years she found a job as a nurse in a hospital near her hometown and there she met Matteo who later became her husband. Soon the couple began to experience difficulties in their relationship which, linked to the fact that they could not have children – as she was diagnosed – they thought about separation. Thanks to her brother-in-law Tino Piazza, they came to know about the Movement and together they participated in the Mariapolis. Piera was stunned. Not only was their marriage saved, but in a totally unexpected way she soon after realized that she was pregnant. Throughout the years they would have 10 children, among which one left for heaven just five days after his birth.

Everything was going smoothly: a beautiful home, a good job for Matteo, many things to do at home for Piera who, because of her choice to be a Volunteer of the Movement, gave herself totally even in outside activities. In 1974 they were asked if they would like to move to Loppiano as a family so as to contribute to the building of the Little City. Even if there was no guarantee of any kind and they would have to live in just a small apartment which is not really comfortable with five children, they accepted. «I think that it was the Madonna who made us say “yes”» Piera shared. And with the same love that she had for her children, she participated in the life and development of Loppiano. In Jesus Forsaken she found the strength to overcome every difficulty. She wrote to Chiara in '95: «... I had the grace to fall in love with Him and to feel a great desire to discover Him everyday so as to embrace Him and say: I love You».



In 2015 her illness started. «Jesus Forsaken – she wrote to Joxepi Zubillaga, co-responsible for the little city – has come to visit me in a big way and with a new dress. Even in my suffering I gave him my “yes”. If this is His will, with His grace it will also be mine. I offer everything for my family, for the little city...». Not being able to participate in the annual retreat of the women Volunteers she wrote: «I try to offer everything for each one of you

so that Jesus will send all the graces that you need. I try to do every little thing as if it were the last, the way Chiara taught us, and it is very beautiful. Jesus Forsaken presents himself everyday with a new face and with every small “yes” that I am able to say, it seems as if He is looking at me and that I can see Him. Isn't this a marvelous thing? Many times it is difficult, but together we will be able to make it».

On December 18, at 77 years old Piera left silently for Heaven the way she had always lived. Her Word of life was: «Whoever enters through me will be saved» (Jn 10,9).

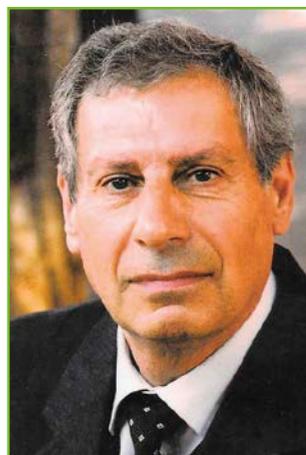
Aurelia Nembrini

Albino D'Amico

*Giving without
limits*

A furniture maker by profession, Albino is the first youth of Appignano (Macerata) to accept the invitation of the assistant parish priest to form a group of the Parish Movement.

He became its pillar for almost fifty years. It is from this original group that in 1984 the present Diocesan Movement of Macerata was born.



He found his vocation as a Volunteer, becoming part of a nucleo. He tried to realize the new commandment of Jesus with everyone he met, in the family, at work, in the social context and in the parish, as a catechist, extraordinary Eucharistic minister, member of the parish council. He was active in the spread of *Città Nuova*, he followed some groups of the Word of life, organized the annual trips to Loppiano of the local community.

Three years ago he was diagnosed with a serious illness which, as his family and relatives shared, he faced without ever complaining, embracing Jesus Forsaken in this illness, with love. Last August 15, the feastday of the Assumption, at 78 years old Albino concluded his Holy Journey. At his funeral the big parish church was overflowing, a tangible testimony of his exemplary and total gift of himself. One of his three children, saying his final goodbye, summarized the life of his father with these words: faith, family, work.

Giorgio Belardinelli



Anna Maria Cavazzoli Mora

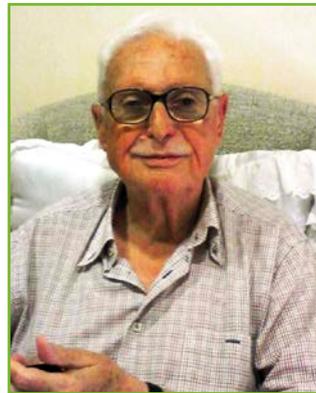
Embrace God even in the harshest trials

Together with her husband Silvio, Anna Maria was among the first young couples in the zonetta of Bologna (Italy), who in the beginning of the '60s welcomed the apitituality of the Focolare, bearing witness in society and in the local Church. She discovered her vocation as a Volunteer and brought her contribution of harmony and goodness towards everyone in the activities and events of the Movement. A friend said: «Anna Maria has always chosen and loved God, and being well-trained she was able to embrace Him even in the harshest trials and sufferings, like the death of her husband and in the final years of her life».

