

YEAR XXX N 2 FEBRUARY 2013

MARIAPOLIS

Newsletter of the Focolare Movement



**Thank you,
Pope Benedict**

*Together with
the Church
open to the novelty
of the Spirit*

**Commitment
for Peace**

A Project of today
with roots
in yesterday

New Humanity

Personal
responsibility
and the social
dimension

To become saints as Church



(...)

The face of the Church, with its lights and shadows, ought to be in every Christian, in every group of Christians. This means that we must feel as our own not only the Church's joys, her hopes, her constantly new forms of growth, her victories, but above all we must feel as our own all of her sorrows: the lack of unity among the Churches, negative disputes, the threat of discarding age-old treasures, the anguish that many deny or refuse the message God speaks to the world for its salvation. [...]

In all these afflictions, above all in the spiritual ones, the suffering Church appears as the Crucified Christ of today who cries out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Not long ago I was at Mount La Verna. There I meditated on the exceptional gift of the stigmata that God gave Francis as a seal of his imitation of Christ, of his discipleship as a Christian.

I was thinking that all true Christians must be stigmatics, not in an extraordinary, outward sense but spiritually.

I seemed to understand that the stigmata of today's Christians are the mysterious but real sufferings of the contemporary Church.

If the charity of Christ is not wide enough to feel in ourselves the pain of these wounds, we are not how God wants us to be today.

In these times, only an individual sanctity is not enough, nor one that is communitarian but closed. We must feel within ourselves the sorrow and the joy that Christ experiences today in his Bride.

We need to become saints as Church.

Chiara

From: CHIARA LUBICH: To become saints as Church in Yes, yes, no, no (Essential writings/2), New City Press, New York, 2007, pp. 117-118

1 Mt 27,46

Special issue

Thank you Pope Benedict

"We love You and will always love You!"
**The occasions of "encounters" between the Focolare
 Movement and Pope Ratzinger were many**

"We would like you to know that we are beside You, in profound and continuous prayer for the new phase that is now starting in Your life and in the life of the Church, with the certain faith in the love of God to which You have called us in a special way this year. We love You and we will always love You!"

It is with these words that Emmaus expressed to Pope Benedict the embrace of the Focolare Movement after the announcement of his

resignation on the 11th of February. An embrace but also a commitment in the words that Emmaus addressed to all of us:

"(...) The first reaction was almost that of dismay and certainly of suffering for that 'diminished strength' so simply and humbly conveyed to us by this Pope who appeared to us so much greater now, precisely in this moment of his weakness.

(...)I would like, with all of you, to take this circumstance as a call from God to a new and greater measure of unity. It is our charism and it is in this moment, now more than ever, that we must bear witness to it, gathering close together in a renewed worldwide pact, from one end of the earth to the other, so as to place at the disposal of



Milan, 2 June 2012. Benedict XVI greets one of our families from Vietnam

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all the Church, the treasure of the presence of the Risen One among us. For this reason, naturally aside from our prayers, let us offer every small or big encounter that we have with Jesus Forsaken, in an unconditional faithfulness to Him, so that Mary will once again attract apostles of the Holy Spirit to the cenacle, to comfort, guide, enlighten..."

Our story with the Pope

Now, re-reading the pages of the history of the Focolare Movement with Benedict XVI, one is surprised by the intensity of the relationship. It is that amazement, which in time – with his gestures and his doctrine – this Pope did not allow us to become accustomed to.

8th of December, 1989. The first surprise. Cardinal Ratzinger spends the whole day at the Mariapolis Center of Castelgandolfo with Chiara and the focolarinas who were present for their annual retreat. Answering to a question, the then Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith affirmed that *"realities like the Focolare Movement, are a great consolation: to see how there is a new generation inspired by a profound rediscovery of the authentic faith of the Church, and of the beauty of living it in the community created by the love of Christ. I think that this is really a sign of the times: a new surge, a new joy, and also a new intelligence of the faith that is capable of interpreting it, and also of celebrating it in a new way."*



23 April 2010.
 Benedict XVI with Emmaus

The other big surprise was reserved for us at the feast of Pentecost '98. His talk at the opening of the Congress which preceded that great meeting with John Paul II in St. Peter's Square, was fundamental in defining the ecclesial Movements and their theological position in the Church. With the difficulties that the post-conciliar Church was passing through, he has a clear vision of the reality of the Movements: *"something that no one has ever programmed, here the Holy Spirit, so to speak, asks to be heard; and faith once again flourished in the young men and women, without "ifs" or "buts"; without subterfuge and loopholes, lived in its entirety as a gift, as a precious gift that makes one live."*

When he became Pope, in 2006, he revived the appointment with the Movements at Pentecost. He recognized them as belonging to the "living structure of the Church", he encouraged them among other things, to be always, "schools of communion", encouraging the work of unity among them. The Holy Spirit – these are his words – *"does not take away from us the hard work needed to learn how to build reciprocal relationships among us, but shows that He is working towards arriving at the one body. And it is precisely only in this way that unity acquires its strength and beauty"*. To the Bishops friends of the Movement in February 2007, whom he met together with the Bishop friends of the Community of St. Egidio, he underlined: *"...that communion among the charisms, that makes up the typical 'sign of the times'"*.

In the message for the event *"Together for Europe"* in May 2007, he wishes for all that they *"work with courage and perseverance"*.

- 1 Benedict XVI, *New invasion of the Spirit – The Movements in the Church*, Editrice San Paolo, 2006 http://focolare.org/lt/1dia4_i.html
- 2 Benedict XVI, *Speech at the Congress for the Movements*, (v. L'Osservatore Romano, 3.06.2006)
- 3 Clementina Hall, 8 February 2007. See: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070208_focolari_it.html



Castel Gandolfo, 8 December 1989.
Card. Ratzinger and Chiara

His relationship with Chiara

Pope Benedict was close to Chiara in various ways. On the 26th of January 2006 he wrote her a card which he personally signed: *"on the eve of the publication of my first Encyclical, you expressed in the name of the Focolare Movement, the joy for the message that I addressed to all the people of God, "Deus caritas est", at the beginning of my Pontificate. I am very grateful for your participation in the life of the Church"*. Then he adds his best wishes for the birthday of Chiara which had just passed.

On the 3rd of November 2007 to the members of the New Families Movement who were present at his audience he would say: *"I thank you for the greetings that were sent to me by Chiara Lubich, to whom I send my best wishes and thoughts, with all my heart, thanking her because with wisdom and strong adhesion to the Church, (she) continues to guide the big family of the Focolare"*.¹

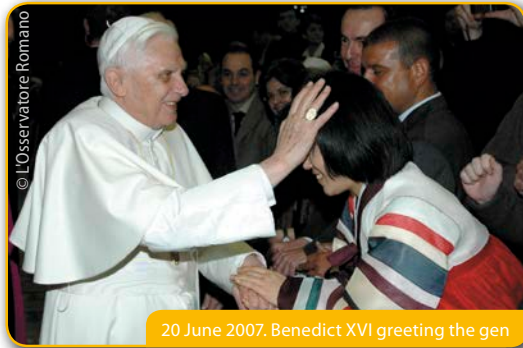
This closeness continues up until March 2008, the moment in which Chiara is confined at the Gemelli Polyclinic: *"I am aware of the trial that you are going through and I would like to send you, in this difficult moment, the assurance of my prayers..."* At St. Paul outside the wall, during the final greetings for Chiara, he exhorts: *"there are many who have known and met her, admiring the marvels that God has done through her missionary ardor, and who follow in her footsteps keeping the charism alive"*.

1 Clementina Hall, 3 November 2007. See: www.vatican.va/.../2007/november/.../hf_ben-xvi_spe_20071103_focolari_it.html

With our people

Benedict XVI had a special relationship with the Gen 4 boys, to whom he wrote a letter on the 14th of June, 2007, and with the Gen 4 girls whom he greeted in the audience of June 2008. The bond of affection that links the Gen Movement with the Pope is clearly expressed in the audience of the 20th of June, 2007: "That look of love – the gen said – will remain forever in our hearts". Let us not forget Chiara Luce who was cited as an example during the World Youth Day, and the presentation of the YouCat, the catechism for young people edited by Città Nuova, in June 2011.

The New Families celebrated their 40th anniversary with him on the 3rd of November, 2007 in the Clementine Hall. And this embrace of the Pope extended up to the worldwide



20 June 2007. Benedict XVI greeting the gen

meeting of families in Milan last June 2012.

During the Synod for the Middle East in October 2010, it was a focolarina, Rita Moussalem, from Jordan, who was present as an auditor, who gathered the love and the blessing of the Holy Father for the Opera. The members of the Great Religions, who greeted him on the occasion of the various Symposiums, feel an increased desire for a sincere dialogue.

In March 2011, Città Nuova presents him with the *Opera Omnia* of St. Augustine: "This work gives honor to the Church," he commented.

