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# MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the focolare movement

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## *Brazil*

**The charism  
of unity acts  
and transforms**

### **14 march**

The person  
of Chiara  
receives more  
recognition

### **Gen 3**

The invitation  
to work with  
the whole  
Opera

# Renew the pact

Dearest, we are still profoundly touched by what Jesus had done in our Genfest '90. [...]

But today is also Holy Thursday, a special day in which we often, in the past years, feel ourselves wrapped up and intimately immersed in a special and very sweet atmosphere: the particular presence, for sure, of the Holy Spirit.

And it cannot be otherwise, because today we recall and relive, in a condensed form, several mysteries of our faith and our Ideal. This, in fact, is the day of love, because it is all love, which this day commemorates.

The priestly ministry is love, instituted during that Holy Thursday, long ago, and of which the Holy Father, in his last letter to the priests for Holy Thursday said, that it is not just an institution that exists «beside» the laity, or not even «above» it, but it is «for» the laity and precisely because of this it possess a «ministerial» character which means «to be of service» and therefore concrete love.

The Eucharist is, wherein Jesus gave us all of himself, is love.

Unity is love, an effect of love, that He asks for from the Father even today.

His «new Commandament» that he left us is love. And it is this «new Commandament» of Jesus that I would like to dwell on. We proposed it at the Genfest as the great chance we have to reach a united world. Everyone, more or less, will make an effort now to put it into practice today.

And we who are at the heart of the Movement, the closest ones, what shall we do? My answer is this. Today the Easter triduum begins. They are three solemn days. Well then, in one of them we must find a solemn moment wherein we renew



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Rocca di Papa, 14 giugno 1990. Chiara saluta alla conclusione del Collegamento CH

among us in our centers, in our focolares, in the nucleos, the gen units, our groups, everywhere possible, that pact that the first focolarinas made when they declared reciprocally : «I am ready to die for you, I for you, I for you ...». We know it. Even this small but great thing is not always easy: even the fundamental structures of our Opera may have been infiltrated by a little human respect. Maybe for some it is easier to make decisions directly with God. But ours is a collective spirituality, and we cannot betray it.

That first pact was the milestone of the Movement. There, Jesus placed himself in our midst. Let us find a way to renew it. Then let us make an effort to live in conformity with it.

The supernatural tone of the whole Opera will increase and we will become better workers - the way we must be - for a united world.

The Risen One will always be shining among us, with his Spirit, just as the feast of Easter that we are preparing to celebrate, requires.

Without forgetting that tomorrow, Good Friday, we remember Jesus Forsaken, the divine key that truly makes it possible to be ready to die one for the other.

To each and everyone a happy, excellent Easter!

May the Risen One be among us

*Chiara*

Excerpts from the Collegamento CH, Rocca di Papa, 12 april 1990, published in *Santi Insieme (Saints Together)*, Città Nuova, Rome, february 1995, pp. 24-27

# VI anniversary of Chiara

## A people on a journey

**For the first time, a plurality of religious traditions gathered together, fruit of a long journey that has been going on for more than ten years and which has allowed for a deepening of reciprocal acquaintance that «has become friendship and then, brotherhood»**

«Chiara has helped us to find our in our religion a teaching, which is, that we are all created in the image of God, and if this is so, then it means that to love our neighbour is to love God. Today, this invitation is extended to all of us, so that we may unite ourselves through the religions in a dialogue with the Focolare and with the Church. It is a blessing to be a part of this». These were the words that Russ Pearce, a Jew from New York, said to the journalist of the Vatican Radio during the press conference, expressing not only his personal experience, but also the reality that is being lived by all the participants of the Convention «Chiara and the religions. Together towards unity of the human family».

At Castel Gandolfo, they were in 230 among whom were Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindu, Buddhists, Sikh, Shintoist and followers of the Tenrikyo. Also coming from various origins: thirty two Countries from the four continents. In the last ten years or so, the bilateral interreligious meetings of the Movement, have allowed for the deepening of reciprocal acquaintance. This year all were able to experience together an interreligious moment, that resulted in a sincere and profound gift of one to the other. During the sessions, in fact, the various expe-

periences of dialogue lived by Christians respectively with Buddhists, Muslims, Hindu, Jews, in the different geographical and socio-religious contexts were presented. What followed were experiences, reports on common projects of collaboration and reflections on spiritual thoughts. A mosaic that gave an idea of the treasures of a dialogue that contributes towards the healing of ethnic and religious tensions, to rehabilitate the social fabric, and to integrate communities in conflict.

The charism of Chiara emerged clearly in this context, expressed in an effective way by Prof. Kala Acharya from India who is Hindu: «[Chiara] wanted each person that she met to benefit from her spirituality. She was like the thread of a necklace: we have the pearls, but if there is no thread, the pearls are lost. She was the thread of a necklace, that brought thousands of people to live in harmony».



Difficult moments were not lacking, but the commitment of many years to live dialogue as a lifestyle allowed her to overcome all possible obstacles. On the other hand, Emmaus at the conclusion of her inaugural speech made a proposal that «all of us make a pact» to reach the goal which – as the title of the Convention says – is the unity of the human family.

On March 19, before the general audience, a delegation of twenty representatives of the Convention were received at the Santa Marta House of Pope Francis, introduced by Card Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In an atmosphere of family the Pope encouraged all of them to «walk together without ever stopping».



19 marzo 2014. L'incontro con Papa Francesco

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concluding: «May God be blessed for the gift of Chiara Lubich and of the Focolare Movement».

Six representatives of different religions - Jews, Muslims, Hindu, and Buddhists - shared their touching experiences on dialogue that began more than thirty years ago with Chiara and in her spirit in an atmosphere of deep and visible fraternity.

Waichiro Izumita, direttore of the youth department of the Risso Kosei-kai, shared the words of the founder Nikkyo Niwano when he met Chiara: «Even before we were born, I think that it was already in God Buddha's plan that we would meet. Before meeting the people of the Focolare, I believed that I was the only "crazy one" in the world who wanted to tackle the immense problem of universal peace. Here instead I have found another "crazy one" just like me». Amer Al Hafi, vice director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan: «Chiara made me read the Qur'an with more pure eyes and to penetrate its meanings with a greater depth. With her I understood that Love is the essence of God and the reason for His existence».

It is a dialogue – we realized – that does not aim only at friendship and peaceful co-existence. While it helps us to understand the others in their deepest identity, it also makes us walk side by side towards the goal that awaits us, and together we form a people on a journey, in communion.

*Christina Lee, Roberto Catalano*

[see [focolare.org](http://focolare.org) for the video of the talks]



20 marzo 2014. All'Università Urbaniana

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On March 20, the public event in memory of Chiara was held at the Great Hall of the Urbanian Pontifical University, which gathered together aside from the participants of the previous days, 250 people: ecclesial, diplomatic and civil authorities, representatives of religions, protagonists of dialogue in the Roman and Italian panorama. After the talk of Emmaus on the dialogue that has been built by Chiara, Card. Arinze, who was president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, for eighteen years presented a reflection on Chiara's charism and on the collaboration of the Movement with the Pontifical Council itself,

14 march 2014

# Chiara companion on the journey

**Numerous events all over the world on the occasion of the VI anniversary of Chiara. Her person and the power of the charisma that God has given her is always more recognized on all levels**

**Angola.** The different communities were the protagonists of this day. In Luanda 400 persons gathered together among whom were 150 children, friends of the gen4. The characteristic of this event was the return of many, who had left the Opera, and who found themselves «once again at home» – they said. Many new ones experienced the power of the Charism and want to continue this life, various youth said they want to become gen. **In**

**Lubango** the community thought of celebrating this day by going to a prison, involving more than 650 inmates in the Mass. Our members said: «We shared the story of the Ideal, read the Word of Life and shared experiences. The prisoners and two priests who accompanied us, were touched and asked to continue having these meetings».

**In all the provinces** the new generations were the protagonists. There was a vital force that exploded everywhere. From the echoes of the 1448



persons we met and which continue to arrive, we strongly felt that the sanctity of Chiara reaches everyone and brings many, many hearts to God.

