

YEAR XXXII N 05 MAY 2015

# MARIAPOLI

Notiziario del movimento dei focolari

**Maria Voce at the UN  
In the Assembly  
with the  
religious leaders**

**At the Center  
of the Opera**

and meetings with  
the different  
Centers continues

**Media**

Important  
appointments for  
the communicators  
of the Opera

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# Apostles of dialogue



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Castel Gandolfo, 22 January, 2004.  
Chiara at the Collegamento CH

The Pope calls us all “apostles of dialogue”. “In harmony with the Magisterium of the Church, the men and women focolarini have become apostles of dialogue...” he writes. It is a new title we never had before, even though the content of all our actions lies there, in dialogue.

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves: how does the Holy Father see us, how does God intend us to be “apostles of dialogue”?

Do they see it as an activity to carry out every now and then during our meetings with other Catholics, individuals or groups, with the faithful of other Christian Churches, with the followers of other religions and with men and women of good will?

Yes, of course. But we can worthily carry out this specific duty of ours if dialogue is a permanent reality for us focolarini who are called to a collective spirituality.

And the reason is this: we are all called to be a reflection of the Holy Trinity, where the three divine Persons are eternally in dialogue, eternally one and eternally distinct.

In practice, this means that each time we are in contact with one or more brothers or sisters, directly or indirectly, by means of a telephone call, a letter, a job carried out for their benefit, prayers said on their behalf, we all feel that we are involved in an unending dialogue, that we are called to dialogue.

How?

By being open to our brothers and sisters, by listening, empty of ourselves, to what they want, to what they say, to what worries them, to what they desire. Once we have done this, we give what is desired and what is opportune.

And if there are moments and hours in which I must dedicate time to myself (eating, resting, dressing, and so forth), I should try to do everything in consideration of my brothers and sisters, always mindful of those who await my love.

In this way and only in this way, by continually living the “spirituality of unity” or “of communion”, can I effectively contribute towards making my Church “a home and a school of communion”; towards furthering, with the faithful of other Churches or ecclesial Communities, the unity of the Church; towards achieving with people of other religions or cultures ever vaster spaces of universal fraternity.





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New York April 22, 2015

# Invent peace

**Excerpts from the intervention of Maria Voce at the United Nations Assembly<sup>1</sup>**

We can see that today is not the time for half-measures. If violent extremism exists – while maintaining the need to defend oneself, above all the weak and the persecuted – our response must be similarly radical, but one that is structurally different, by which I mean an «extremism in dialogue»! A dialogue which requires the highest level of engagement, which is risky, demanding, challenging and which aims to sever the roots of incomprehension, fear and bitterness.”

It is in the ambit of this Institution that the initiative of the «Alliance of Civilizations» works, which proposes an alternative and constructive process of global interaction, and which tends to underline that which unites humanity in all its many expressions rather than what would seem at first glance, to divide it. It is therefore of great merit to speak of an alliance of civilizations! Nevertheless we must ask ourselves if we should

get closer to the roots of this new outlook and focus not only on an alliance of civilizations but on what might be called the «civilization of alliance»; a universal civilization which enables peoples to see themselves as part of a great happening, which is both varied and fascinating, that is humankind’s journey towards unity. A civilization which makes dialogue the pathway to recognizing each other as brothers and sisters, as free and equal. [...]

What should we do then? Chiara Lubich wrote with hope and a firm conviction that after the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003): «We must not give up! [...]. There are many signs that a new awareness may finally emerge, out of this serious international situation, of the need to work together for the common good, the rich and poor, sophisticated or less so in their weaponry, believers or not, with the courage to “invent peace”. The time for “holy wars” is over. War is never holy, it never has been. God does not want it. Only peace is truly holy because God himself is peace»<sup>2</sup>. [...]

[See the special report on «Emmaus at the UN» with her complete intervention in Mariapolis online](#)

... let’s feel that we are “apostles of dialogue” and live accordingly. A 360 degree dialogue, certainly, but starting out on the right foot: by loving every neighbor we meet, and the measure of our love is the gift of our life.