In his trips. A memorable event was his meeting with the focolarinos and focolarinas at the end of 2006, who had a central role in welcoming him to Turkey. In Brazil, in May 2007, to the gen boys and girls, he said, embracing them: "I trust you ..." In Lebanon, last 16th of



Pentecost 2006. Benedict XVI greeting Carlos Clariá (Opus) at the meeting with the Movements

September, he said to Mirwat Kelly, a Syrian focolarina belonging to the Siro-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch: "I am very grateful to the focolarini, please send them my gratitude".

The support of a father

During the audience on the 31st of July, 2008, to the participants of the Assembly of the Work of Mary – the first one after the "departure" of Chiara, Benedict XVI said: "The Church counts very much on the Focolare Movement" and he invites them "to go ahead with joy and courage in the tracks of the spiritual inheritance of Chiara Lubich that has been gathered in your Statutes". And to Emmaus who was then elected as President, he expressed a certainty: "God will help you".

This relationship remains uninterrupted. On the 24th of November, 2009, he appointed Emmaus as a Consultant of the Pontifical Council of the Laity. On the occasion of her first trip to Asia, Emmaus received a special blessing. And in the audience after she returned, on the 23rd of April, 2010, he told her: "Continue in this way". On the 7th of December, 2011, he appointed her as Consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. She then is invited as an auditor to the Synod of October 2012. Now in his last blessing in answer to our Christmas greetings, on the 7th of January 2013, he said that he accompanies us and encourages us to follow him, each one according to his way: "God calls me ..." .

Written by Gianna Sibelli

Going in depth

The culture of peace in the charism of unity

In the idea of a united world – a “marvelous project” in which conflicts, wars that cause “countless wounds” – is contained the synthesis of the culture of peace inherent in the charism of unity



New York, 28 May, 1997.
Chiara at the U.N.



“We know how all over the world, in these past few weeks, there is an agonizing suspense due to the crisis going on in the Persian Gulf, that could bring about catastrophic consequences for a vast portion of humanity”. This is what Chiara said on the 13th of September, 1990, during the link-up wherein she foresaw in that region a strong signal of instability. She immediately links this to other places throughout the planet “where battles are ongoing”. She does not stop at the facts but she reads them with the eyes of the charism: “We too, certainly, are no less sensitive and less worried than all the others. On the contrary, we are – so to speak – even more so for two reasons: for that which could happen and because such circumstances will compromise our program: to work for a united world”.

In the idea of a united world – a “*marvelous project*” to which conflicts, wars that cause “*countless wounds*” – lies the synthesis of the culture of peace inherent in the charism of unity. It is a goal – Chiara continues – that we must reach in all circumstances, even during a conflict: “*Let us hold firm to the important things, let us bring ahead the Ideal with or without war*”.

The charism of unity is a vision that does not call for peace but for a united world, proposed as a way to peace, an instrument to conquer peace and, above all to preserve it. This calls us all to be protagonists: “*... a burning desire has been born in our heart, also because of these very serious problems, to bring our own contribution to work for their resolution*”.

It is a desire that Chiara, already in 1959, expressed in her appeal to all peoples to unite and to be protagonists in this adventure of peace: “*every people must go beyond one’s own borders and to look be-*

yond; the moment has come in which the country of the other must be loved as one's own"². An objective, though, that is not reached just by simple intentions, but by looking beyond one's ego, individual and collective, and by working concretely in the structures.

It is not enough to understand what is happening in the world, maybe even convincing ourselves that it is the powerful that make the rules or that in the end the nations freely decide how to act. It is a call to participate directly so as to give life to a culture of international relationships wherein it is not the powerful who rule, but rather peace. And this can be done through the rules, the attention for the other, the commitment towards the weak, and the development of all people.

The charism of unity requires a mature conscience in each one and in all those who have put unity with the others above everything else, that brotherhood that, if it "gives much joy to those who put it into practice, also asks for a commitment, daily exercise, sacrifice". It is the certainty, Chiara says, that: "It is not a joke to commit oneself to live for and to bring peace! One needs courage; one needs to know how to suffer"³.

In the present worldwide context, the seriousness of the conflicts seems to push the solutions further away making peace appear as eternally defeated. Why? because conflicts must be solved based on different visions which apparently seem to be irreconcilable because both parties are unable to approach one another, to dialogue, to lose one's own egoism. One speaks of the clash of civilizations which are always more transformed into opposition and battles that express the ideology of war, considered as the only instrument to overcome conflicts, as if peace was just

an alternative to war. This is the reality in which the charism of unity with its paradigm of a united world finds an answer in that intuition of Chiara: "to go beyond the category of the enemy, of any enemy"⁴. Thus it is the enemy that I must/we must destroy so as to create the conditions for peace, on all levels. Well, this cannot happen without military might lined up in the field, with sophisticated weaponry or with nuclear deterrents, nor is "diplomatic strength enough", but what is needed are the "forces of Good"⁵. In "giving one's life for the other" the category of the enemy is singularly overcome, we go beyond it together and we bring it up to an international level.

We are now living a planetary dimension in which the problem is the hidden conflicts, the bloodiest and the forgotten, even with causes that are more painful than the sufferings they provoke. With Chiara, we start again with the Pact and the Time-out "so as to ask the Father, in the name of Jesus and through the intercession of Mary, that the crises may be resolved (...) and the wars all over the world may end"⁶. And let's do it convinced that Jesus can give humanity the gift of peace: "that just peace, that peace that will allow everyone, of any belief, of any condition, of any Country, to live their life in serenity"⁷.

Vincenzo Buonomo

1 Answer to the married focalinari, 18.1.1991

2 At the Mariapolis of Fiera di Primiero, 22.8.1959

3 At the U.N., 28.5.1997

4 To the U.N., 28.5.1997

5 Chiara at the Calvin Auditorium, Geneva, 25.10.2002

6 Collegamento CH 3.9.1990

7 Maria (Emmaus) Voce, To the Gen 2 Rainbow Units, Castelgandolfo, 28.12.2012



How the *Time-out* started

In 1986, after almost 10 years that Chiara did not come to a Gen 3 Congress, she finally promised to come to the next one which would have taken place during Pentecost of '87. There was a great joy and expectation for all the Gen 3 boys and girls: this would not just be an ordinary Congress but a Supercongress!

To prepare themselves, but above all to ask for the health of Chiara so that she may be able to come to their meeting, they thought of praying everyday all together: a prayer that would rise up to Heaven from all over the world, all together, a *consenserint*.

Precisely in those days, I was in Poland and there they shared with me that just a few months before, due to the protests against the previous communist government a curfew was declared throughout the nation.

The gen would not have been able to meet and so they de-

ecided to meet spiritually every day at an appointed time, uniting themselves in prayer for one another every 12 noon.

I shared this idea with Virgo Folonari at the Gen 3 Center and we shared it with all the gen 3 boys and girls who liked the idea immediately. So they started to look for a name for this worldwide *consenserint* until someone suggested: *Time-out*, the moment which calls together all the *basketball* players to agree on something.

This name was welcomed unanimously and so it was launched all over the world. Chiara came to the first Supercongress which was then followed by her presence in the succeeding ones, always preceded by the *Time-out*.

In '90 when the first Iraqi War broke out, Chiara called us up at the Gen 3 Center asking us permission to use this idea and so the *Time-out* for Peace was launched to all the persons of the Movement and to all those who would like to unite themselves to us in this prayer.

Walter Kostner



New publication

Beyond the veil in the heart of Pakistan

Pakistan: a fascinating country but still relatively unknown to us westerners. It is a region with a scorching climate but which boasts of the highest snowy peaks in the world. It is a new State, but which has a centuries-old history which was often turbulent and sorrowful. It is a land of wars, of invasions and conquests, whose culture's origin comes from a mix of various cultures.

Here in Karachi, on the 1st of January, 1986, the adventure of Daniela Bignone started, a woman, western, Christian, fo-

colorina. The adventure – that will last 23 years – is that of bringing the Ideal to a far-off land which is different in language, traditions, history, and faith. A strong, captivating life experience is revealed: the experience of inculturating oneself, of “losing oneself” so as to make the beautiful, positive values of a centuries-old culture emerge.

After some years, in something like a diary, Daniela gathers together impressions, encounters, flavors, perfumes and colors in the book *“Beyond the veil, in the heart of Pakistan”*.

This book represents a challenge for Città Nuova: to tell about our life and the Ideal of fraternity, using a universal language, understandable to all. Reading this exciting and yet delicate, both profound and enthralling story of Daniela, it seems to me that this challenge has been met.