**South Africa.** At the University of Pretoria the second «Memorial Lecture» for Chiara was held. Around 100 were present: Catholics, Anglicans, Reformed, Lutherans and Methodists, among whom were the Archbishop of Pretoria, William Slattery. Dr. Kobus Gerber (secretary general of the Dutch Reformed Church) who in his speech said that we are



Montreal, Canada



Kinshasa, Congo

just starting to discover the greatness of this extraordinary woman, who is Chiara, and of her spirituality, now spread all over the world and he underlined that in ecumenism we must learn how to «lose» that which may seem to us as the absolute truth, up to the point of talking explicitly and



Cittadella Maria Mai. Le testimonianze di coloro che per primi hanno accolto l'Ideale a Fontem

new people. These were moment that characterized our unity in diversity. Bishop Khazzoum shared his experience in French, translated simultaneously in Turkish, which surprised us because of the admirable synthesis he made of the figure of Chiara and of her spirituality.

profoundly about Jesus Forsaken! They asked themselves what can they do to bring this reality of unity in their own environments. Work together, was the answer, and they already thought of organizing themselves together for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

**Turkey. In Istanbul** a celebration of an ecumenical nature saw the participation of representatives of the various Oriental , Orthodox and Catholic Rite Churches, who at the moment of the prayer, read passages of the Gospel in their own language: from the ecumenical Patriarch p. Vissarion, also from a representative of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate, from the Patriarchal vicars of the Syro-Jacobites, Syro-Catholics and Armenian-Catholics. Two bishops were present: Mons. Louis Pelâtre, of the Latin- Rite and Mons. George Khazzoum, Armenian Catholic, who just recently returned from the meeting of Bishops at Castel Gandolfo. He welcomed us with joy and generosity to stay in his Church in Taksim dedicated to St. John Chrysostom. Other communities of religious men and women were also present and some



Trento. Luce Ardente con mons. Luigi Bressan

**Brazil. In Porto Alegre** there were two events held: the travelling exhibit «Chiara Lubich: protagonista of a new era» at the Municipal Hall of Porto Alegre and the dedication of the Chiara Lubich Street, crossing one of the more important arteries of the capital, between an area of expansion and a poor

**BISTORTO. UNA CITTA' PER EDUCARE**  
**L'EDUCATORE DEL XXI SECOLO**  
 Riflessioni e Testimonianze  
 a partire dall'esperienza della Fondazione del Movimento dei Focolare  
*Chiara Lubich*  
 La "Maeatra" o "Maeira" Russa  
 a cura di Michele De Bent  
 Istituto Universitario "Sophia" - Loppiano (FI)  
**SABATO 15 MARZO 2014 - ore 16.30**  
**SALA DA PRELEZIONE**  
**ACCADEMIA DEI CONCORDI**  
 Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, 100/101  
**LA CITTADINANZA È INVITATA A PARTECIPARE**

Presentazione dell'esperienza educativa di Chiara Lubich, fondazione del Movimento dei Focolare. L'incontro attende preliminarmente una riflessione sull'esperienza educatrice oggi.  
 Una domanda che interregala questi tempi: in quale futuro delle giovani generazioni e con quali genitori, insegnanti ed educatori educare?  
 Una sfida – quella educativa – a cui si deve trovare il coraggio di rispondere, non solo teoricamente, ma con una responsabile testimonianza di vita.

Chiara Lubich  
 Obbliga a pensare di sempre  
 Premi UNESCO 1988 per l'educazione alla pace  
 Laurea in Scienze della Religione - 1968  
 Laurea in Lettere - 1969  
 Laurea in Filosofia - 1970  
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 Laurea in Lettere - 2020  
 Laurea in Lettere - 2021  
 Laurea in Lettere - 2022  
 Laurea in Lettere - 2023  
 Laurea in Lettere - 2024

neighborhood where the AFASO (Association of Families in Solidarity) a social project for vulnerable children of the Focolare Movement, is located. In his speech Archbishop emeritus Dadeus Grings underlined that when a street is dedicated to a person and given his or her name, it highlights the role, the importance and the values that this person offers to society and he wished that in the city this street



Porto Alegre, Brasile

become a road of relationships. This event was followed by the meeting «Fraternity – mobilizing principle, to answer together to everyman's questions» promoted last November by the Politics for Unity Movement at the Municipal Council during the youth protests against corruption that had been going on for months in the streets of Brazil. More than a hundred participants, various politicians and many youth, involved in a frank and open dialogue between the government and society. It was a moment of strong awareness of the need to listen to the requests of society so as to get to know it, to dialogue, learning what it means to put into practice the proposal of Chiara: fraternity in politics.

**Oceania. Melbourne in Australia** Bishop Greg Bennet presented Chiara as a person who «danced with the love of God in her life and who attracted others into the circle of the communion with God. In people like Chiara - he said - we can see the image of the divine, a model,



who teaches us to be builders of bridges, to go beyond our imagination with the capacity of loving even our enemies». At the Mass, 150 people participated, from the new ones to those who met the Ideal during the beginning in the '70s.

**Czech Republic. In the Cathedral of Olomouc**, The Archbishop Jan Graubner, in his homily included Chiara among the great persons of the Church, such as St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, as testimonies and luminous example, who with their obedience allowed their Charisms to emerge.

**Congo.** An event of dialogue lived with Christian Catholics, Evangelicals and with the Muslims: this was the **One-day meeting of the Opera in Kinshasa**, with the participation of 850 persons. It was the fruit of relationships of great mutual appreciation and friendship built in time. Present were the Founders and national Presidents of Protestant and Muslim communities and of Catholic Movement.

**Italy.** On March 14 and 15 precisely coinciding with the anniversary of Chiara, Trent had the gift of welcoming Luce Ardente with other three monks and two lay Buddhists, accompanied by the focolarini of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The entire delegation was present at the Mass held in the Church of the Capuchins, celebrated by Fr. Bonaventura. At the conclusion the monks wanted to say a prayer for Chiara. It was deeply moving to see them with Fr. Bonaventura at the foot of that altar where Chiara and the first focolarinas had asked that the Ideal would reach the ends of the earth. The visit to Archbishop Luigi Bressan was very cordial: Luce Ardente, holding in his hand the pectoral cross, highlighted the importance of mutual love «so as not to let Jesus suffer». At the moment of their departure, one of the monks told us, visibly moved: «We are one family!», expressing what each one had in their heart.

*prepared by the editorial board*

[refer to [Mariapolis online](#) for a report of the main events prepared by the Chiara Lubich Center]



Catania, Italy



## Brazil

# A revolution in action

**Emmaus Voce and Giancarlo Faletti in the Country as big as a continent.  
The story which began in 1958 and which saw the numerous  
visits of Chiara continues**

The trip of Emmaus and Giancarlo to Brazil as we are writing this, is about to begin. In 30 days, from March 22 to April 22, we will travel through this great Country, almost a continent, from North to Central South, starting from the Northeast, from Recife, which Chiara called the «Bethlehem of the Opera», where everything started in 1958.

The programme is intense: it begins with the cultural event at the Catholic University for the inauguration of the «Chiara Lubich Chair», the opening, of a new course of research and study on «Fraternity and Humanism» inspired by her thoughts and her life. In each stage of the trip, there will be visits to the social projects. But, above all, there will be a dialogue with the intern members of the Movement. A zoom will be made in the Mariapolis Ginetta on the Economy of Communion, Movement of politics for unity and social organizations not only in Brazil, but also in Latin America. Then they will be in dialogue with the «Efesini» Bishops, on the contribution of the Movement to the Brazilian Church.

It is a much-awaited event not only for the Brazilians, but also for Emmaus, which she has repeated many times. It is the long-awaited mo-

ment of the revelation of that piece (of the mosaic) that the Opera is called to set today in the design that God has planned for this Country and for the entire Latin American continent.

**Let us go back to re-read** some excerpts from that prophetic talk of Chiara in '69, when she identified the specific call of the different areas of the world in building the unity of the human family. It is a talk that will remain in history and is entitled: «The world in colors», because of the enlightened gaze of the light of the charisma, that breaks up into the seven colours of the rainbow. It was not by chance that this talk was directed to the gen, the symbol of the present and the future.

A talk that today, after a span of 45 years, resounds with great relevance. At that time the world was rocked by the cultural revolution of '68. Today the world is going through a profound crisis in which many foresee an «epochal change» whose results are not yet defined.

**Chiara then had drawn** some conclusions about the youth. «I can understand the reactions of the youth. There are so many ills that

**In the photo above**, from left to right: • Chiara in Recife during the '60s • The little town of Santa Maria welcomes Emmaus and Giancarlo





they face», she said. She defined humanity as «a big Adam wounded» by savage capitalism, by the hotspots of war, by the confusion of ideas, by the many social problems, by hunger and disease. She saw all of these personally in her many trips to the Usa, to the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Argentina. And here too in Brazil.