*Chiara*

From Collegamento CH, Castel Gandolfo, 22 January, 2004 wherein Chiara comments on the letter sent to her by John Paul II on the occasion of the 60° of the Focolare Movement (see *Mariapolis* n. 1/2004)

- 1 New York, Headquarters of the UN. High-level Thematic Debate on «Promotion of tolerance and reconciliation: favoring a peaceful, welcoming society and battling against violent extremism» – Plenary Session – April 22, 2015
- 2 From C. Lubich, *No to the defeat of peace*, Editorial, Città Nuova, 2003, n. 24



## For peace God in the United Nations

**The participation of Emmaus in a session of the Assembly of the United Nations, upon the invitation of the president Sam Kutesa and of the secretary general Ban Ki-moon was an important step also for the Focolare community in New York.**

What are two days in the almost 70 years of history of the United Nations? But, the meeting held on April 21 and 22 on the «Promotion of tolerance and reconciliation: favoring peaceful, welcoming societies and countering violent extremism» has changed this organization that links 193 states in the world and which hopes to be the expression of a more united world.

The state leaders felt the need to ask for help from the leaders of different religions. For the first time in the history of the UN, religion was not a private matter, but a source of wisdom, just as the secretary general Ban Ki-moon already said in his opening remarks on the second day dedicated to the response of the religions to violent extremism.

Among the invited leaders, was the president of the Focolare Movement, Maria Emmaus Voce, and Ermanno Perotti, gen2 of Florence, 25 years old a a student of Devel-



New York, 22 april 2015. The interventions of the President and of the Secretary General of the UN in the presence of the religious leaders

opmental Economics. Also present with them was a group of members of the Focolare, from various vocations, ready to bring God into the United Nations, not only with words but through their life.

This is what Emmaus precisely said after a Mass in the Focolare center of New York on April 20, commenting on the invitation that she received just a few days before. «I felt that

I am a flag which is displayed to show that there is something behind it, it is like a flag that is carried when one's team has won». With this statement she was referring to the life of the whole Opera, not only in the United States, but in the entire world, «that bears witness to universal brotherhood, the desire to build true relationships, relationships of reciprocal love in such a way that the violence in the world is brought down».



New York, 22 april 2015. The surprise intervention of Ermanno Perotti during the afternoon session dedicated to the debate

A symptomatic observation: «From the first announcement of this meeting I had the impression that finally they realized that they did not have the resources capable of winning over this evil. All their attempts at diplomacy or military responses were not able to counter the violence».

The presence of religious leaders has changed the United Nations, but also the community of New York, which oftentimes feels like just a «little flock» in this enormous city that never stops to ask itself: «But will we be able to change something? We are few, taken up by many realities of daily life...». The visit of Emmaus showed that there is no need to worry: we are made for this, we will be able to do it because He is in our midst.

What has remained after these days? Ermanno said it frankly: «Jesus in the midst. A new Jesus in the midst here in New York».

*Susanne Janssen, New York*

## We are made for these environments

### Interview of Emmaus at the conclusion of the trip to New York

#### *Emmaus, what has remained in your heart? What have these days been for you?*

«The most beautiful thing that remains in my heart is the fact of going to the UN together. I truly feel what I said before going, which is that I am bringing the life of the Opera. Also because of the presence not only of myself and Ermanno, but also of a visible group of focolarine, focolarini, Volunteers, gen, who gave me much joy and which impressed also the others. It seemed like the sign that we are

made for these environments: they need the presence of Jesus in the midst, but we too we need such environments to express this presence in all its power.

The «going out» of the Opera also has meaning if it brings fruits such as these, because we cannot «go out» only to engage in some activities or manifestations: we must see to it that the charisma, the reality of Jesus in our midst, makes its mark. While I was at the UN I said to myself: «This is truly the Work of Mary, Mary who enters into this environment and brings Jesus to it, Jesus in the midst and she reveals him to the world».

Going out from there I had the desire to glorify God, the things that He did in our midst: truly great things. And I felt that he did them not only for the others, but also



for us, to show us the power of the charism that we possess».

*It is not always easy here in our lands, and at times we feel discouraged. What can you say to us, thinking about how in the past we had many more contacts on all levels. What is the plan of God behind this?*

«I think that the times are different, while maybe in the past there was an explosion of life, but then it will take time for this explosion to take root. Here there was an explosion when Chiara received an award at the UN, or maybe when the dialogue with the Afro-Americans began... Some years later maybe we could think: what has remained? And so it seems that this moment is that of the seed who had to die underground. But, in reality, it does not die because that life is born again outside, and it is reborn now



22 aprile: Emmaus nel focolare di New York con la comunità

with roots, more solid. Maybe there are less people in relation to all those whom we saw passing through in all these years, but those who remain have a stronger resistance, because they have gained that strength which is capable of generating a new blossoming, a new expansion. And now also there are many new people, maybe people who can make a mark in the environments where they are. I also would like to tell you: don't just wait for them to look for you, go out to look for them. I think that then there will be a new blossoming, precisely because in these lands nothing is impossible».