Elena Cardinali



«Hot spots»

zoom

West Africa • Mali

There is apprehension for the state of war in which our members in Mali find themselves. Since 2012 in fact, there has been an ongoing conflict which at the beginning of 2013 saw the intervention of France (besides that of other African countries). Our bigger community is found in Bamako and other smaller communities are scattered throughout the rest of the Country. The focolare centers from the Ivory Coast are often in contact with them.

Vitoria Franciscatti and Pino Fiorucci write to us from Man: “For the moment they are fine, although they are still in danger. They are, together with their fellow citizens, in the midst of a situation in which everything crumbles and which is a strong reminder of the ‘early times’ of Chiara. Here, from all over the zone, we are praying and striving to be as close as possible to them.”

Pakistan

The situation in Pakistan remains fragile, due to the various episodes of violence. People continue to struggle to go ahead in the midst of the high inflation and frequent interruptions of the supply of electricity, gas, petrol, and now also of mobile phone signals; but in spite of this they try to keep their hopes up and to go ahead with courage. Every day during the Time-out, as we pray together for peace, let us also remember our brothers and sisters of Pakistan.

(see also pages 27 and 29).

Youth for a United World

Fraternity is in action

United World Project: steps in a journey that also passes through the little daily activities



In Rome, Corrada and Riccardo have organized a tuition class after school for the children of the gypsies, to teach them Italian and to help them to successfully integrate themselves with their classmates.

Juliana and Marcos in Porto Alegre in Brazil have involved all their friends and acquaintances in a project of cleaning up their neighborhood.

Aki and Isako in Japan have organized a big party involving the other apartment blocks: an occasion to tear down prejudices of religion that for many years was an obstacle to building good relationships with the neighbors.

Small examples or better yet, fragments of a united world, that goes ahead day by day in the measure in which we personally roll up our sleeves. These are the concrete actions that form the foundation of the "United World Project" (UWP) promoted by the youth of the Focolare Movement.

"A slow but irreversible journey of humanity towards universal brotherhood"¹: this is how Chiara Lubich saw, with a brilliant intuition, the history of humanity and the importance of bringing to light the positive signs of the times.

The "United World Project" would like to echo the words of Chiara and to bring to light this journey towards universal brotherhood.

The project was born in June 2011 during the weekend workshop for the Genfest. The commission made up of young people and adults immediately started to develop this idea, which was driven by the task that Chiara has entrusted to the Youth for a United World: to convince the world that it is called to unity. The project was launched in Budapest during the Genfest in the presence of twelve thousand young people.

What does this project foresee?

The setting up of a permanent International Observatory on universal brotherhood with the aim of increasing and spreading the culture of brotherhood, obviously not only among members of the Movement, but also in civil society and in the international institutions.

How can one contribute?

We are all called to sign up for the Project with our signature that expresses a lifestyle. The objective is that of collecting fifty thousand signatures by the end of May. Your signature demands a commitment to:

- **live the «Golden Rule»** («do to others what you would have them do to you»);
- **support the future setting-up** of the «Permanent Observatory on Universal Brotherhood» so as to make known and to promote experiences of brotherhood in action among individuals, groups and institutions;
- **ask for recognition** of the Week for a United World at the institutional and international level.

¹ Chiara alla Giornata dell'interdipendenza, Roma, 12 settembre 2004

The signature campaign is the occasion to propose the project everywhere: in the Universities, in schools, in the parishes. In Parma, for example, on the 1st of January, the gen participated in the March for Peace promoted by the Community of St. Egidio. At the end of the march, the UWP was presented and many signed the document. The possibility of signing the document not only on paper but also online was prepared since the start of the project through the website www.unitedworldproject.org.

The project does not only require a signature. It brings with it a daily commitment to bring ahead, to realize and to identify micro and macro initiatives of fraternity. These are called "fragments of fraternity", which is the name that Chiara gave to the small local and universal



actions that increase fraternity.

But all these represent only the tip of the iceberg. Aside

from this, there is the daily fraternity, that of being together in normal everyday moments, that of loving one another and feeling ourselves brothers and sisters, without any special visibility: this is the hidden part of the iceberg.

The Center of the Youth for a United World is already gathering the micro and macro initiatives of fraternity that describe in a more scientific way what the Movement does outside of its' own ambit. The goal is to hand over to the UNESCO National Commissions this collection and then to prepare a dossier to present to the Central Headquarters of UNESCO in Paris.

Let us remember then to be «sentinels» of universal brotherhood, with open eyes so as to grasp the signs of the times that show the journey of humanity towards the realization of a united world.

prepared by Tiziana Nicastro

Two important moments of 2013

The Week for a United World that closed the year of the Genfest. This will take place in Jerusalem from April 24 to May 2, and foresees events in the inter-religious and academic fields. The culminating event will be held on the 1st of May where the theme of fraternity will be discussed. The Gen Verde and the Gen Rosso will participate and will offer some workshops for the young people.

«Sharing with Africa»: a construction site of reciprocity was born after a Pan African Congress of the gen. The unifying vision of the world which is the basis of the African society and which is expressed, for example, with the proverb «I am because we are», seemed to the gen as the gift that Africa could give to the rest of the world. Fully aware of this patrimony, they would like to safeguard it and to share it with young people from all over the world. From the 10th to the 13th of May, a School of Inculturation will be held at the Mariapolis Piero in Nairobi, followed by some social activities.

Let us hold the world in our arms

**The Ideal of unity has reached
the ends of the earth.
The dream of Chiara now
gives mature fruits.
Emmaus and Giancarlo
meet with multi-cultural
communities**



When Emmaus and Giancarlo met with the community of Wellington in New Zealand, the welcome presentation started with the well-known words of a psalm that Chiara and her first companions prayed many years ago in Trent: *«Ask me and I will give you all the nations as your inheritance, and in possession the ends of the earth.»* (Psalm 2, 8). This is the image with which we could enclose the visit of Emmaus and Giancarlo to the zone of Oceania (22 January – 5 February).

The moments spent with the young people coming from all over were very special. In Melbourne the experiences of the gen boys and gen girls and their questions ex-

pressed the desire to live in profundity. «How can we remain strong in our faith when there are super-difficult moments? – they asked for example -. How can we continue to swim against the current when the pressure to follow the current in today's society is so strong?». *«The current that drags you, that captures you, will force you to go down - Emmaus answered -. From what Giancarlo said earlier we have understood that it is also not enough to just resist, that we have to fight against this current, and that God is asking great things from us»*. She invited everyone to create together a positive current, with the faith that God will intervene and will support us.

Some representatives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne who were present during that weekend together were enthusiastic in seeing so many young people actively involved in the life of the Church.

The theologian Ann Hunt, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology at The Australian Catholic University, expressed the desire that the Gen start a group of young people in her University.

During the retreat of the focolarini, at the beginning of their visit, Emmaus, using an image that really impressed everyone, compared our relationships to that of an «inverted pyramid» expressing the need that each one of us in the Opera must be responsible for living and sharing the Ideal. «Having done this reversal (complete change) – she explained – then everything that comes after is fine, because we are all at the service of the Work of God, which means at the service of humanity, of those brothers and sisters God puts beside us».

The experience shared with the indigenous people of Oceania was a great enrichment during their visit. Many of those present at the meeting in Melbourne came from the Pacific islands: Fiji, Futuna, Wallis, New Caledonia. Their faithfulness to the Ideal and the witness of a culture imbued with the Gospel were truly a gift for everyone.

During the meetings with the communities, the presentation of the zone recalled the pioneers of the Opera in Oceania: lives transformed by the Gospel, to be imitated so as to bring the Ideal in the places where we live. The image used by Emmaus of the water that makes the earth fertile even after a drought was very effective: «Each one of you must feel that he or she is a drop of water which together with the other drops must leave this hall to spray, to water, so as to revitalize all the people here, who may not know it but who are thirsting for God. We can give Him to them with our life».

The invitation to rely on the strength of living together was very strong at the end of the meeting with the community, «because Australia is vast, and also a bit scattered because there is a lot of space and very few people. When

we are together we have the strength of the whole. That's why maybe two of you go to one place, two in another: someone to New Caledonia, someone to Futuna, someone to Samoa, someone else remains here in Melbourne, in Sydney, in Perth, but each one has the strength of everyone and finds the courage to say to himself or herself: I cannot keep for myself the bread and the water that God has given me without striving to share it, it's my turn now!».

The New Evangelization and the theme on the love of neighbor was the key to many answers that Emmaus and Giancarlo gave. A Muslim professor, invited for the meeting which was open to all, was deeply touched by the experiences of the Gospel lived in a secularized society like Australia, and he said that he found joy and freshness in the lively enthusiasm of the people. An Anglican bishop, who had participated at the meeting of Bishops and priests, said that he had found the family once more, and a Catholic bishop spoke of the importance of living the Ideal in his life as a bishop.