Chiara followed the first steps of the Movement in this land with great love. She went to Recife in '61, in '64, '65 and '66. She saw with her own eyes the miserable conditions of those who were living in the favelas, in great contrast with the riches of the buildings and skyscrapers that were rising in the city. In her diary of '64 we read: «The hunger and thirst for justice is one of the beatitudes that we must feel resonating within us. How urgently needed is the revolution of the Gospel!». She indicated the poor as the objective of the Movement in Brazil. And that's why in '69, looking at the Latin American continent, she defined it as «the blue continent», precisely because she saw in it the call to bring harmony to these serious inequalities and differences. .

**A few months after**, during the annual international meeting of the Delegates of the Opera at the Center and in the Zones, Chiara once again focused on the various geographical areas with that vision of the world in colours, but enriched with the news of the developments that had matured everywhere. Passing to Latin America where the first social projects were initiated, from the fruits that were already gathered, she saw that «what we tru-

ly wanted is already guaranteed, that is, for South America to be the example, where we can say: look how the social problems are resolved, look, it is becoming a reality».

The Delegates of the Zone at the same time had the print media, Città Nuova, in their hands as an instrument, and they said: «But a revolution cannot be accomplished without the press, because we have to spread the ideas». «Here then – concluded Chiara - Social projects and the printing press».

From then on there have been many developments, the latest of which is the Economy of Communion.

**In this month**, with Emmaus and Giancarlo, we will go through the stages of this «sacred history» simultaneously with the new page of today. We can live them together through various forms of media, a novelty of this trip: in every zone that they will visit, teams have been formed with the gen boys and gen girls who will be following the various events posting news, pictures and videos in the social networks. So you can participate... in real time!

*Carla Cotignoli*

### To follow the trip

On Mariapolis online you can follow the various stages of the trip of Emmaus and Giancarlo in Brazil, documented by photos and videos:

[www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli](http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli)



# Community in the Amazons

## At Abaetetuba life is reborn



**With the «Project Amazons» life is re-enchanted in the parishes and in the families. Starting from the youth. The community is reborn.**

A city close to the shore of the Tocantins river from where Maratauíra and further onwards Jarumã, take their names. It has 150 thousand inhabitants, of which 45% live in the 72 islands that make up the Town of Abaetetuba. The diocese, guided by Mons. Flavio Giovenale, who today is Bishop at Santarém, is 50 years old, there are 26 priests distributed in the six parishes spread around this piece of the Amazons.

The scenery is of unparalleled beauty: palm trees of açai and of buriti, a very delicious fruit with an exotic taste that can only be found in these areas. Where it seems that only forest exists, the city and its abate, spring forth, that in the indigenous language tupi, means strong, valiant and noble men. The Ideal of Chiara arrived here more than 30 years ago and a big community was born, with all the vocations: gen, volunteers, families and various focolarini,

today spreads all over the world. As time passed, Abaetetuba became a transient city due to the fact that the gen4 and the gen3 did not grow in the Opera, because at the moment that they had to pass on to the gen2 they would move to Belém to continue their studies. This made the community that remained sad, it seemed as if there were no new vocations being born and therefore nothing went ahead.



After the departure of Chiara and with the permanent push to «give preference to the new generations» the people of the Movement told themselves: «Well not everyone goes away, there are also many youth who remain. Let's do something for those who remain in the city».





And so, for the last three years the intern members of Abaetetuba, with some from Belém and from the Mariapolis Ginetta, are bringing ahead the «Project Amazons»: ten days of home visits, evening meetings to dialogue, concluded by a One-day meeting open to all, building of personal relationships.

The fruits? Three parishes and around 500 families visited and many relationships built that have remained from year to year.

Slowly the intern members rediscover the beauty of the charism of Chiara and many new ideas are born. The first is that of giving importance to the Word of Life meetings, and to do them regularly, highlighting the experiences of the newcomers, involving the young people more who then discover something worth giving their life for: God, unity. Many of the participants come from faraway. A man lends his bus so that every month he can fetch everyone for the meeting; the youth group of the parish starts again and is now going ahead full steam; there are more people participating in the Mass in the Churches; the parish priests who used to look at us with distrust have now changed completely and welcome us with great joy and appreciation. The President of the Council of Laity, before the Movement arrived, expressed his worries

about the Diocese, but after getting to know the Focolare, he found hope once again that the Church will once more be alive and fruitful.

Today the community meets every Thursday, with the youth and the adults together, to do some sharing and to plan the activities. When we visited them we found happy people, hopeful and generators of the life of the Ideal. Every difficulty is faced together helping one another to overcome and heal it.

*Nazaré Pereira, Mario Dias Feio*

## The «Project Amazons»

was born in 2005, involving the members of the Focolare Movement throughout Brazil, with the aim of giving a concrete answer to the appeals of the CNBB (Bishops' Conference of Brazil) for an action of evangelization in the Amazon region, that is lacking spiritual assistance due to the vastness of this immense territory.

The project, ever since its first edition in 2006, has generated a lively interest. Many people of the Opera put their time and their experience at the disposition of the project, also in undertaking many long trips.

# Towards the Assembly

## Work with the whole Opera

Le proposte delle gen3 in preparazione all'appuntamento di settembre.  
Estratti dal loro dialogo con Emmaus

«We heard that the Opera is changing and that in September there will be the Assembly. We too talked about it yesterday afternoon and meeting in groups, we prepared some proposals regarding the world of the teens.

- our desire is to spread the Ideal and to find ways to reach all the teens even those who don't believe. We would like to be able to do this together with the adults. That is why we would like to grow in the dialogue and in the relationship among the different generations, to improve our relationship with the local community and in particular with the gen2;
- we want to increase the dialogue with the other Associations and Movements and to do concrete actions for the benefit of our city;
- we have very much at heart the openness of the Movement towards the other religions in the search for dialogue
- we would like to immediately go to the concretization of the Ideal in daily life;
- to make an experience with teens of different cultures, nationalities and religions through international appointments such as the Supercongress and link-ups with other Countries, highlighting the positive also in the teens who are not part of the Movement;
- promote more initiatives in the social field on a worldwide scale; concrete projects for all teens, to go out towards the others, also towards the needy».

**Emmaus:** ««You said: "We heard that the Opera is changing". This "changing" could be understood in two ways. I say: yes, the Opera is changing, but why is it changing? Because it is



growing. Just as a person changes, logically as one grows one changes features, the hairstyle changes, the size of one's clothes change, the style of dressing changes, many things change because one grows, and so too the Opera as it grows it is changing. But a person, even if he changes, remains always himself or herself [...] What is happening in the Opera? The Opera changes but is the same. Therefore it changes because it develops, it grows, because possibilities increase - as I said before - the possibilities of communication, the contacts with persons belonging to other Churches, of other religions, without religion, increase; and therefore it changes. But at the same time it is always the same. "It is always itself" what does this mean? It is always that special grace, given to Chiara by God that has formed us and through us it forms everyone, with the grace to bring the presence of Jesus everywhere. This is the "identity of the Opera", this must remain always: the identity!

The identity of a person is always the same. The identity card always carries the same information: name, surname, date of

birth; those things never change. It is the same for the Work of Mary, what are the things that don't change? This does not change: the Work of Mary has as its nature "to bring the presence of Jesus everywhere in the world". This is the Opera.

And how does it bring Jesus today? The same way that it did in '43? No! It brings Jesus through new means: now it uses the web, with internet with all these things to bring Jesus; it brings Him to new people who didn't exist then. In this sense (the Opera) changes. [...] So something has changed during the course of time and is still continuing to change. [...]

What will change would be the attention that we have for the situations around us, why? Because even the world is changing, it does not remain the same. And the questions, needs, problems that we have to answer are different. What are the problems of today? There are many, but the main problem of today - according to me - is precisely this, in spite of all the means of communication, there is always more loneliness, each one is always more closed up within him or herself, each one logically wants to defend himself from the others, to affirm one's own ideas. All these, which may even be right because each one must grow as a person, as a reality, but must be integrated by this communion that makes possible the presence of Jesus. So this identity of the Opera to bring the presence of Jesus remains the same. [...]

You may say: "And we, what can we do?" In the meantime you have already done a lot; but what you have done you did because you have lived (the Ideal) throughout all these years. "What can we continue to do?" Live the Ideal! The greatest help that each one of you can personally

give to the Opera is to live the Ideal, because this Ideal lived by one, by another, makes the Opera grow".

Beatrice from Arezzo asked: «What can we do so that the principles of the ideal, that we know, enter into society and change it? For example, in Countries such as Italy wherein we are many belonging to the Movement we could make scholastic programs to be inserted in all the schools, and also in politics; but to be able to do this we must be a strong force, therefore we must join with the gen2, gen3, gen4, families, focolarini and work together to reach the common goal and to have an effect on society».