Susanne Janssen, New York

# Now is the time

**Maria Voce  
at the Summit on climate  
change in the Vatican**



Maria Voce, being the co-president of Religions for Peace, was invited last April 29 to the important Consultation, promoted together with the Religions for Peace, the UN Department for Sustainable Development and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. At the Summit meeting held in preparation for the imminent release of the Encyclical of Pope Francis on the environment, the secretary general of the UN Ban Ki-Moon was also present.

Emmaus in an interview said among other things: *«The persons who adhere to the Movement allow themselves to be guided by the vision of Chiara Lubich: everything is created out of love and love is the law of creation. Every woman and every man must live with the same perspective which means in love towards the others, both with regards to Humanity and with Nature. No one has the recipe for escaping from the dramatic situation in which we find ourselves if we do not join forces with the others. Because everyone has something to say, everyone has a specific role. [...] We must then look to the future with great respect both for the new generations as well as for the Earth which is will be their home. A possibility to do something concrete is given to us by the "Dice of the earth" launched by our members of the Eco-one precisely on April 22, World Earth Day. On the six faces of the dice one can find phrases that will help us to respect the environment through our daily actions: don't waste water, recycle trash, re-use. The last face of the dice says: now is the time, don't wait for tomorrow».*

prepared by the editorial board

see also [www.focolare.org](http://www.focolare.org)

# We go ahead. In spite of everything

**We interviewed Radast, of the focolare of Damascus, during one of his visits to Italy where the persons responsible for the Focolare Movement in the Middle East recently met with Emmaus, Jesus and the Center of the Opera**

## *How can our communities in Syria manage to survive?*

Through the life of the Ideal that keeps them up and also thanks to the communion among them. They feel much support from the Opera all over the world, above all through the prayers, but also through the financial help they receive.

When Aleppo was bombarded and some of our families lost their homes, the intern members of Damascus organized an evening of prayer and they gave up the usual Easter lunch in a restaurant – one of the few ways they had to relax - and donating the corresponding amount. The gen3 boys and girls also did various activities. There is a lot of family life. The local communities have grown. In Aleppo, there is no longer the women's focolare and only the

focolarini are left and we also have to leave periodically.

The intern members bring ahead the community, they take care of the gen4, gen3 with meetings in the focolare, even when the focolarini are not there. At the beginning of the year they proposed to revive the Word of life meetings. From ten people who were participating before now they are sixty youth and adults.

In Damascus the sister of a girl who used to be a gen, lost her two children of five and ten years old during the bombardment. It was tragic. With the love of the focolare and of the community they were able to go ahead. But they didn't accept the idea of having another child. «What for? - they asked - so it could also die just like the others?». Then, last year she became pregnant. We all supported her. A week ago the baby was born: the whole community felt that this is a child of reciprocal love. It is a miracle of life, of life that is born in spite of the death all around.

Between Aleppo and Damascus, near Hama, a city whose citizens are mostly Sunis, there is a Christian village, Kfarbo. There we have a beautiful community. A gen girl had her telephone line cut-off as she could no longer pay the bill. One of the intern members emptied his pockets so that she could maintain this means of communication and, a short while later, he received the same sum of money. On the occasion of March 14, both in Aleppo and in Kfarbo, a Mass was celebrated for Chiara. Precisely in those days, the departure of an extern focolarino for Loppiano was a great joy for everyone.



## Is the community able to meet one another in Aleppo?

Yes, even if meeting each other means to defy death. Sometimes, before the meeting of the Word of life there is some bombardment. But the people come just the same. A few evenings ago a missile struck a church. Our members who were living nearby, together with other families went out to the street. Just a short while later another missile struck their building. They were miraculously saved. Everything is risky. It is already the fifth year of this violent war. The bombs fall without any warning, there are no alarms. One goes to school or to work and maybe never come home. After the bombings the victims and the ruins are quickly removed: there is the desire to continue living.