Towards the end of the trip, when we asked Emmaus her impression, she answered: «I am fascinated by this people, by their courage, by their struggles against all adversities. In Australia, having had to adapt to difficult situations and many diverse cultures, a healthy, open, enterprising people developed. They are capable of meeting new challenges with simplicity and without fear and to welcome the gifts of the other. Imagine if the "golden rule" were to be put into practice by the whole continent: it would be something marvelous! The fact that we see that this could be possible gives us a lot of joy in working for this».

In 1986 when Pope John Paul II came to Christchurch in New Zealand, he said jokingly: «What is the distance between here and Rome? Today distance does not exist». It is the same experience that we lived during the visit of Emmaus and Giancarlo. What she said to the focolarini of New Zealand seemed to be a reality for us: «What more beautiful thing is there than to think of this body of focolarini



who open their arms and from one end of the planet to another they embrace it in order to offer it to God? Let's take the world, let's keep it close to us and together let us bring it ahead towards God».

Lucia Compostella, Bruno Carrera



From Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia: together for the first time

Together for a historical meeting with Emmaus and Giancarlo during their trip to the Asian archipelago from the 17th to the 21st of January: it was the first time that the communities of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia met together. We were 300 in all, happily going beyond all our expectations. The economic difficulties, in fact, due to the long trips, permission from work, family situations, led us to think that we would only be half the number and instead here we are so numerous. The people, in spite of being so different from one another, found themselves «one» due to the presence of the President which transformed everyone into a true family full of warmth.

The various communities were reciprocally enriched; especially the much younger community from Indonesia, who upon their

arrival the day before, already conquered everyone with their love; at the same time they discovered the beauty of the other communities. For this reason someone expressed the desire to meet together as a zone at least once every three years.

Due to the presence of the focolare center in Indonesia, the entire preparation – lodging, meeting hall, transportation and all the necessary things that such a gathering entailed – were taken care of particularly by the community of Johor (in Malaysia) and Singapore. They all felt themselves as the protagonists, happy of the trust that was given to them. Each community, then, with a great responsibility, prepared their experiences inserted in the local context of every Country and also many harmonious and varied artistic presentations. A very

beautiful aspect was the presence of persons who had lost contact with us since the coming of the Ideal to their Country.

The day Emmaus left we asked her:

«What would you like to tell those of us who will remain here? ». «For me there is only one word – she replied – *Jesus in the midst. If there is Jesus in the midst we can be peaceful in whatever place and in whatever situation. This depends on each one of us.*

«Today I strongly felt the presence of Chiara among us. She will never die if we have unity and Jesus is among us», someone commented.



The 50th anniversary of the Focolare in Africa

From a flame to a fire

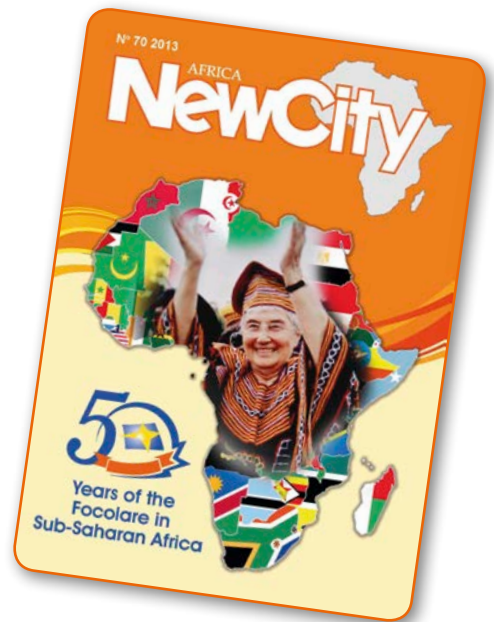
**The celebration of the 50° in Africa
starting from Shishong in Camerun
and will go on during the year**

«First a flame now a fire» - with these words from one of our songs we went back to the source of this fire, there, where on the 12th of February 1963, the first focolarini arrived.

«It is a divine and extraordinary story that you know well» - this is what Emmaus said in her message. And she continues *«They are many, many years of faithfulness and commitment on the part of many of you, who have made that seed sprout – which was planted in the beginning in Cameroun – and from which branches of a renewed humanity blossomed, branches which tend towards the realization of the plan of God for all the great African continent and beyond.* Chiara Lubich herself, coming several times to your beloved land, gave a great push to the growth of a people born from the Gospel, able to bear witness to “being a family” beyond the membership to a tribe, ethnic group and different peoples.

My thoughts, and I believe yours too, goes out in a special way to you and to Mons. Julius Peeters, who from Heaven, together with Marilen Holzhauser, Piero Pasolini and all those who have already reached Heaven, are close to you today».

Shisong comes into view after 10 hours by car from Fontem - , immersed in the setting sun, resplendent like a luminous crown! The inhabitants of the place opened the doors of their homes; the mayor himself has housed many persons, not only to sleep but also offering them dinner. Around 5,000 people have come.



On the 9th of February, a much awaited day, the Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua of Bamenda, opened the celebrations with a Thanksgiving Mass – three bishops and around 20 priests and religious concelebrated. Going over these past 50 years and to underline the relevance of the charism today, he cited long excerpts from the speech of Emmaus at the recent Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization.

The dances of the Bangwa expressed the gratitude and the happiness for the gift that God even today is renewing. The feast continued with experiences and commemoration through films and experiences of the first focolarini that this earth has given to God through the charism of unity.

Then there was the invitation to take up the Time-out once again, the launching of the United World Project and the new edition of *New City Africa*. Everyone left with a renewed strength, an irrepressible joy and a hymn of gratitude to Chiara, the absolute protagonist in the heart of each one and of this divine adventure.

Marie Janes

see also www.focolare.org

Secretariats of New Humanity

Experience the beauty of the new times

Their faces showed amazement, astonishment as they gazed upwards at the Last Judgment of Michelangelo. The same eyes that had just passed through the Room of Raphael, the Art Gallery and a quick tour of the Museums and which, certainly, did not go unnoticed also because of their international features. For a few days more, although unaware of it, our people are not only savoring the cultural value and the beauty of extraordinary works of art, but they are also experiencing a piece of history that precisely in these weeks is becoming newsworthy in the Sistine Chapel with the election of the new Pontiff.

Nevertheless it is a quick but stealthy pace that runs through the colors of the Vatican Museums, the lights of St. Peter's Square and the cold that has enveloped Rome in this February evening for a few days each year.

Then off again back to the Mariapolis Center of Castelgandolfo, where the International Congress for the New Humanity Secretariats is taking place, of

A social vocation that passes from personal and communitarian responsibility

which the visit to the Sistine Chapel is an integral part of the program.

The meeting was held from the 6th to the 10th of February, with 260 participants from all over the world: tired and a little bit cold that evening, but very happy. Teres Maric of Romania shared - «It was like a meditation. To go in depth in our social vocation also through these works of art made it possible for us to acquire a greater perception of that which we are called to do in the world, all together».

On the other hand, the title of the Congress encouraged everyone to make this step: **«Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and the rest will be given to you besides»** (Mt 6, 31-33).

Five intense days, during which they went in depth with the theme of love of neighbor as seen from the eyes of New Humanity, with the awareness of what the Opera is today, thanks to the answers that Emmaus and Giancarlo gave in Guatemala, and to the far-reaching talk given by Gusti Oggenfuss; each participant rediscovered his or her personal and collective responsibility for the incarnation of the Ideal in the place where they live.



Due to the economic and financial crisis that most of the world is experiencing, the Congress could not but dedicate a whole day to the world of economy and work using new methods and a new language: the theme on poverty was presented in all its nuances, with experiences, comparative groups, exercises in deliberative democracy of concrete cases, with multimedia contributions from Italian and international production companies, with reflections from Luigini Bruni and Elisa Golin, who is the President of the International Commission of the Red at the Central Secretariat. The workshop reinforced and clarified what the specific contribution of New Humanity is: to express through actions, values and priorities that «love becomes a method through instruments of sharing that give value to diversity. Jesus in the midst so as to give an answer to humanity that lives in poverty of relationships».

Poverty as expressed in the lack of money, in the difficulty of surviving up to the end of the month or in the hopelessness in the eyes of an 8-year old child questioned all the participants with a reflection on one's own lifestyle, and showed the diversity of cultures and mentalities as a fertile terrain to develop proposals for concrete action in the territories.

The story of Sergio Rosas, labourer at 400 meters underground in one of the mines of Sulcis, in Sardegna (Italy), one of the poorest in the Country, gives witness to this. His experience, shared by Achille Napoleone and Cristiana Caredda, showed how the (economic) crisis became «an opportunity to rediscover the values», and also overwhelmingly showed the need of radically re-

newing oneself and the society around. Sergio wrote: «Today more than ever I am convinced that uniting the experience of the adults and the strength of the young is still a winning hand, the stakes are really high in this moment, let us try to do our part, for ourselves but above all for all our children».