Emmaus: ««This is a very beautiful proposal! We will add this to that list of proposals that you have made and I will surely welcome them and talk to the Assembly about them in September. You are right. If we all work together with more strength [...] we will have the power of all the people who want the same things, who share with us this Ideal, and this is a lot of power! [...]

Look, I cannot tell you what to do because I still don't know, but I can tell you that it is a very good proposal, and we will try to study how to do it together, youth and adults, all the generations together so as to bring ahead all our proposals. Thank you!».





# At the gen3 girls' congress

## Effect *boomerang*: does it really work?

**From March 2 to 5, 700 gen3 girls from 13-17years old at Castel Gandolfo**

«Does it really work? If I love is it really true that love comes back? Is it true that more and more people will be involved? And then, does the reality around us change?». These are the questions that welcomed us upon our arrival at Castel Gandolfo. Coming from 20 Countries and of 19 languages, after some months of living the commitment to love in the way that Jesus did, we already had some things to share with one another. And those provocative questions that flashed alternately with images of evident «non love», immediately became occasions for sharing with whoever was seated beside us. Julija from Lithuania: «I launched a small boomerang and it came back a much bigger one that involved 150 children from poor families...». The experiences are going ahead: the life of a gen3 unit, of a local community: the boomerang effect can be applied to the dynamics of love just like a mathematical equation!

With this certainty as our basis we can start to work: from the development of the newly-born Teens magazine to the proposals for the coming General Assembly of the Opera.



Divided into groups, we discuss with one another so as to understand how to answer to the demands and needs of the teens, what steps to take together in the Opera to come closer to a united world. There are many ideas. We vote to choose the most common ones to offer to Emmaus during our meeting with her. (see pgs. 12-13).

The next morning, Emmaus doesn't only listen to them and take them seriously but she tells us that they are good proposals and that they will become the «heritage of the Opera». Our joy was uncontainable and Flavia expressed this when she greeted Emmaus in this way: «We are all ready to take this big step for the future of the Opera welcoming all the choices and the novelty that will be proposed in the Assembly, because we know that they will be done with love!».

We are on the second day and a very intense afternoon awaits us wherein we will deepen, through a dialogue among us and with the experts, the gift of reciprocity in the relationship between man and woman.

In school, in media, with our friends, ideologies and behaviour



that negate the feminine and masculine identities are making headway. We feel the need to know more about it, to listen to other opinions from the dominant ideology, to be able to intervene in debates that take place in our classes, to know how to react in front of certain behaviour of our companions and at times of our professors who trivialize the relationship between a man and a woman. It is the chance to live immediately what Emmaus told us, to be open to different ideas so as to go together towards the truth.

The day after, reciprocal love opens up to the world from Chiara's perspective, that sees in each person a gift for the other. Among us there are the representatives from various continents who highlight their resources and the challenges they face. The characteristics of the person of the future generations that Chiara indicated at the Supercongress 1997 emerge: «A person who is able to welcome in his heart the treasures that the others from the various continents give and who is able to give his treasures to all the others. The person of tomorrow therefore, is a person of unity, he is the world-man». It is a good preparation for the «Construction site World-man» that awaits us in Latin America this coming July!

In the evening we open the doors of the Congress for the «Exhibit of street artists», an occasion to offer a good dose of creativity and fantasy to those who want to share a moment of celebration.

We conclude with what the Pope wished during the audience of March 5 in St. Peter's Square: «Live your faith with joy bearing witness to the love of God for each person». We were able to greet him from the square and he noticed our «noise»! Five of us had the gift of being able to speak with him personally in the sacristy; now he too knows about the boomerang effect! We promised him: to throw it especially towards the teens who have not yet met God.

*Prepared by the gen3 Center*

## Teens

This is how the editorial board of Teens presented its work at the Congress, through an interactive afternoon. There was a great interest shown for the translations in different languages.

«Ciao, we are the central editorial board of Teens and you can see us while we are in the midst of preparing issue number 1. There are always many ideas and, at least for this year, there will only be 16 pages that we can use. For anyone who still doesn't know about Teens:

**Teens is the magazine of teens for teens: it is our magazine.** Ours because it doesn't talk about us but we are the ones doing the talking. It is not a magazine that you just read and that's all, it is a magazine we create together.

**Teens is our calling card.** We can bring it everywhere to share our ideas with our friends, our point of view on the events in the world, to go in depth on certain challenges that our age group face.

**Teens proposes a united world using a universal language** through stories, experiences that become concrete proposals. Offers values starting from life, from a film, an sports event or from an interview of personalities with different cultures, religions, professions with whom we share the commitment to make the world a more beautiful place.

**Teens is work in progress!** If every subscriber can collaborate by writing, proposing topics, inventing puzzle games, designing, sending us photographic material... we are asking everyone to help us spread this magazine among friends and relatives, but also in schools, libraries, parishes, chapels, everywhere.

Do you like this idea? What are you waiting for? Run and subscribe now!>





Bishops friends of the Focolare Movement

# Reciprocal love the badge

**Around sixty Bishops from different places lived  
a strong experience of communion**

The reciprocity of love among the disciples of Christ is possible and is capable of transforming the quality of interpersonal relationships...». These words directed to them by Pope Francis during the audience in the Clementina Hall, confirm the experience lived by the 65 Bishops who participated in the meeting in Castel Gandolfo, from February 22 to 28. They came from different places – Asia, North and South America, Africa and the Middle East, aside from various parts of Europe – but they shared the unique experience of communion, of a real family lived among everyone.

## With Pope Francis

The Archbishop of Bangkok, Mons. Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, the present moderator of the meetings of Bishops friends of the Focolare, ended the meeting with these words: «We experienced what it means to live in communion, to live like the disciples of Jesus, with reciprocal love as big as the world. The meeting with the Holy father opened our hearts and minds. After his first Consistory he made us understand with great clarity that which the "Spirit is saying today" to the Church.

Yes, it is clear that under the guidance of Pope Francis the whole Church is orienting herself once again to the simplicity and the transparency of the Gospel. We felt that he appreciates the charism of Chiara Lubich just as Benedict XVI, John Paul II and Paul VI have done. His word, that I wish to recall here, encouraged us greatly: "Society today has a great need of witnesses, of a lifestyle that reflects the novelty given to us by the Lord Jesus: brothers who love one another, in spite of the differences of character, origin, age...".

The days at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo were in fact spent in the learning the «reciprocity of love among the disciples of Christ». Maria Voce spent a morning together with the Bishops, offering a reflection on this central theme in the spirituality of the Focolare, followed by an intense dialogue with comments and experiences. Also very much appreciated were the voices of the laity in particular the experience of a family and a lively group of young people. «As Church – one of the Bishops present affirmed - we do not sufficiently aim at the





badge or distinguishing mark of a Christian. We identify him with holding meetings, wearing a habit, as the clergyman, etc. Instead, it is clear, that the distinguishing mark is reciprocal love. And this is not something irrelevant, but it is the heart of the Gospel».

Two roundtable discussions facilitated a multi-voice reflection on important themes: ecclesiological guidelines that have emerged after the first year of the Pontificate of Pope Francis - with Card. João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Consecrated Life, and Archbishop Vincenzo Zani, secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education - and the Sinodality and Primacy, in the light of the teachings and praxis of Pope Francis - with Card. Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for the promotion of the unity of Christians, Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick (Ireland), and Christoph Hegge, auxiliary Bishop of Münster, Germany.

## To grasp the action of the Spirit

Archbishop Zani underlined the relevance

Lubich received from the SPirit and communicated to millions of people spread throughout the world, directing them towards an evangelical life, was and is a providential sowing that is now being encouraged to generate new life and mature fruits in the Church and in society».

The four days spent in Rome, interwoven with the spirituality of unity, was an occasion to listen to the voice and the commitment of Christians in the Church spread throughout the world, with their criticisms. A dimension that many media have amplified, gathering the testimonies of various Bishops especially from the Middle East and the experience of everyone made up of and «effective and affectionate collegiality.

## With new courage

Mons. Andrew Nkea Fuanya, just recently nominated Bishop of the diocese of Mamfe (Cameroun), to which the little town of Fontem belongs, said: «The focolare is very dear to my heart. If I am alive it is because Chiara sent doctors to Fontem! I saw that it is possible to



Il colloquio con Emmaus



Il vescovo Andrew Nkea Fuanya di Fontem



L'attenzione dei media

today of the charism of Chiara, inviting everyone to «grasp ... that which the Spirit is doing in the Church and in the world through the successor of Peter... Those who have been reached by the light and the grace of the charism of unity feel an extraordinary closeness between the teachings of Pope Francis and the different points of the spirituality. That which Chiara

live as a Bishop and as a Christian ... Staying together with you for a week is my initiation to living as brothers [...]».