Antonio Morales Gómez-Caminero

The Ideal his way of life

Antonio – from Jaén (Spain) – met the Movement when he was 46 years old and the Ideal became his way of life. A public servant in different ministries, he found his vocation as a Volunteer. Antonio's vocabulary does not contain the word «no». With Lola, his wife – also a Volunteer – they are one of the couples who are the reference point in the Diocesan Center for family affairs and in the parish. His fatherly being and their great willingness to serve, made everyone feel that they were in a family.



With wisdom and live he helped the men Volunteers of his nucleo by highlighting what is important: the relationship with God and, when necessary, to become a mediator in healing relationships. When he sent the Word of life to his grappolo, he always made sure to write a special phrase for each one.

He retired when he was 65, very much respected by his superiors and colleagues. «In front of his religiosity – the director said - I want to underline the respect he had for the others and at the same time the firmness of his convictions».

Eleven years ago Lola passed away. Antonio lived this great suffering in God, not closing himself up, always ready to help whoever he met. He spent the last years of his life in a hospice together with other men Volunteers, forming with them a living cell that irradiated warmth in the place where they

On August 7, 2017, at the age of 87, she left this world, in fulfillment of a life lived in a special love for the charism of unity making her own the phrase: «That all may be one». This is the gift that she leaves behind for her sons Franco and Giorgio and to all of us.

Daniela Nicolini Palmieri

were staying. «My luggage is ready», he often said. On September 10, 2017, at 91 years old, he concluded his Holy Journey peacefully, surrounded by his children.

Toni Torres

Victor Pagunsan

A man of great will power

Originally from the Philippines, as a young man Victor already had a strong willpower. Even if he had to take care of his six siblings, being the eldest, he was able to attend the University of Cebu and to graduate with a degree in economics and commerce. He met the Ideal of unity and became a Volunteer of the Movement. Together with his wife they migrated to Australia, where he found work in the Ministry of Health. Their daughter Mairene was born and the whole family participated in the life of the Movement.

During the '90s he was diagnosed with a degenerative disease. Victor was determined not to let himself be stopped by this illness and continued to work in the government as long as he could. In the parish he started a support group for persons with disabilities. As a sign of gratitude and esteem for this initiative, in 2000 he was chosen to carry the Olympic torch for a portion of the way going to Sydney.

His health grew steadily worse and so he was forced to move to an institution that could provide assistance round-the-clock. For an active person such as him it was a moment of great suffering, but with his typical willpower that distinguished him, he welcomed this will of God with love. All those who came to visit him were touched by his witness. In the final two years of his life he could only move his hands. In spite of this he continued to love – with the family in his heart and in his thoughts – he offered every suffering for all the people who were undergoing physical or spiritual trials. His brothers in his nucleo and the Focolare community often went to visit him, accompanying him to the appointment with the Father whom he loved dearly. Victor left us on March 12, 2017 at the age of 69.

Kevin Kelly



Our relatives

The following have passed on to the Next Life: **Elida**, mother of **Francisco Canzani**, and **Germaine**, mother of **Marc St-Hilaire**, focolarini at the Center of the Movement; **Silvana**, sister of **Arnaldo Diana**, focolarino at the Roman Mariapolis; **Giovanni Battista**, father of **Doriano Danieli**, focolarino in Loppiano; **Remo**, father of **Federica Alloisio**, focolarina in Genoa; **Giuseppe**, brother of **Lucio Geronazzo**, focolarino in Pescara; **Taziana**, sister of **M. Giulia Carli**, focolarina in Trento; **Madeleine**, mother of **Chris Bilong**, focolarino in Abidjan (Ivory Coast); **Llesch**, father of **Reggina Paluca**, focolarina in Albania; **Giovanni**, brother of **Mario Silvestri**, married focolarino in Lazio Nord; **Adelina**, mother of **Elisabetta Parisi**, married focolarina in Catania; **Angelo**, father of **Patrizia Servida Franceschini**, married focolarina in the Roman Mariapolis and of **Valeria Servida Alessandrini**, Volunteer in Lazio Nord; **Josè**, father of **Aurelio Soto**, focolarino in Cochabamba (Bolivia); the mother of **Martine Schneider**, focolarina in Geneva; the mother of **Aga Ghislaine Kahambu**, the father of **Marie Gorettie Ralalaharisoa** and the mother of **Isolde Böttger**, focolarine in Congo; the sister of **Teresia Kropp**, focolarina in Zambia; the brother of **Margrit Francisca Monteiro**, focolarina in Ivory Coast; **Raimunda**, mother, and **Manoel**, brother of **Maria do Parto Moraes**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo; **Anton**, father of **Regina Hessler**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Center of Vienna; **Maria**, mother of **Carmen (Seg) Soto**, focolarina in the Cittadella Castello Esteriore (Spain); **Mario Sandro**, brother of **Luisa Ajroldi**, **Shawkiya Al Khoury**, mother of **Mirvet Kelly** and **Angela**, mother of **M. Franca (Nati) Cavati**, focolarine in the Roman Mariapolis.

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