«**To work, to always work together with the whole Opera!**» this is the wish and the commitment that the secretariats brought home with them. From the Sistine Chapel to Castelgandolfo, together with the Youth for a United World through the United World Project, up to the whole world, so as to experience the beauty of this new era in which we are called to live and to work where the Ideal of Chiara is now more than ever relevant. Without forgetting our next appointment: «Learning Fraternity», the international meeting on education, scheduled from the 6th to the 8th of September, 2013 at the Mariapolis Center of Castelgandolfo.

Paolo Balduzzi

Volunteer women and men «Together» for a new beginning

**From all corners of the Earth
to Castelgandolfo. Testimonies
from hotspots in the planet**

«The men and women volunteers here are smart, they are exceptional people!» These are the warm words that Emmaus sent us from Australia, through a telephone call to Darci Rodrigues and Gusti Oggenfuss. All the 130 participants of the short school (28-30 January) for the new volunteers responsible for the nuclei were full of joy upon receiving her affectionate greetings, full of esteem.

The three days were illuminated in a special way by the video of Palmira Frizzera on the birth of the Opera and of the «Colors». «Listening to the words of Palmira, we felt that we were brought in a special way into the soul of Chiara, generated by her life».

Then from the 31st of January to the 3rd of February the meeting with 280 volunteers responsible for the nuclei, coming from all corners of the world was held. The Volunteers from Africa were absent because they were preparing for the Pan African Congress of the Volunteers of God, scheduled for mid-May at the Mariapolis Piero (Nairobi).

We shared to everyone the fruits and the graces received during the school. Then, recalling a thought expressed by the Pope in these days: «God is calling us today...», some of us shared the dramatic situations they were living in their Countries, which gave witness to the strength of mutual love: from the heroic life of the Volunteer men and women in Syria (see box), to the birth of a new political conscience in Egypt in the midst of the confusion and the violent situation of the Country, to the earthquake in Emilia, in Italy.

Gusti, renewing the greeting of Emmaus, put into focus once more and with great emphasis that: «The Opera today is the Opera with Jesus in the midst», inviting each one to put themselves beside the Delegates of the Opera in the zone so as to build «together» the Opera for «Ut omnes».



We meditated on the love of neighbor through some excerpts of Chiara and Emmaus, and with the talks of Marco Tecilla, Vera Araujo, Fr. Amedeo Ferrari and the Secretariat of New Humanity, we saw how this love becomes relationship, becomes dialogue and influences society.

They were moments of unity and of light which renewed our responsibility and opened our vocation to the dimension of the Opera and of humanity. The moments of dialogue in the Hall and in the small groups were profound and constructive. We departed with «the inheritance of Chiara: her sanctity», that Lucia Abignente presented through her talk. The words of Chiara renewed in us the certainty of being able to realize the sanctity of the people.



Mariele Quartana shared the last days of Pino, and together with the spiritual thoughts of Klaus Hemmerle and with the profiles of our volunteers who have gone to the Heavenly Mariapolis, we saw how Heaven and Earth became one.

It was a new beginning for everyone, which was expressed in this final commitment: "In the new reality of the Opera and in the concreteness of an incarnated love for humanity, our vocation as volunteers stood out: women and men of today called to love always with their lives and with their actions»

Maria Ghislandi, Paolo Mottironi

Live from Syria

I am Daisy, in-charge of the women volunteers of the zone of Lebanon which also includes Syria, which we know has been at war for the past two years.

Many Syrian families have already left the Country. Six of them came to Lebanon, others escaped elsewhere. Some made the choice of staying in the Country, to live that phrase «to live for one's people»

They are heroic. Five families sought refuge at the Mariapolis Center and a good number of the community, including many volunteers, are taking care of them with much love. The people are tired. Our members in Aleppo share with us by telephone about the continuous hardships, the stinging cold, the lack of water and electricity, bread which is scarce and if available is sold at an exorbitant price, of blackmail and kidnappings for profit in a city that was once the industrial and commercial center of the Country.

They talk of death always at the door and of the providential help from God. Often we hear terrible news, like the massacre at

the University of Architecture in Aleppo, due to the missiles that fell on it. We immediately called Hilda, a volunteer who works there and the two gen who are studying in that University. Their voices were still full of emotion but clear. They told us of unspeakable scenes. Hilda shared: «Today was the first day of exams, the bell already rang and we were collecting the papers. A student asked us to give him a few more minutes: he had arrived late due to the blockaded streets. My colleagues didn't want to give him more time, but in the end I was able to convince them to do so. After five minutes passed the student handed in his exam paper and we went down together to the courtyard on our way out. Then I saw a missile pass above my head, then another! I would have been in the exact place where the two missiles fell if I had left the room a few minutes earlier. I found my car and saw that the roof was damaged, the windows in fragments, but that act of love for one student had saved me».



After what happened, many of our people repeated to one another: «Let us remain in Love, in the present moment». There is nothing else. In spite of everything, we feel the special Love of God for our Countries in the Middle East, because He is the one who makes history and His Resurrection will also be ours. So now with the Time-out launched by Emmaus, at 12 noon in every Country, we renew with you the faith in the power of prayer that can stop every war in the world.

Priests and deacons Called to a vast sowing

The Ideal of unity at the service of the local Church, «giving witness and promoting communion». An invitation received abundantly.

For the meeting of the priest and deacon focolarinos (22 – 25 January 2013) Emmaus suggested this motto: *“To look at all the flowers ... To look at the other as a flower belonging to one’s own garden”*. It was in this light that we went in depth with Chiara, Emmaus and Bishop Klaus Hemmerle into the theme of the year – Jesus in the brother – and we dove into the reality of the Opera today with all its joys and challenges with Gusti Oggenfuss and Hans Jurt.

The talk of Piero Coda on the «50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the charism of Unity» served as the luminous background of the meeting. It made us grasp this hour of history as a true moment of God: we have in our hands a precious talent that we must make use of as much as possible for the good of the Church and all humanity who are called to enter into a new era!

In this context, the letter of the Co-President of the Opera from Oceania (see box) came precisely *ad hoc*, showing us our characteristic contribution to «*Ut omnes*», in the closest collaboration with the other branches of Opera. First of all with the Parish and Diocesan Movements who updated us on their recent meeting with Emmaus and Giancarlo.

«To be beacons of Jesus in the midst in the Church» was the motto of the day in which six priest focolarinos made their promises. The day started with a meditation on «The specific characteristic of the priest and deacon focolarinos in the thoughts of Chiara» and culminated with the spiritual thought of Chiara on Jesus Forsaken: «*Nox mea obscurum non habet – my night knows no darkness*» – the true heart of the meeting – which was echoed in the inspired homily of Marco Tecilla.

fr. Hubertus Blaumeiser

The letter from Oceania

Dear priests, [...] I would like to share with you the joy and the grace of your meeting. In a special way I would like to tell you something about how precious this new moment of the Opera that we are living in appears to me [...]. I have in my heart [...] the recent meeting that Emmaus and I had with the Secretariats of the parish and diocesan Movements [cf. separate article, n.d.r.]. [...] At the school of Jesus in the midst we must find the ways and the means that will allow us to incarnate always better the Ideal of Chiara in the life and the mission of the dioceses and parishes.





We must abundantly sow the spirituality of unity in the soil of the local Church, bearing witness to and promoting communion. The charism must be placed at the service of all: in fact, we have received it as a gift that must be used widely as much as possible, so as to arrive at «Ut omnes». [...]

You must be certain: that the Opera will accompany you with love in this work, your work, that will be appreciated, supported, guaranteed and guided and (the Opera) will commit itself together with you to undo the eventual knots that may present themselves [...]

What is important is that everything develops in full communion, which is always the dynamism of the Trinity – unity and distinction: therefore by having in your heart the unity with the entire Focolare Movement you will know how to safeguard and nourish the specificity of this branch [...].

«Ask and I will give you as your inheritance all the people!» I strongly believe that this consignment is true also for you, above all in the pastoral situation in which you are involved [...] Emmaus has read and shares with joy all that I have written to you [...] and she greets all of you one by one, with all her heart. [...].

Giancarlo

This letter was welcomed by the priests and deacons as a brotherly and warm invitation to launch themselves in prospect of «Ut omnes», and to feel that each one is a protagonist following the shining example of Fr. Enrico Gemma, parish priest in Rome, who had recently died, which Giancarlo recalled (see page 29).

Through a dialogue via skype with Giancarlo during the meeting of the priest and deacon focolarini, two directions to be lived in particular emerged: «to throw one's life off balance» and to put all the structures at the service of life.

The meeting of the priest and deacon volunteers (5 – 8 February)

had as its thread of thought the theme on «co-responsibility» given in the three dimensions of the Opera, of the branch and of the Church. We found ourselves, in a way that was more intense than before, responsible for the life of unity, for the realization of that «body», a «living part» of the Work of Mary, with her features and her «gaze» open to all humanity.