Other Bishops underlined the different aspects of their personal experience. One from the United States: «the theme on reciprocal love showed us the cement of unity, the heart of the Gospel. This spirituality is for the whole

# A man of God

**During the meeting of the Bishops, a vibrant memorial of Bishop Klaus Hemmerle, on the twentieth anniversary of his departure**

Bishop Hemmerle came from a poor, anti-Nazi family. Even before his being a Bishop, what emerged in him was the dimension of the priesthood, a ministry that he exercised with great love and dedication.

It can be said that Klaus Hemmerle was both a theologian and a philosopher, an expert in the German theology of Hegel, Fichte, Schelling and of the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, Welte. He was truly a builder of bridges in many directions: be-

tween the Catholic and Protestant Churches, among the lay faithful and the clergy, he was always at the border between the secularized world and the Church.

There were two key events in his life. While he was studying Philosophy he understood that you cannot think of grasping God only with the mind. God, infinitely greater than the thoughts of man, can only be grasped when the act of thinking is placed at the disposition of receiving. To think about God means: to receive, to listen, to enter into a silence that awaits the Other. When he met the Focolare Movement and Chiara Lubich for the first time he had the impression that God opened up a space in which He could be present in the midst of the community of these people. Forty six years later he recalled: «There, for the first time I truly experienced God [...] God was simply there, he penetrated our relationships of reciprocity. I was pulled into this new way without putting up any resistance».1 Almost immediately he understood that the Church cannot be programmed, but it must be received as a gift of God who gives us His presence in our midst.

## A person of encounter

Hemmerle put himself seriously in the attitude of learning from the world, to understand what is the True contained in the other. And at the same time he fell in love with the Word of God, and as a consequence he continually bore witness to that which God revealed in Jesus and with his infinite and trinitarian

Church and humanity». From the Middle East: «Chiara Lubich has created a school of unity and of peace... Let us drink of these ideas, this atmosphere, and then we go back to our areas with a new courage». An Italian: «... I think that this charisma of Chiara Lubich is relevant to day like never before, precisely to reunite the Church in unum. And it is clear that the Pope underlined this to us».

For some of the participants the experience of communion continued in the little town of Loppiano: the meetings with the Sophia University Institute, with the Center of Spirituality for priests, with the Loreto School for the families, brought out in them the desire that students, priests, families, of their dioceses could spend a period of time in the Cittadella to deepen the dimension of the charisma and to make an experience of communion lived.

*Helmut Sievers (Chiarama)*

1 K. Hemmerle, *Unser Lebensraum – der dreifaltige Gott*, in: *Das Prisma* 1994, 23. Trad. it. in *Gen's* XXV, 1 (January-February) 1995, 15



Da destra, i vescovi Klaus Hemmerle, Acácio R. Alves, Reinhard Pünder

love he opened venues of encounter, of reciprocal love.

### A person who serves the Church

This person, gifted with many talents and charisms, was chosen by the Church to become the Bishop of Aquisgrana in Germany, from 1975 to 1994 and for this reason he leaves his chair at the University. He loved the Diocese with all his heart and he strived to serve it according to the heart of God: «How can I fulfill my task well in the different institutes of the Church? How can I manage them without possessing them as my own? How can I interact with them, how can I immerse myself in them with my personal style without running the risk of becoming some sort of engineers of the bountiful God? [...] I must leave space for the Other so that it is He who acts».<sup>2</sup>

And so year after year he develops his own theological way of evangelization for the diocese. His pastoral letters open up a way of communion and mission towards the labourers, towards the youth and towards the diocese in the third world with whom the Diocese of Aquisgrana is paired.

### A person who wants to give Jesus

A passage taken from the Letter to the Galatians (Gal 2, 20) has always fascinated Klaus Hemmerle throughout his life: «It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me». At the International Congress of priests and religious

men held in Rome, on the 30th of April, 1982, he commented: «My being belongs to Jesus Christ. Every present moment I can die in Him in a new way so that He can live in me: this is the authentic way to find my the true realization of oneself».

### The unity with Chiara Lubich

In Chiara Lubich and in her spirituality of unity he discovered a profound theology, able to give to the Church today new impulses of communion and mission. With Chiara, he developed a style of communion lived among Catholic Bishops and, upon the request of Pope John Paul II, also with Bishops of other Churches.



Il vescovo Klaus Hemmerle con Chiara e don Foresi durante un incontro di Vescovi in Svizzera

The foundress of the Focolare, informing the whole Movement of the death of Mons. Hemmerle, wrote: «God was everything for him, and doing the Will of God was the constant commitment of his life. He was the Word lived, so much so that whoever came to know him personally can certainly define him as: “someone in love with the Word of God”»<sup>3</sup>.

In an interview, Chiara said: «He helped me to realize two very important realities in the Focolare Movement: the branch of the Bishops friends, animated by the spirituality of unity and the founding of the Abbà School to translate into doctrine the spirituality of unity, fruit of a charism».

*Wilfried Hagemann*

<sup>2</sup> K. Hemmerle, *Ökumene aus der Mitte in Ökumenische Mitteilungen der christlichen Kirchen*, in NRW, september 1976,3

<sup>3</sup> Chiara Lubich, *Bishop Hemmerle, a gift of God*, in Mariapolis 2/1994, pp.2,3,5

# Consecrated women

## A charism for communion

International meeting for consecrated women of different  
Congregations and Secular Institutes



The Mariapolis Center at Castel Gandolfo welcomed the consecrated women from different Congregations and Secular Institutes from March 6 to 9. The variety of their charisms expressed, in a profound communion among all, the gift and the beauty that the charism of unity brings about. This is how our international meeting started, enriched by the presence of Korean, Chinese, Camerunese consecrated women including those from different European countries and regions of Italy.

### «More Opera in the Opera»»

The various experiences lived in the light of reciprocal love with talks given on the different realities of the Opera and the work for the preparation of the General Assembly, which involved everyone in expressing reflections and suggestions, made us all feel that we were truly one with the Opera, and prepared us for the meeting with Emmaus and Giancarlo. All of us felt that we were more «Opera in the Opera». The link-up in streaming made it possible for the consecrated women all over the world to also participate. Those moments that were so divine were indescribable, and linked «heaven and earth» in one planetary embrace.

From an email we received: «I followed the meeting with Emmaus. it was an unexpected gift

that entered in me like fire. I felt that I was taken once again by the Ideal in a new dimension. The Opera is charity if I live like this, count on me. Reviewing our vows was a special moment: intense memories, questions without comments».

### In front of the gift of God

«When Chiara started – Emmaus underlined – she didn't think of founding a focolare, she thought of "Ut omnes". What did God make her see, what did God show her as the goal of her life? That all may be one!

[...] Each one in the Opera is capable of bringing ahead everything. What counts is this treasure of charisms that makes us able to generate, safeguard, build the whole Opera throughout the world.

Once Cardinal Rylko said: "No one can understand a charism except for someone who has a charism". I felt that the treasure that there is in the Opera, is that there is not just one charism, (but) there are many charisms placed in communion by a charism that is the charism of unity; it is something marvelous. Now this light, this gift of the charism of the Ideal must have this effect.

In this hall there are many charisms. If each one says: "I belong to the Oblates, but how beautiful the Salesian charism is"; and if the Salesians say "look how beautiful the charism of the Jesuits is, how beautiful is the one of the Daughters of Charity; if each one truly does this, and puts herself in front of the gift that God has given to the other, different from one's own, and recognizes the beauty of that gift and of all these gifts and all of them are placed in communion by the charism of unity, each gift will shine and become even more beautiful, made so by the love of all the others.

I can now understand why Chiara was always grateful to God for the presence of the religious men and women in the Opera: because she really knew the values that they bring. We must continue to give our attention to the religious men and women knowing that this is an extraordinary gift. At the same time, in this recognition of the gift that one is for the other, we must also recognize the charism that allows us to put them in common, the gift of living in the communion of charisms. And this is a gift of God: so we must recognize it, value it, make use of it».

Some immediate impressions of their dialogue with Emmaus: «I was impressed by the communion of charisms. When we are in the Opera we are deeply in the Opera and when we are in our communities we are daughters of our founder. It is a weaving wherein nothing is lacking, whether you are in the Opera or at home. It is a gift! What comes out is a treasure. We remember when Chiara in one of her first messages in '73 placed in our heart: not only our being daughters of these charisms, but also our being always alive in the Opera, precisely because of this communion of charisms. I think that what you have shared with us is something that brings about a revolution within that tells us "have courage, count on us!"».