There are difficulties in travelling with checkpoints also within the city. There is no electricity, water, gas. Aleppo has been emptied: the Christians who used to be two hundred thousand are now only fifty thousand. Even among our members around a hundred have left Syria. Many don't want to leave, others want to, but they don't know what to do. We are trying to see how to set-up small projects to give those who remain some means of livelihood and we also help the refugee families, not only those belonging to the Opera, who have come to Damascus from the Christian villages that were affected.

## What can we do for them?

Aside from the prayers, we must see if there is a way to stop the marketing of weapons, as the Pope continuously repeats, even if no one listens to him. We must reawaken public opinion. And we can also encourage the communion of goods. I feel that I must thank many people. The other day I received a hand-written envelope from a girl: «For the children of Syria. I did a small task for my grandma». Inside there was ten Euro. But they were worth gold. A person renounced going on a trip and gave me the corresponding amount, another sent



me four hundred dollars that he received on his birthday. This communion makes us feel the love of the family of the Opera.

A great support for us also comes with the visit of someone from abroad, just like the recent trip to Damascus of an Italian priest who met the Movement as a seminarian. «I came to tell you that the Church is with you - he affirmed - and that you represent the Church here». The Nuncio also encourages us to bring hope to others. Everyone believes that if peace is to return we will be able to live in harmony and rebuild the Country.

At Christmas the youth of Damascus invited their friends for a concert. Among the three hundred people who came there were around ten Muslims. One of them, the colleague of a girl, played the organ. «Here you can feel an atmosphere of peace, an oasis of peace - a young Muslim girl said. This is what we need».

*prepared by Anna Lisa Innocenti*

### Emergency Syria

**For those who would like to make a contribution**

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Via Frascati, 342 - 00040 Rocca di Papa (Roma, Italy)



# The Big zone of Africa

## A miracle that continues

**The first trip of the new Counselors of the Big zone of Africa, Juanita Majury and Joseph Assouad, began in Fontem from March 4 to 16**

Together with us in this trip were Augusto Parody, ex-Counselor of the Big zone and Maria Goretti, focolarina from Burindi who works at the Center of the Opera. A festive atmosphere welcomed us upon our arrival in Fontem and accompanied us throughout our stay. As we saw Fontem appear in the midst of the forest, we had the impression that what Chiara has foreseen is becoming a reality, that there is a particular design of God on this city and on the Bangwa people.

We stayed for a week in Fontem and we were able to visit the entire Little Town: the hospital which offers numerous quality services for the sick who come even from far away; the *College* which has 500 students and the kindergarten that welcomes 90 children; the parish with the church of St. Clare; the Mariapolis Center; the electrical plant; the office for construction and maintenance; the *garage*; the carpentry shop. The commitment of everyone to live the «new evangelization» was strong as they would go to the surrounding villages every month. They had to walk up to eight hours to bring the life of the Word to groups of people who await these moments of communion with joy.

We can say that during these days the unity grew stronger and stronger: the more we went ahead, the more we understood how we should

bring ahead this «dream» of Chiara for Fontem and the Bangwa people. To see to it that everything done in the Little Town will contribute to realizing it, what is necessary is a tried and tested reciprocal love, that is renewed everyday.

After Fontem we stopped in Fonjumetaw, 20 kilometers away. Around the parish of Our Lady of the Annunciation, where there are two priest focolarinos, and a women's focolare, the community of the Movement is growing. The focolarine work in the kindergarten where there are 90 children, and also in the clinic, two projects that offer an important service for the population there. We spent two days in Bamenda; here, together with the Mariapolis Center, there are two focolares and a beautiful community.

In Douala we participated in the Day meeting of the Opera with persons from all generations. The presence of the youth was noteworthy. Many among those present came in contact with the Focolare Movement for the first time. Both in Bamenda and in Douala we shared moments of profound unity with many, with the focolarini and the focolarine, with the Councils of the Zone and the Zonetta.

*Juanita Majury, Joseph Assouad*



Chiara Lubich Center

# A place of «effervescence»

Meeting with the Center of the Opera on March 27

It began in an atmosphere of profound joy. After a brief presentation of the collaborators – including those who work full-time and those working part-time – and their respective tasks, they continued by showing the work that has been done so far and some proposals for the coming years.

Officially born during the Assembly of 2008, the Center began, in a certain way, during the ten years before Chiara's departure for Heaven. She herself, in fact, gave the go-signal, investing much in the people, equipment and houses, aware of the need to look after, to safeguard, to organize, to protect the patrimony of the written word, audio, audiovisuals and photographs, of everything that emerged from her life, from her works and from her creativity.