The letter of Giancarlo and the final and unexpected telephone call from Emmaus were the seal of the meeting. A second reality came to life: to feel that, precisely because we are «Opera», our life is «for» the Church, directed towards her crosses and her joys. It is from here that the interior motivation and the push to launch ourselves with greater courage, together with the priest and deacon focolarinos and the Movement at large in the ecclesial environment, comes from, so as to contribute to making the Church a «prophetic sign» of humanity realized in «fraternity».

The young priests were a special presence at the meeting which was expressed in the admission of 12 new members, the majority of them below the age of 40: a sign of great hope. In the Mass celebrated for the occasion, it came spontaneously to us to think about the twelve apostles with Jesus among them. An emblematic image of what we had asked Mary: that She continue to accompany that new «cenacle» which is Her Work, so that the Holy Spirit even today may open it up to welcome the hopes and the lights that in the various languages still express themselves and wait with expectation for authentic answers.

fr. Tonino Gandolfo

Parish and Diocesan Movements

With courage and a leap forward

To work in synergy with the whole Opera: to bring the charism of unity is a service to the Church and to society

«Dear Emmaus and Giancarlo, thank you for the new season in which you have brought us. We would like to assure you of our full agreement to live with the dimension of the Opera wherever we are, with courage and sprint, sowing (the Ideal) at large. Certain of your support and help in this new journey, yours of the Secretariats of the Parish and Diocesan Movements».

This message was sent to Emmaus and Giancarlo at the end of the first day of the meeting of the secretariats of the Parishes (PM) and Diocesan (DM) Movements that was held from the 11th to the 13th of January in Castelgandolfo.

It was a meeting characterized by a continuous exchange, by communion and by dialogue on the various aspects of these two mass movements. The great novelty was the updating of the meeting



of the Central Secretariat with Emmaus and Giancarlo in December, which was welcomed by all with enthusiasm, gratitude and full support (see box).

A special moment of joy was the visit of Darci Rodrigues and Gusti Oggenfuss who answered various questions touching important points on the incarnation of the Charism in the life of the Parish and Diocesan Movements, both externally and internally in the relationships within the Opera.

There was a long exchange of experiences on the identity of one who is committed (to the Parish and Diocesan Movements) which gave rise to some very precise aspects while at the same time taking into consideration the diversities present from one zone to another, based on the expansion and the maturity of the Movement in that zone.



Fr. Emilio Rocchi, from the Priests Center, presented the theme on ecclesial formation, from which emerged the importance of this aspect for the Parish and Diocesan Movements. It is surely a reality that must be looked after always better with regards to formation. Many were grateful for the novelty of this moment that opened wide a new season for the two Movements, with the confirmation of the presence of the youth, and the expressed commitment to develop these two realities, fully aware that we are at the dawn of the incarnation of the Charism and that we must sow (the Ideal) widely.

The secretariat meets with Emmaus and Giancarlo

On the 11th of December, 2012, the Central Secretariat of the Parishes and Diocesan Movements had a very beautiful meeting with Emmaus and Giancarlo which ended with these encouraging words from Emmaus: «*With courage and sprint, sow widely*».

It was a very important moment due to the topics that were tackled and above all because of the instructions and directions that emerged from this meeting.

Emmaus and Giancarlo underlined the fact that bringing the Ideal to the parishes is a true service to the Church, or better still, to all of society. The Church, the Opera are happy if we go and sow widely, at large. Humanity does not expect anything less. We must not be afraid to grow, because if these two Movements grow it means that the Opera is growing.

What came to light was the presence of a youth sector that is very rich and alive. A synergy must be formed with the other youth branches and movements of the Opera, just like what happened

during the Genfest 2012. Emmaus feels that all these young people are the «*second generation of the Focolare Movement*» ... and only then are they gen 2, Youth for a United World, youth of the Parish Movement and the Diocesan Movement, and that we must make them grow in the realities where they are, so that they may be able to choose in which branch they will belong to when they become the first generation.

They advised us to get to know one another, among all the branches, the mass Movements, so as to discover the riches of one another. These living relationships with the various realities of the Opera are important because in the parishes you have people of all ages. Aside from this, even if the principal animators are the priests and those who are specifically committed, everyone can be animators of these two mass Movements.

Emmaus said that «*the parish must have the same breath as the Opera, the breath of Jesus in the midst among all the members, which is then visible, radiates, goes out, and is transmitted, throughout the city where that parish is found, even into the civil structures...*».

Both at the Center and in the zones we have already started to have these meetings with the center and the mass movement so as to get to know each other better.

At the end of the meeting we were very happy for the hour spent together. We immediately sent an update to the zones asking them to inform the whole Zone Council of the important points regarding the whole Opera and all its parts. We feel that a new season is starting for the two Movements and as a consequence for the whole Opera.

D. Klaus Hoffstetter



IN DIALOGUE

Communion and Law

A growing commitment

At work for the coming International Congress

After some years in which Communion and Law developed in various countries, finding ways to dialogue with the local juridical realities, we feel the need for a moment of «global» encounter so as to gather and study the experience that has been made up to now and the intuitions that were born regarding the way of living all juridical relationships with love for the other.

This life and these intuitions developed following the International Congress of 2005 that had as its objective the relationality in law and the possibility of giving rise to and living this relationality in terms of fraternity.

Therefore we thought of dedicating the coming international Congress that will take place in Rome on the 13th, 14th and 15th of March, 2014, to the deepening of the same theme by looking more concretely at its juridical implications in the various fields of social life.

With this objective we chose two specific fields, that of environmental protection and that of partic-

ipation, inasmuch as it is particularly characterized by the relationships between different subjects, that often bring with them contrasting interests.

Therefore we would like to do some research also through experiences, to see how it is possible to have a vision and a practice of law that has man and the common good as its center. We would like to follow various pathways, that are slowly taking shape, with a scientific committee and with zone points of reference of the Inundations. This means to look at environmental protection in the different constitutions; so as to be able to enter into international agreements (for example for the protection of the seas and oceans) and in the legislation of single states. The theme on participation also appears to be very rich with possibilities that can acti-

vate virtuous relationships of the citizens with the public authorities, also with the aim of defending legality. So aforementioned themes could open the way for the consideration of other protective laws in other fields of society in which it is necessary to reinforce the responsibility of each one with regards to the other such as: the social responsibility of an enterprise, the right to be employed, the protection of health, the responsibility to protect, the approach of precaution, etc.

Those involved in the preparation of the Congress include young students and graduates that form research and study groups in the zones on the themes of the Congress and who will bring their results to the Summer Camp scheduled at the end of July.

*Maria Giovanna Rigatelli,
Gianni Caso*



India

Dialogue on a fishing boat

In Goa a fragment of fraternity opens with a new Hindu Movement

Meenal Katarnikar, professor at the University of Mumbai, our Hindu «friend» wanted us to get to know the people of her Movement. Anam Prem (Love) is not really an institution or an organization but rather a current of thought; they are people who aspire to the divinization of what is human, followers of Shree Adaneshwar.

The headquarters of Anam Prem is found in the heart of every follower and in all his activities.

Its aim is to spread love and to weave every soul with that invisible thread of love. Their desire is to promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood among the different religions, cultures and languages and also the dignity of the woman.

Meenal had organized a tour to introduce to us their project for fisher folk who live along the river between the region of Goa and Maharashtra. After a two-hour road trip we reached the river where a fishing boat awaited us. As soon as we sailed out on the river, an enchanting view of nature greeted us, and after a refreshing drink which they kept for us in the hold, a spontaneous sharing on the life of our respective Movements started with the five people of Anam Prem who accompanied us.



Anam Prem: «joy and love, to do everything with a disinterested love, dedicating oneself to the needs of the neighbours», and their faces expressed the joy, pureness and serenity with which they live these teachings. We too spoke about the «Golden Rule», of universal brotherhood, of the «art of loving». We found ourselves as brothers and sisters, as if we had always known each other.

After the tour on the boat, we were welcomed by their families for a delicious vegetarian lunch during which we met the person responsible for the zone of Goa. The next day we were invited to a gathering with their founder who was visiting Goa then for a year-end prayer meeting.

Dadaji, as their founder is called, a former judge, is considered as a father to whom one can confide in, ask for advice and for blessing. He told us how they live love in their daily life and then he invited us to speak to about a hundred people who were gathered there in prayer. So, in the span of a few minutes we shared the story of Chiara, her discovery of the love of God and of the presence of God in the neighbour.

It seemed to us that this encounter has sown the seeds for the development of another «fragment of fraternity», as Chiara called the Movements in the great religions who share common ideals and who work for universal brotherhood

Giuliana Taliana



In Surinam Made for the Ideal



It is the only country in the world where the mosque was built next to the synagogue. At the base of the reciprocity in action between the populace made up of different ethnic groups, there is a politics of fraternity proposed in the 60's by two politicians: Lachmon, who is of Hindustani origin and Pengel, who is a descendant of an African family.