«The reality of the pact of '49», with the theme prepared by Michel Vandeleene with the precious contribution of the Santa Chiara Center, who prepared some excerpts of videos of Chiara, truly marked us even more with that «living as a mystical body» in that «annihilation of oneself so as to be the other».

## Reopen one's eyes

Here is just a glimpse of what emerged from the communion that was done in small groups: «It is an instrument of salvation, personal and communitarian and is a challenge that God is giving us. In this historical moment we are being called to be the first to live and deepen it».

«Experiencing Jesus in the midst is not a medal given to the best ones, it is our way of loving, to open our eyes and to realize that Jesus is already there. Thank you because I have been able to open my eyes once again».

«At the end of this meeting I will go back home with this question: am I keeping Jesus in the midst? This is also the most important key point».

The meeting ended with a beautiful group photo, followed by a medley of songs of the early times, it was «a sealing of unity, of inexpressible power even if one is faraway».

*prepared by the secretariat of the consecrated women*

## New publications

«Jesus said that he will remain with us: but where is he? We cannot see him... he became invisible... When Jesus was alive, he could be seen, you could hear him speak... Now, where can we meet him?»: an imaginary dialogue among some children and Michele Genisio opens *Where are you Jesus?* The map to meet him, which is the new supplement to catechesis edited by Città Nuova.

With the help of nice cartoons of Vittorio Sedini, Michele Genisio accompanies the young readers towards a discovery of the nine different places where one can meet Jesus: in one's conscience, in the neighbour, among persons united in his name, in the Old and New Testaments, in the Church, in joy and in suffering, in the Sacraments and, especially in the Eucharist.

The volume is designed with nine maps made up of the «sources». For each of them there are citations from the Bible that are indicated for going in depth, a game to be played in groups, some cartoons to colour, experiences of children from all over the world and an exercise to do at home (a letter to write; a resolution to be made, «1 minute of silence» or rather a moment of meditation). Thanks to a long experience in this field, Michele is able to explain a central aspect of our faith using language that is fresh and simple, and which is suitable for children

from eight to ten years old.



# For an Opera that is «outward bound»

**The central secretariat undertakes some trips to get to know the different local realities up close**

We are in Krizevci in Croatia, more precisely at the Mariapolis Faro. It is January, but it is still cold, even then they are talking about spring! And in fact their joy in the faces of everyone, the surge, the fraternity lived among persons of very different origins (we come from seven nations) brings to the air an atmosphere of the warmth of springtime in this splendid Little Town, that seems like a place chosen by God as a crossroad of races, cultures, religions, a bridge between West and East Europe.

**A month ago, at the** Mariapolis Lia in Argentina, in the summer, what was instead highlighted was the freshness of this population, which is young, open, free, with concreteness in their initiatives, activities of all kinds, social commitment on all levels. Starting from the Mariapolis Lia itself, a very beautiful garden, a ray of light that attracts many, just like the sun that is born in the pampa. This year in fact the secretariat of the Parocchial and Diocesan Movements chose to hold the meeting of the secretariats on the level of the Big Zone here, so as to discern the challenges that present themselves in the various local Churches and also to go more in depth in the role of the secretariat itself. In December 2013, this same meeting for Western Europe was held at the Little Town Castello Esteriore in Spain (see Mariapoli n. 1-2/14).

**When the meetings ended,** we went in person to some parish communities: living communities, where the 360° dialogue is done just as in El Viso (Sevilla) and where all the mem-



bers of the Opera make up a piece of a world that is already united. (Argentina and Croatia).

The final impression after this very rich journey? Spurts of life that come out from all over that, together with all the realities of the Opera present in the territory, give life to the most varied initiatives directed at the existential outskirts which Pope Francis frequently talks about.

It is enough to think about the canteen where 500 meals a day are distributed to the Rumanians of Serbia, the youth centers of the Greco-Catholic Church in Serbia, the work being done to reintegrate into society those marginalized in the different parishes of Argentina or the commitment of the members of the Opera on all levels in this great country of the Southern Cone.

**We brought with us** a particular gift: our conversation with Emmaus and Giancarlo on the 11th of December, 2013, a special moment in which some important clarifications relevant to the present situation of the parishes came to light, the insertion of the Movement in the local Church (in the light of what emerged from Pope Francis) and on the realities of the youth of the Parocchial and Diocesan Movements. All these novelties were welcomed in every latitude, with joy and gratitude.

In front of the recognition of the committed members of the mass movements as a vo-

cation of the Opera, some cried for joy at having found their way.

We found the reality of the youth everywhere, ready to bring the Ideal among the youth in the parishes.

The meeting of the Italian secretariats both of the Parish Movement (17-19 January 2014) and of the Diocesan Movement (14-16 February), was done distinctly so as to be able to go more in depth with each reality. Working meetings, moments of dialogue rich with possibilities and concrete actions.

We realized that the world of the parish is changing also in Italy; there are more and more realities where all the dialogues are developed, totally inserted in the social fabric, open doors towards «Ut omnes». As someone said, what emerged was the need to «open the arms of the Parochial Movement to the entire world of the parishes in their diversity». The reading of some passages of the Evangelii Gaudium, in particular that on the social dimension of evangelization, deeply called us to open ourselves up to a more concrete and incarnated view of the Church today.

**In the meetings an** updating on the preparations for the Assembly could not be missed, and we saw with great joy how much we were involved in this special moment of the Opera. We could feel the passion for the youth. At the conclusion, it came spontaneously from everyone

to give the priority to the youth this year. So a meeting for committed youth is being planned for August as an important step in this journey.

The hour spent that the secretariats of the Diocesan Movement spent with Emmaus and Giancarlo was rich with emotion and joy (see box).

In this year that Emmaus defined as the «year of gratitude», it comes to us to thank God for having contemplated such a luxuriant Opera that is «outward bound», where everyone feels himself or herself as the protagonist and committed to bring love to the world.

*d. Klaus Hofstetter, Sameiro Freitas,  
Marco Bartolomei*

**Some impressions** of the participants after the hour spent with Emmaus and Giancarlo during the meeting of the secretariats of the Diocesan Movement:

«We experienced a historical moment. You made us see the beauty of this new page that God is writing in the Opera and that we want to continue to write in faithfulness to the Charism».

«Thank you for having once again focused on the radicalness of the vocation of those committed, that you have shown us in full harmony with the various vocations of the Opera».

«We felt that we have become responsible and encouraged to be totally Opera and totally Church».



Central Africa

# «... this is the moment to give one's life»



For more than a year the Republic of Central Africa has been shaken by a violent civil war. The country is bloodied by the conflict between Christians and Muslims. Entire communities, people whose families have been living together peacefully for centuries are forced to hide, or to run away to escape threats and violence. Only in the month of December 2013 there have been more than a thousand killed and a million evacuees.

N.J., a priest of the Opera in this nation, shared with us through a phone call what he is living with great courage this week, even at the cost of risking his life.

Some months ago the place where Fr. N. serves as parish priest was attacked by the Muslim rebels and more than 500 Christians sought refuge in his parish. Then the Christian rebels arrived and they drove the Muslims out. So then there were about a hundred or so Muslims who sought refuge in his parish too. Many times Fr. N. welcomed and defended them, so much so that he was taken by the Christian militia and threatened. The other priests who lived with him in that place suggested that it would be better to leave.

A particularly significant experience shared during the 6° anniversary of the departure of Chiara for Heaven, in which what she did to promote interreligious dialogue was highlighted, comes to us from Bangui

«I too was very much afraid - Fr. N. told us - but, thinking of Chiara and her relationship with Muslims and also for Fr. Silvano Cola, I told myself: this is the moment to give my life: I have to be ready to die rather than have even just one of these people killed». So he wrote his testament and celebrated Mass, fully aware that it could be his last.

Seeing his determination, two other priests decided to stay there too. At a certain point, the rebels wanted to burn all the church where everyone was taking refuge. The situation was about to get worse when the army arrived in the last moment and the tragedy was prevented.

Sharing these facts, Fr. N. underlined how he always felt supported by unity, he wanted to thank and greet everyone. It was very clear that he was under a special grace and it came spontaneously to thank the Father for this champion formed by the charism of Chiara.





# The same family

The experience of Ismael, a Muslim friend from Lubumbashi

In our big piece of family owned land we rented a house to a sect and up to now we were not on good terms. Since I was a Muslim, they looked at me strangely, also because I often wear the tunic. Since the members of the sect use the loudspeaker with the volume up I often heard the pastor speak badly about me up to the point of not allowing the children to play in front of my house.