The Chiara Lubich Center, continuing along this line, has specialized up to this moment, in «trasforming» all the works of Chiara into documents that are ready to be safeguarded and conserved in their maximum and possible completeness. In this regard they were able to start a real and true archive complex. Aside from this, the testimonies of the relationship with Chiara that was lived by the first men and women focolarini have been collected; a search for documents regarding Chiara in various ecclesiastical and civil archives is also going ahead; on the occasion of the anniversaries of Chiara some volumes were prepared and published: *God loves you immensely* (2009), *Letters of the early times* (2010), To



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bring you the world in my arms and The musical score written in Heaven (Book-in-interview of Eli Folonari, 2011); various essays on Chiara, both during formation meetings of the members of the Movement and also outside, like for example in Universities in Rome, in the Catholic University of Lublin, in the Faculty of Theology of Trent, were presented; in collaboration with the Paul VI Institute of Brescia two study days were held in November 2014 on the theme «Paul VI and Chiara»; a website was opened with more than 500 visitors everyday; in the Facebook page «Chiara Lubich» the number of visitors has gone beyond 90,000 and continues to grow by around a thousand every month.

With the developments that emerged at the Assembly 2014 and the creation of the General Archives, there was the need to re-think what is the identity and the function of the Chiara Lubich Center. Today it seems that we can see it as a vital «center» that gathers, joins and promotes ideas and values related to the foundress of the Focolare Movement. More than just safeguard-



ing and making use of the value of her person and of her message for the world, the Center could be defined as a center of «effervescence» that contributes in keeping alive that place which the foundress herself could have in history today.

In this perspective, we have proposed some short-term and long-term projects:

- An edition of a historical review of the complete works (published and unpublished) of Chiara. We could start with a review of the book *Meditations* and a first volume of the complete works;
- A specialized publication (as a text reference) on the story of Chiara Lubich (biography, story of the foundress) and of the Opera founded by her;
- A specialized library that contains all the works of Chiara, the translations in the different languages, the productions on Chiara and a virtual extension that is made available to scholars and researchers;
- A Dictionary of key words;
- A modification in the website of the Chiara Lubich Center to give it an institutional profile that expresses its function, expanding it to include venues and instruments making it more suitable and better utilized;
- The creation of a bibliographic fund at the service of research work;

- The eventual institution of an international «Chiara Lubich» Prize aimed at highlighting the presence of the Charism of unity on the world;
- The realization of an exhibit in 2020 in Trent, for the one hundredth year of Chiara's birth.

The project was approved *in toto*, with enthusiasm, by everyone. *«I am very happy with this meeting – Jesús Morán said - It seems to me that the profile and the specific characteristic of the Chiara Lubich Center is becoming clearer: it is to “focus” on the person of Chiara from the historical-critical profile.»*

*«I must express a great gratitude for all the work that has been done in these past years in the cellars of history – Emmaus observed [...] Today the Opera clearly recognizes in the Chiara Lubich Center an instrument that is necessary in order to continue to do what Chiara wanted it to do and to continue to work based on these researches, these studies, this work that you have done and will continue to do. I think that everything is valid, everything is valid» «I think that all the work that has been done up to now – she concluded – has been done with much wisdom, with much prudence and, above all with much love. Therefore it must be considered for all that contribution of love that there was and which now has blossomed into this. Thank you, thank you.»*

*Alba Sgariglia, João Manoel Motta*



# New Humanity A people formed by the whole Opera

So as to give a credible answer  
to the world

Those two hours of intense dialogue, of fruitful exchange between the Central Secretariat of New Humanity and the Center of the Opera was lived in real atmosphere of the family, which on the 27th of March confirmed the proven lines of action, but also opened up new working outlooks and horizons.

*«I think that we must begin from this afternoon onwards with a wave of rediscovery of the fact that new humanity is made by the Opera»* this is how Emmaus recalled the dream of Chiara from the very beginning: that of working towards healing the wounds of a wounded humanity and to have an impact on the social problems, because there is a unique people, strong in the various vocations, who only by working together can give a credible answer to the world. The risk, in going ahead alone, isn't only that of not making an impact, but also that of dissipating the strengths, ideas, work, time, talents ...