This country of Surinam, which lies at the border of Brazil and Guyana, a Country which up until 1954, was a colony of the Holland and Dutch remains as the official language.

The Ideal arrived here too 25 years ago and spread especially through Sr. Lucia Lewis and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Surinam, who were personally followed by Vale who came to visit them in 1981. The bishop, Alouis Zichem met Chiara in one of his trips to Rome, and he became an apostle of unity. Already in

After five years the surprise of finding a community that is lively and open

the '80s, the first trips were made to this country from Venezuela by Geppina Pisani.

So as to better follow the community and also due to the language difficulty, Desirèe from Holland was assigned to the focolare center in Caracas where she remained up to 2007. After a few years in which it was not possible to visit Surinam, last January, Manuel, Belarmina and Gaudia from Venezuela, together with Desirèe who arrived from Holland with Leon and Barbara, a family of the Movement, went back to visit: «We found a small community – as written in the message to Emmaus – but alive, where the Ideal is lived by very different persons, with a great love and mutual respect. In our meetings, God touched the hearts of new people and of others who have known us for many years but who were rather prone to criticize us». Sr. Lucia, the natural point of reference of the community told us: «I felt a great suffering upon the departure of Vale, but now I understood that she is working for us from Heaven». Some of the people

of the Opera are members of the National Inter-religious Commission of the Christian Churches, and they give a precious contribution to the Church of Surinam.

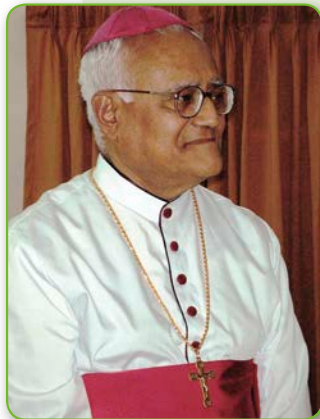
We gathered many experiences, facts of everyday life, transformed by love for the neighbors. Juliana, an adherent, leader of the community shared: «I remained in the office to work overtime so as to finish what I was doing. My colleague also remained. At a certain point she asked me something and I replied quickly. Soon after she asked me something again, and I replied vaguely hoping to be able to finish what I was doing. She approached me once again ... then still again. I understood that she wanted to talk to me. I listened to her up to the end, as she shared a serious problem that was taking away her peace of mind. In the end we left the office like two sisters and she felt relieved. As I entered the car, the worry about my unfinished work crossed my mind. I smiled: 'This was an act of love!' – I realized that I had lived the Ideal».

Gaudia Caceres



Bishop Anthony Lobo

- a model for the people of Pakistan



Mons. Anthony, bishop emeritus of Islamabad-Rawalpindi, concluded his "Holy Journey" on the 18th of February. Due to his health condition, which had greatly deteriorated, he resigned from the position three years ago. He always remained spiritually united to the Focolare and had a great respect and

admiration for Chiara and for the charism of unity which had entered his life profoundly and which he considered as a great hope for the future of the Church and of humanity.

Since the first days of the arrival of the Focolare in Pakistan, at the beginning of the '80s, he has always been beside us to help us and to lend his spiritual support, which was also very concrete: a father, a brother, a friend. He participated in our meetings, including some of the meetings of the bishop-friends of the Focolare Movement and in his trips abroad he always tried to visit the focolare centers. Whenever we met each other, he always was very happy to stay with us for some time: these were always occasions for a profound reciprocal communion of the joys and sufferings of the Church.

In 1999, he thought of opening the school at Dalwal, which the government had just returned to the Church. He had been to Loppiano and so he was happy to be able to start a Little City in Pakistan, and even more so since it would be in his diocese.

He always supported us with his encouraging words, his advice, his wisdom, his prudence, his protection. We can still remember his last visit to the Little City in

October 2011 when he gave us a book of the Gospel, saying: "I am giving this to you: read it, live it, give witness to it".

He was the one who guided us in the translation of the "Dice of the Art of Loving" and of the "Time-out", which was faithful and immersed in the local culture, so that these material may be a patrimony not only of Christians.

He was far-sighted, able to open new pathways with audacity and courage. He had the talent of an educator and without doubt he knew how to put it to good use for the benefit of many, without any discrimination contaminating the others with his enthusiasm, and the desire to help – in a special way the Christian community – to be free, through education. Mons. Lobo, being a recognized authority in the field of education, was greatly respected even at the government and national level due to his competence and his work. He founded many schools and educative institutes and gave an essential contribution for the process of the return of the Catholic schools that had been nationalized by the government.

He gave all his life and his strength for the Universal Church that he loved with untiring effort; he was always at the service of everyone, with openness and wisdom.

In his last years, marked by physical suffering, he continued to give himself, without any complaint, a model for his people.

The funeral, in the Cathedral which was overflowing, took place in an atmosphere of great serenity and sacredness and expressed the great gratitude of everyone for the life of Mons. Lobo.

In the message of condolence sent by Emmaus, she expresses the gratitude of the Focolare Movement to God for this «*Pastor who knew how to give light and courage to the faithful even in difficult moments. His fertile pastoral work, especially in the field of education and in society, which was appreciated everywhere, will surely remain and continue to multiply for the good of society.*

Veronika Semmler, Ruperto Battiston

Pasqualina Chelo Balzani

one of the first Italian married focolarine



On February 18 Pasqualina Chelo Balzani, one of the first Italian married focolarine, reached heaven. She was born in 1919 in Alghero (Sardinia) and orphaned at a very young age. She was welcomed into an orphanage run by the Sisters in Sassari where she lived and studied through to high school. She was an intelligent and strong-willed young woman who obtained a scholarship at the Catholic University of Milan and graduated in Arts.

Upon returning to Sardinia she attended meetings for catholic college students and met her future husband Sebastiano, a physician. They completed their family with 7 children (one son Marco is a married focolarino). She and Sebastiano lived their Christian commitments in politics too and for a time Sebastiano was mayor of their city.

Pasqualina met the Ideal through Natalia Dalla Piccola which marked a turning point in her life. Through the focolare center in Sassari, she met other first companions of Chiara.

In 1964 she was present at Valtourneche during the time of the foundation of the married focolarini. There she discovered her own vocation which she lived out radically.

Sometime after she wrote to Chiara: "I place myself in your hands by following you in the years I have left to live along the way that you open up to us with the collective sanctity."

Thanks to Pasqualina, a beautiful community came to life in Alghero. Notwithstanding those difficult years because of the Church's prohibition regarding activity with the Movement, many vocations to the Work of Mary later surfaced.

Together with their numerous and vivacious family they attended all the first Mariapolises in the Dolomite Mountains with many memorable anecdotes especially one when her youngest son slept in a... suitcase, since there were no more beds available in

the Mariapolis! Not to mention the adventures in traveling by boat... and yet, what wisdom she would bring back to the island!

Pasqualina was characterized as a very concrete person who dictated her concern for the needs of everyone. She was the beating heart of the community of the Ideal, a secure and ever present point of reference. She never forgot anyone, not even those who drifted far from the Movement.

Her life was deeply marked by her love for Jesus Forsaken who she chose, embraced and lived as her 'Only Good', shedding the light of the Risen Lord on youth, adults, and families alike.

In a letter written in 1995 she promised Chiara: "I will be a popa, faithful to Jesus Forsaken so as to be your love wherever God asks, in that mosaic you are forming."

And in another letter she wrote: "My heart is full of hope and the certainty that one day I will be with you and your pope and popi for eternity. In this perspective I'll walk along the Via Mariae which culminates in Mary Desolate."

She really lived in this way first by the premature death of her son Paolo and then of her daughter Gemma. These last years were marked with illness and suffering.

Her Word of Life was: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38).

From the telegram of Emmaus to the focolare centers in the world

Muneeb Sohail

Gen2 of Karachi (Pakistan)



Muneeb Sohail grew up in a family of the Opera in Karachi: his mother Nasreen is a volunteer, his father – an adherent – left for Heaven when Muneeb was still a baby. Muneeb was a gen 4, then a gen 3 and for a few years he was with the gen 2.

In the spring of 2012 he went to live in the gen house which is just in front of the focolare so that he could «deepen and understand better the life of a gen» - he said.

In this period he felt a call from God and he asked himself how he should spend the rest of his life. During the Mariapolis last July he spoke for a long time with a Bishop so as to understand his vocation better and he was encouraged to enter the focolare.

At the beginning of December he requested to go to the focolare after his exams in January, and to live in the Little City in Pakistan or in another place, thus expressing his decision to give his life to God.