One day in a meeting of the focolare we



reflected on the Word of Life which spoke about love of neighbour. I took a few more copies and I went to bring them to the pastor. He was shocked at the fact that a Muslim knew about the Gospel. From that moment on a good relationship was born among us. The pastor came to my house and even invited me to attend a course on the Bible.

Recently I went to work in a city with an Arab friend of mine. Since I had to go to another city I found lodging for him in the parish, even if the place was not very comfortable, but there was nothing better that I could find. Abbé Emery welcomed my friend with much love and he spent a day with him bringing him around the whole parish. Being an Arab, he encountered some problems with the Chief

of Immigration, but the priest defended him by asking one of his parishioners who worked in that office to help out. When I came back I found my friend very happy: he shared with me that the priest brought him hot water whenever he had to perform the ablutions before saying his prayers and was often with him.

So we went to thank him together. Upon entering his house we saw a beautiful picture of Chiara Lubich and only then I discovered that this priest belonged to the Movement. I told him that I was a «Muslim focolarino», and so we found ourselves to be members of the same family! My friend then sent an email to his Muslim friends in Saudi Arabia sharing with them what had happened, attaching also a photo. The text was more or less like this: «I was staying in a house of priests». The answer came quickly: «They didn't cut off your head?». He replied: «They didn't even ask me what my religion was, on the contrary they welcomed me like a member of the family».

Often he would ask me about this priest just like the other day I wrote him a note attaching it to the Word of Life that the focolare sends him regularly.



## In Cuba With Marco, at the origins of the Charism

From February 21 to March 14  
the Caribbean Islands «welcomed»  
the visit of the first focolarino

The visit of Marco Tecilla which is without a doubt very special, was a gift for the family of Chiara in the island of Cuba, for which they are profoundly grateful. It was a «trick of Jesus», Marco said, since, being 88 years old he never expected that he could still come to this «hot» island.

A simple people with a deep thirst for God, willing to learn how to live the fraternity of Jesus that generates unity; these people welcomed Marco starting from Havana, then in Santiago and still in Florida-Camaguey .

On Sunday the 23rd, in the capital, there were around 170 children, families and many youth who came to listen to the story «It was war time...». The life of Marco, interwoven with that of Chiara and of her first companions, made them discover the presence of God in the history of the Opera and also in the personal story of each one. When he talked about the «secret» that Chiara revealed to him and the episodes that helped him to recognize the various faces of Jesus Forsaken, one could feel that in «that "window" – the wound of Jesus crucified – through which God looks at humanity and humanity looks at God» each one discovered the key to continue to live together the mystery of suffering-love, with a renewed faith in the God's plan of love for this people.

The week continued with an ecumenical meeting wherein the acquaintance with friends from different Churches was deepened and there was also a meeting with priests and seminarians.

Marco then visited the community in Santiago de Cuba – one thousand kilometers from La Habana – it is the first community that the announcement of the Ideal reached 14 years ago, and from there spread throughout the island. Also present were the communities of Banes, Palma Soriano and Guantanamo, after having undertaken long and uncomfortable journeys, just to be able to live this moment of celebration that took place in the Santuario della Madonna del Cobre, patroness of the island. Gen, volunteer and married focolarini shared the story of the arrival of the ideal in these lands, the encounter with the great Light.

The depth of the life of these people allowed Marco to share his greatest treasure which then became the everyone's. He brought them to the «roots of the great tree of the Opera that is spread out all over the world». (see box)

the last stage of the trip is in Camaguey around eight hours by car from La Habana, to meet the communities of Florida, Céspedes, Esmeraldaotto . Here too the meeting with the youth was special; they asked many important questions for their life, and were able to draw out sprays of wisdom: how to face difficult

moments, how to remain in the Will of God, how to remain united with Jesus in the midst even at a distance. He brought each one present to the realization that God loves us immensely and that by living each difficulty with Jesus Forsaken we become fountains of communion and therefore protagonists of our life and actors for a better future. A young girl seemed to express everyone when she said: «I already miss everything that we experienced with marco, it was fantastic and marks a before and after in my».

The brief meeting with the Archbishops of the three cities visited was also important, since it confirmed the appreciation of the local Church for the presence of the Movement in their dioceses.

For the two focolare centers present in Havana it was also a moment to renew the commitment to live as true children of Chiara, striving to incarnate the Gospel in these lands; new light, new strength and new ardour to live for «Ut Omnes»!

We can say that we were immersed in the life of the early times, we felt that Chiara was very much present among us. And that is where we want to remain.

*Alida Valsecchi, Luis Fernando Veléz*

## With the gen4 boys and girls

Marco in Cuba met also the gen 4 boys and girls! They waited for him near the ruins of the parish church that was completely destroyed last year by Hurricane Sandy. After the greetings they shared various experiences with him. Veronica: «I go to school and there is always a boy who is very noisy. Our teachers get angry with him but with much love I asked him to stop making so much noise and he became peaceful. I was the first one to love». After some experiences of the early times shared by Marco, Isabel asked him: «Marco, I would like to ask you this question, how can a gen4 not be afraid?» And he answered: «Love, you only have to love. Because true love, as it is said in the Gospel, true love drives away fear. Are you baptized? Are you preparing to receive your first communion? And so Jesus is in your heart and he is like an armour of steel that will always protect you». «When I greeted Isabel - the assistant wrote - I told her: "always remember what Marco told you, it is very important" and she answered me "I will remember it for the rest of my life"».



## Elena Sachsel

On the side of the least

Pediatrician, active in many associations, present with her political involvement in the realities of Magenta (Northern Italy) her city, volunteer in the developing Countries. Elena was born in Trieste, of Jewish origin from both her parents. Origins that have made her a citizen of the world and a sister of the persecuted. Elena worked for the least. She was a courageous woman, ready to welcome with a generous heart all the challenges that life presented. Her secret? Putting the Gospel into practice. She grew close to the Focolare Movement while she was still young and her thirst for justice led her to answer the appeal of Chiara to «die for one's own people», involving herself in the New Humanity Movement as a volunteer.

Since the '80s she dedicated herself with much energy to the drug addicts. «With a group of friends we made a crazy experience, but we were able to rehabilitate almost all the youth whom we were taking care of». She placed her own house at the disposition of those in need and with the other staff they rent a small apartment in the mountains for the rehabilitation process where the teens withdrew from their drug dependence before they were welcomed for a period of time in the homes of the families of the focolarini and other friends.

Then her profession brought her to in Perù to take care of the poor who were farthest away. But after a few months she had to return home because of her health a condition that placed limits on her action, but opened up new dorrs upon her return: «I was a stranger and you welcomed me» (Mt 25,35): for twenty years she committed herself to «Naga», an association giving socio-sanitary assistance for clandestine foreigners and immigrants, of which she becomes the president for many years. «They welcomed me as a Catholic, even if almost all of the people had different religious convictions –

Elena shared – and with them I lived a marvelous experience of brotherhood».

And with the Association «Lule» Elena she brought first aid to prostitutes, courageously going to them at night in very dangerous neighborhoods.

Often she was involved in the battle for adequate social policies. During the clearing out of a gypsy campsite, she wrote to the mayors of the zones suggesting an alternative solution to the problem. She incited and involved the different town administrations in the territory encouraging initiatives for peace and concrete actions through the «Heart for Heart» Association, lending support to the «Casetta Macin» in Romania, a house for families of street children.

In 1994 she started, with some others, a «Home» for persons in difficulty and in need. «It is reciprocal love. Now I am disabled, my legs and my arms no longer function well, I am no longer independent, but the people here go out of their way to help me in everything. Before, I was for the Center, now the Center is for me».

Humble and resourceful, her dedication was often given public recognition. The last tribute given to her – Meritorious of Civil Virtues (Benemerita delle Virtù Civili) – touched her deeply especially what the civil authorities said. «They revealed something of my life and I felt that it was the realization of my vocation as a volunteer of God in the Focolare Movement She died peacefully on February 14, 2014 at 86 years old. The day of her funeral was declared a day of mourning in Magenta. The church was crowded for the final greeting of the very many friends of Elena, those for whom faith, origins, whether a nomad or one who committed countless mistakes, didn't matter. The world that Elena dreamed of was a world where there is a place for everyone.