This «people» can be seen in some fields promoted by New Humanity and which already involve various expressions of the Opera: from «working groups» that we are bringing ahead for many years, such as the coordination of the various activities in common with the other branches, mass movements,

Inundations. But the «people» is present, even if not yet fully visible, in the territories, where the most diverse experiences are lived and which bear witness to the influence of the charism in schools, factories, hospitals, in Parliaments. A life which must be supported and shared through the websites and the *social network*, but also through a database which, is still being studied, but which could be placed at the service of the whole Opera.

The mandate of the Assembly 2014, «to go out», «together» and «suitably prepared», has made New Humanity the privileged venue for the incarnation which makes the Ideal concrete and credible, even on an international level. New Humanity is the non-governmental organization recognized by the UN and by UNESCO which is approaching its thirtieth year. It is very much appreciated for the work that it brings ahead promoting universal brotherhood. The importance of an office of the Opera in these international headquar which must be strengthened and supported was noted .

New Humanity, viewed by the whole Opera, has regained with a greater awareness, its potentialities at the service of «*Ut omnes*».

*Fanny Bava Furnò, Domenico Mancinelli*





# New Families Gift for the world

To answer to the challenges of the family today

On March 25 the «Nazareth Center» (Central Secretariat of New Families) met with the Center of the Opera in an atmosphere of warm welcome. What emerged were the challenges that the family is called to face today. The role of the central Secretariat was underlined and also its relationship with the Zones, the need to strengthen the collaboration with the Centers of the mass movements and the pressing need of formation for the various components of the family.

Some Counselors highlighted the need for a greater «closeness» of the Central Secretariat of New Families with the Zones, above all in terms of formation. What also emerged was the need to plan meetings dedicated to the family under the interreligious aspect, so as to make a greater contribution towards peace through the family.



To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of New Families in 2017, various local day meetings were proposed entitled «Chiara and the family» in collaboration with the centers of the Dialogues which should coincide with the events linked to March 14. «This could be an idea» – Emmaus told us.

Barbara and Paolo Rovea briefly illustrated the «Up2Me», a project of education on affection and sexuality, geared to teens from 9 to 17 years old, which was realized in collaboration with the Centers of the gen3 and the Teens for Unity, in answer to the need to form the teens with a life project and in a language accessible also to those



who don't have any religious background.

At the end of the meeting Jesús highlighted the importance of looking at the human person as a project of God and to aim at a more capillary, radical and effective formation

so as to build «the new person». He proposed the elaboration of school of thought in collaboration with all the cultural agencies of the Opera. «It's as if the Movement has to engage only in the New Families, because many things that we do are useless if we do not take care of the person. [...] If, in the end, the "new man" does not emerge from the Opera, we will never accomplish anything. But can the "new man" emerge without New Families?». Emmaus made this observation: «We have a great strength which are the families in the world [...] who live or are striving to live and to incarnate the Ideal. [...] I believe that we must rediscover this potentiality of all the families and to help them to be at the disposition of being a gift to the world, builders of the new family just as Chiara saw it to be». «I believe - she added - that if the families of the Movement, who felt called by Chiara to live the Ideal, truly live it seriously, the family will already be healed». Emmaus invited us to «be courageous», because we have a great charisma and we can bear witness to this out of love for the Church and for humanity.



Adriana and Francesco Scariolo

# Men and Women Volunteers

## «On the frontline as the Opera goes out»

**More than a thousand persons responsible of a nucleo coming from all over the world reunited at a Castel Gandolfo from March 19 to 22. Among the most important moments was the meeting with Emmaus Maria Voce and Jesús Morán**

«A strong effusion of wisdom for each one of us and for the branch» this is how the men and women Volunteers defined the moment lived with 1,100 persons responsible of a nucleo, with Emmaus Maria Voce and Jesús Morán at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo. An hour of dialogue, transmitted also through live streaming, that touched on various topics. It began with a question about the specific contribution of the men and women Volunteers with regards to the suggestions made at the Assembly: «to go out», «together», «suitably prepared». «To go out is the way of expressing our belonging to God. – Jesús explained [...] It is impressive to see how Jesus lived always outwards, always! And he did so always going towards new



*out with others because he came from the Father: "The Father and I are one", therefore always in unity with the Father in the Holy Spirit, but also with that group with whom he wanted to reproduce his experience of the life of love with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Suitable prepared: he was the Verb, therefore! But he dedicated his time to prayer, to reading the Scriptures. We must truly look to Him». «One could say that you are specifically going out – he said, addressing the men and women Volunteers - because your vocation [...] is to be mediators of the light, to incarnate the light in the human realities. Therefore the specific contribution is particularly characterized in "going out", an intensity in "going out", a vivacity and a creativity in "going out". You are at the forefront in the "going out" of the Opera.*