The 17th of January, 2013 was a tense day in the city due to the serious and violent clashes, which unfortunately happened often. Muneeb was walking home from an English lesson together with another gen when he is hit by a bullet. That same morning he had told his mother: «I am so happy to give my life to Jesus».

Some gen told us about Muneeb: «When I met him for the first time he immediately shared with me his experiences and his life and he never lost the occasion to make a concrete act of love for the others»; «We were impressed by all the people with whom he had a profound and spiritual relationship»; «He was an angel for me, he taught me how to live with God. He was really a friend to us gen 3».

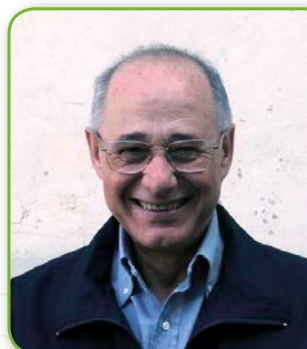
Emmaus, in a letter to the gen of Pakistan, wrote: «I am with you in this particular moment in which God has called to Himself our Muneeb. I can imagine what this has meant for each one of you, this unexpected visit of Jesus

Forsaken! Go ahead gen, more decisive than ever to live our great Ideal with radicalness, precisely so as to offer to the society around you, the love that shines in your hearts and that Muneeb would have wanted to give to many. Undoubtedly from Heaven he will continue to live and to work with you and with the whole Opera so as to build a new, united, peaceful, people day by day».

Ruperto Battiston

d. Enrico Gemma

«I go ahead»



Priest volunteer, he was born in Arce (zone of Rome) and in 1954, at twelve years of age, he entered the Discalced Carmelites. He was the Prior at the Convent of Caprarola (Viterbo), when he was sent to Rome to be the parish priest from '79 to '88. The year after, he is entrusted with the care and guidance of a community in formation.

«One day, he narrated – a mother, crying inconsolably, tells me of the loss of her husband and their home ... I lost God but luckily God did not lose me, by making me meet the Focolare Movement.»

An always more profound bond grew with the focolarini and with the Diocesan priests who were already living the spirituality of the Movement. "I was no longer worried about

not having a church at all. The Vicariate had offered me an apartment but I preferred to stay in a shop that had been transformed into a church, where Jesus in the Eucharist is present and where at night some mice would jump up on my bed». A small group of people started to take interest in and to live the Word of Life and Fr. Enrico gave each one the freedom to express one's own charism: neo-catechumenal, focolarini, the community of St. Egidio, catechists. Young people and families felt at home there, where often other parish groups from around the world come to visit too.

About 13 years ago, physical sufferings appeared and a new spiritual phase started for Fr. Enrico. He shared: "When the parish complex was under construction, I was living a spiritual high. Every day I was at the construction site ... and it took three years to complete. But God unexpectedly wanted to stop my momentum. I was diagnosed with a tumor. The operation and the con-

valence forced me to leave the parish for two weeks, while I said to Jesus: "I understood now: everything is your work, I give it back to you"». In spite of his being physically weak he continued to work with an always more refined adherence to the Will of God and, gifted with a big sense of humor, he would solve many problems with a smile or a funny remark. To whoever asked about his health he would answer: «The body doesn't work anymore ... but I go ahead». To a group of committed members of the parish he confided: «When a big or also small trial comes, all our limitations come out ... Only unity can help us».

At his last Mass, celebrated in the hospital room with his assistant parish priests, the presence of God was tangible. He left us on the 13th of December; the next day was the feast day of St. John of the Cross, the entire neighborhood came to his funeral, the church was overflowing and there was also a crowd outside: priest, civil authorities, the disabled, the poor, the gypsies, many friends to whom Fr. Enrico had opened his arms.

Claudio Battistutti



Noemi Curti Barbalace

"He is here and only He matters"

Sister of Guglielmo and Norma Curti, focolarini, she was born in Reggio Emilia (zone of Bologna). After her marriage she moved to Buenos Aires, in Argentina, where she came to know the Ideal in '64.

She began her "holy Journey" with the Volunteers, illuminated by the charism of unity and by the teachings of Lia Brunet. Noemi was always giving and radiated serenity and love, often with a beautiful smile that reflected a pure heart. For many years she was responsible for a nucleo and the volunteers remember her especially for her small notebook wherein she recorded the most precious things of the Ideal. Chiara gave her the Word of Life: «For me in fact, to live is Christ» (Phil 1, 21) and told her: «It will help you to have a great love for Jesus just as you desire».

Noemi underwent many trials above all during her last years, also because of the death of her husband Pasquale.

Supported by the presence of Norma and Guglielmo during her stay in the hospital due to a very painful operation, Noemi said "yes" to everything: «I say my 'yes' to Jesus for all that I am suffering. He is here, and only this matters».

Some comments: «For me Noemi was truly a 'teacher' in showing us how to accept and to love Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate», «I learned much from her; from her continuous love for Chiara and for the Opera», «With her life she sustained the Opera in Buenos Aires», «She was humble, simple: a 'great' person».

Noemi left us in the fullness of peace, surrounded by her family and by the community, in an atmosphere of Heaven, on the 8th of January, at 92 years old.

Silvia Escandell

Daniel Meyfroid

"Everything for unity"



Volunteer of Anverse (zone of Belgium), Daniel left us on the 1st of January, at almost 90 years old. He was a manager in a company at the port of his city. Daniel and his wife Rooske, because they didn't have children, spent all their energy in the parish, in organizations, in works in favor of the «fourth world» and as co-responsible of the «Coffee without alcohol», a citizen's initiative of great value. Thanks to their numerous contacts, they became godfather and godmother to many babies from poor families. In 1978, when fatigue was starting to overcome their enthusiasm and generosity, they met the Ideal. Both becoming Volunteers, they continued their social commitment with an exquisite love. As the point of reference for many local families, they were a solid couple, and with them everyone felt at home, in an atmosphere of profound joy.

Daniel was reserved but a champion in concrete love: «Everything is for unity», he used to say. Daniel and Rooske welcomed their respective nuclei in their apartment which was in the center of the city, and which opened out to a big square that was both popular and multi-cultural. Their house, made sacred by their mutual love, helped the Volunteers to form a «temporary focolare» and then to go back to the world «recharged», the world that Daniel and Rooske saw each day and for which they gave the best of themselves. When Daniel lost the use of his legs, with the help of his wife, he accepted the gift of his infirmity and, when she died in 2011, he was brought to a home for the elderly.

It was the most difficult period of his life; the Volunteers were always near him, supporting him together with their families and with many grateful friends. His funeral was a continuous hymn of gratitude to God for the great gift that Daniel and Rooske had been for many who called them «father» and «mother», precisely them who did not have any children of their own.

Bernard Keutgens

I nostri parenti

The following have passed on to the next Life: **Eliud, father of Elia Ramos**, focolarina in Neza (Mexico); **João, father of Maria José Coelho**, focolarina in Florianópolis (Brazil); **Apolonia, mother of Alice Kostzetter**, foc.na in Velletri (Rome); **Olinda, mother of Lucia Marangon**, responsible for the focolare in Udine; **Edward, father of Edyta e Hania Bzikot**, focolarine respectively at the Mariapolis Fiore and at the Roman Mariapolis; **Emilia, mother of Marina Veliach**, married focolarina of the Roman Mariapolis; **Alfonso, brother of Ana Maria Fons**, foc.na of the Citadel Castello Esteriore (Spain); **Vigilato, father of Geralda (Gemma) Resende**, focolarina of the Mariapolis Gloria (Brazil); **Lina, mother of Maria Salerno**, married focolarina at the zone center of Milan; **Nyamwaka, father of Ernestine (Santa) Sikujua Kinyabuuma**, focolarina in Congo; **Antoine, father of Marceline Fon-Sin**, focolarina in Denmark; **Aloisio, father of Regina Florenzia Mwaniki**, focolarina in Onitsha (Nigeria); **Joseph, father of Martine Casimir**, focolarina in the zone center of Madagascar; **Ruth, mother of Edith (Edi) Chávez**, focolarina in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and of **Guillermo** volunteer; **Giovanni, brother of Maria Teresa Bracco**, focolarina in Montet; **Hans, father of Marianne (Ester) Klein**, focolarina in Munich (Germany); **Maria Supriya, sister of Chintana Soong Swang Agnes**, focolarina in the zone center of Bangkok; **Ennio, father of Sergio Rondinara**, focolarino at the Istituto Universitario Sofia; **Maria, mother of Livio Brianza**, focolarino at the Mariapolis Renata (Loppiano); **Otto, brother of Johanna (Eccle) Fischer**, focolarina in Cologne (Germany).

Errata corrige. In the January issue in the column of «Our relatives» it was written: «Toshihisa, father of Mariko Kurokawa, delegate of the zone of Japan» instead of «Toshihisa, father of Mariko Kurokawa, focolarina at the zone center of Giappone». Please forgive us for the unintended error.

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