Donatella Donato Di Paola

# Gabriella Barcella Pesenti

*Always ready day and night*

«Farewell to the vice-mayor with a heart of gold. A commitment for the poor that went beyond her public duty. Always ready day and night to help whoever was in difficulty», with this title to five columns of news, the most important local daily newspaper, L'eco di Bergamo, announced the unexpected departure of Gabriella, of Brusaporto, «a noteworthy and respected person not only because of her public responsibilities but above all for the great spirit of service given freely which has always animated her life.... which she chose to spend for the others, without ever holding back in helping and supporting the families most in need». Gabriella was a volunteer, her lifestyle recalled that of Pacomio, the model that Chiara in 2002 had indicated to the volunteers of the Work of Mary. She met the Ideal in a Mariapolis in 1965, when she was 20 years old. She got married - and had two children - with Angelo, introducing him to a life based on the Gospel. After their marriage, they welcomed Bettina, Angelo's mother, into their home, and later her mother too would come to live with them. The meeting with Jesus Forsaken happens when an incurable illness strikes her husband. Gabriella helps the children to live the final days of their father in serenity so as to «accompany him to God».

Her gratitude to Chiara for the gift of the Ideal, the joy in the life of the nucleo, the generosity and freshness of her relationships are contagious to all those who are beside her. For many years she follows with care and enthusiasm the volunteers in formation. Administrator of a commercial enterprise, she practices legal and ethical principles at work, weaving agreeable relationships with her superiors, dependents, clients. In '98 she wrote: «Now that I am retired, I contacted the ACLI Society (union that is Christian-inspired) to offer my services in my town». It is the start of a commitment that leads her to being more active in the politics of her town, built together step by step with Jesus in the



midst. She participates with fervour in the first meetings of the Movement of Politics for Unity. In 2004, Gabriella is elected as councillor for social services and as vice-mayor, a position that was once again confirmed in the next elections. Her mayor said of her: «At times I couldn't understand where her role as councillor ended and where her role as a volunteer began:

she dedicated herself completely to the others in silence, without making noise ... If someone called her because he had to go to the hospital or to the emergency, she was always there even at night, and in the morning she would come to work as usual without saying anything». In March 2013, at the Mass for the anniversary of Chiara, she shared the unexpected and serious diagnosis of her health offering everything for the Opera. On April 24 at the age of 67, Gabriella closed her eyes and ended her «holu journey» with an extreme act of love: she donated her corneas.

*Donatella Donato Di Paola*

## Anna Maria Bruschi

*«Non mi tiro indietro»*

Di Firenze, Anna Maria alla fine degli anni '60, partecipa ad incontri della Parola di vita e poco dopo alla Mariapolis. La colpisce la proposta di vivere il Vangelo 24 ore su 24... Anna avrà poi la conferma del suo posto nell'Opera, come scrive:



«Mi arrivò l'amore del Padre attraverso le volontarie e mi fu chiarissima la mia vocazione: nella nostra vita non ci sono momenti staccati,

ma nelle piccole e grandi cose siamo libere di riscegliere Dio e rispondere al suo amore». La Parola di vita che Chiara le aveva dato era: «E il Suo Regno non avrà fine» (Lc 1,33). Anna trova il senso pieno della vita e nuovi i rapporti con i genitori amatissimi, la sorella e il fratello, con i parenti, i colleghi di lavoro. Sapeva leggere dentro di sé e nei fatti esterni con lo stupore del bambino evangelico, e attraeva i giovani dando con autenticità e gioia le sue esperienze. Mai arresa, nel settembre scorso ha accettato di essere ancora responsabile di un gruppo di volon-

tarie più anziane di lei, dicendo: «Finchè Dio mi dà la forza, non mi tiro indietro». Un improvviso ictus l'ha colpita nel sonno e, dopo dieci giorni di coma, è partita per il cielo l'11 marzo, a 81 anni. Ad accompagnarla nell'ultimo saluto le persone più diverse e numerose, conosciute e amate negli anni... c'era anche un grande mazzo di rose bianche dal suo capoufficio di 30 anni prima. Ognuno dei presenti aveva da donare «perle» della vita di Anna che fanno rendere gloria a Dio.

*Giuseppina (Ide) Manici*

## Betsy Ruth Tobias De Ramirez

### *Her smile*

Ruth met the Ideal during the early times of the arrival of the Movement in Guatemala, involving herself in the New Families Movement and from 2001 among the volunteers. Married to Juan Luis, also a volunteer, they had three children: Betsy, Telma and Ruth Liliana. She worked as a teacher for 30 years, leaving a mark on all her students and in the teaching staff whom - as she herself shared - thanked her for never engaging in malicious gossip. After her retirement, she goes to work in the personnel department of the «Centro Educativo Fiore» (Fiore Education Center), where she was respected by the children, her colleagues and the parents.

When Jesus came to visit her with a serious illness, she says her «yes» to the Will of God, ready to love and offer all her sufferings for the Opera. Active in the Secretariat of New Families, she together with the group had decided to visit different families that were passing through trials also like hers. Her smile and her innate joy were always present, even in difficult moments.

On December 5, 2013, at the age of 63, Ruth concluded her offering in an atmosphere of serenity in which «one could already feel the Resurrection», as what the volunteer who were present wrote.

*Martita Blanco*

## Our relatives

The following left for the Next Life: **Rui, brother of José Alberto, Maria Laura, focolarini** in Porto, **of Maria Joana**, volunteer, and **uncle of Paulo**, focolarino in the Cittadella Arcoiris (Portugal); **Domenico, father of Rosalba Poli**, focolarina in Pescara (zone of Rome); **Yves, brother of Christiane Michot**, focolarina in France; **Filomena, sister of Pierina Onofrio, Valentino, father of Nilde Del Monte**, and **Angelo, father of Antonella Francesconi**, focolarinas at the Roman Mariapolis; **Fr. Giuseppe, brother of Angela Clara**, focolarina in the Cittadella Pace (Philippines); **the mother of Anadiva Mendes**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Santa Maria (Recife-Brazil); **the father of Daniela Righetti**, focolarina in Buenos Aires; **the brother of Rosa Pinñuela de Contreras**, married focolarina in Maracaibo (Venezuela); **Gastão, father of Ana Beatriz (Luminosa) and Carla Reckziegel**, married focolarinas in Porto Alegre (Brazil); **Antonino, brother of Ferruccio Castrovinci and Vittorina, mother of Antonello Nuvole**, focolarini in Catania; **Willi, father of Jutta Beyer**, focolarina in Mumbai (India).

# Valentina Russolillo

## *A grateful multitude*

Volunteer of the East Zone of the USA, Valentina left for Heaven on January 7, at 76 years old. She was born in Italy, the youngest of six siblings, and was orphaned of both parents at a very young age. She lived through the experience of the Second World War in extreme poverty. At 16 years old she immigrated with her relatives to Boston in the USA, where she was able to study and then work. She married and had three children, one of whom had some mental problems. She met the Ideal in 1974, when her daughter was invited to Chicago to a gen3 congress. Accompanying her to the meetings she comes to know the focalre, and hearing the call to become a volunteer of God. Valentina brings ahead Living City magazine with great commitment; as a Eucharistic minister, she followed a Word of Life group for Italian speakers.

For years she suffered due to spinal problem having to undergo several operations that were not effective. Two volunteers would often go to visit her and one of Valentina's children confided to them that during her stay with her mother they had started to read the Bible together and she has rediscovered her faith once again after a long time. During that visit Valentina prepared her funeral Mass with her children and the volunteers, talking with joy about the Heavenly Mariapolis, on how we will be united with Chiara and with everyone; they prayed together, laughed and recalled many instances of their Ideal life. For her funeral the Highway Patrol stopped all traffic, as the passersby saluted the funeral procession that proceeded, one of the longest processions ever seen in the zone. It was impressive to see the multitude of people: the church was crowded to overflowing which showed how much Valentina had loved each one.

*Chiaretta Zanzucchi and Emilie Christy*



# Nair Maria Pazini

## *«I am happy!»*

Volunteer of Londrina (south Brazil) Nair reached the Heavenly Mariapolis on February 9, at the age of 81, accompanied by the daughter Fatima Celia a focolarina in the Cittadella Luminosa (Usa).

She met the Ideal in 1994, when Fatima was already in the focolare for many years. Chiara gave her the Word of Life: «In Him our heart rejoices» [Psalm 33 (32), 21]. Even if she was soft-spoken, Nair shared the ideal with many, which bears witness to her faith and concrete love. For certain periods during the year she welcomed some students and families into her home. She never discriminated anyone, serving concretely, establishing relationships even with people of other Churches or supporting the community of Schönstatt. Her strength diminished after the death of her husband and the surprise, at the beginning of last year, of a serious illness. Often their nucleus meetings were held at her home and her daughter Fatima came to be near her. Nair passed through a dark moment which she was able to overcome with the support of Jesus in the midst and the unity with Chiara. In the hospital, in one of her last conversations, a volunteer of her nucleus spoke to her of the approaching Paradise and Nair affirmed: «I am happy!». She left after saying the rosary with her daughter.

*Riscelta Lyra*

APRIL 2014  
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