*frontiers, always in new environments; he never closed himself in, he didn't even have a permanent residence, he went from place to place. Then he would go out together with others, he always went*



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## With the Center of the Opera

Light and truth are the two words that characterized the meeting with the international Centers of the men and women Volunteers of God and with the Center of the Opera. At the start Patience Molle Lobè and Paolo Mottironi presented the new councils of the Centers. they spoke of the two branches and their expectations, critical points, strengths. An open and frank dialogue was born. «We felt the love of the Center of the Opera - the women Volunteers wrote - and the desire of each one to help in running the Opera in synergy, so as to be better witnesses which society today greatly needs». They spoke of the vocation of the Volunteers and of how to make it known much more. «With regards to merging and the new set-up - the men Volunteers wrote - these are dimensions wherein the identity of the Volunteers of God must be enhanced and revived inasmuch as it is capable of grasping the "signs of the times" for the incarnation of the Ideal and its influence in the human realities».

*world, for the world. What is the place of communion where Jesus in the midst is born? It is according to our vocations. For a focolarino it is the focolare, for a Volunteer it is the nucleo, for a gen it is the gen unity, the rainbow unit; and so on. These are the structures, which we call "restricted", but not*

*because they "restrict" us, or force us, but restricted or tight because we unite ourselves and we generate Jesus in the midst through this relationship of unity, through this relationship of reciprocity, through this reciprocal love that binds us together. [...] Therefore is it essential? Absolutely. But it is not more or less essential in "going out", both are essential, because the presence of Jesus in the midst generated by the nucleo needs to "go out" in order to manifest itself, to bear witness, to bring this life ».*

The men and women Volunteers express their desire to be formed more by the pages of light born from «Paradiso '49». «This desire is really sacred – Jesús said. [...] This is fundamental: to always go back to the source, to the original intuitions, we must do this, and all those who come after us must do this. We must always go back to the source which is Chiara». But also remember that: «The whole Opera is "Paradise", "Paradise" is in many things that Chiara wrote, it is scattered everywhere: in the themes there is a lot more "Paradise" than what we think. [...] In the Pact there is all of Paradise. If this year we: go in depth profoundly in understanding what Jesus in the Eucharist was for Chiara, and how she linked him to the experience of unity, then we will truly be "formed" by Paradise ».

«The Pact is really something extraordinary – continued Emmaus - when we say: "on my nothingness" it means up to the abandonment of the Father, which means that we promise above all to live among us, above all "among us", reciprocal love up to the abandonment of the Father, with that measure. If we are able to do this, everyday we will live in "Paradise", in the Bosom of the Father ».

*Patience Lobe, Paolo Mottironi*



## Preparing oneself for the focolare «It's our turn»

**At Loppiano from march 29 to April 5, the meeting for those young people who have already decided to enter the focolare was held: around 50 participants among boys and girls, including those who will begin their first year of formation. Following this, there was the meeting with 150 youth who are interested in getting to know more about the vocation**

Days of profound listening, communion, open among everyone, with the focolares of Loppiano and with other countries through skype. The topics presented included the vocation, communion, freedom, relationship with the family of those who live in the focolare. Moments of light. The liturgy of the Holy Week were incisive, lived with the Little City at the shrine of the Theotokos. Everything contributed in living that «one-on-one» with God.

They wrote to Emmaus: «The topics we dealt with made us understand the radicalness and the Love that God wants from us. We came with few certainties, but the fears were many that we had to overcome together. We are living in an atmosphere of family generated by the many experiences and by the communion of soul. [...] We feel a great gratitude in our heart, partly as a fruit of these days but also and above all as a fruit of that special gaze that God has on each one of us».

Some impressions: «They were special days, in God. The moments spent in the focolare, with the focolarini of the school, the profound and simple programme. I arrived with many things

within me and my part was to make my self empty so that God could speak to me. Thank you also for the very beautiful personal talks wherein I was able to share my life, the most intimate realities of my journey». «Many times I pretended not to see what God wanted, now I feel that I have lived all of my life just to reach this moment and to understand what God wants from me».

### Excerpts of the skype conversation with Palmira

«The young people are inclined to look to the future, the elderly look to the past, but we who have such a great Ideal we must look to the present moment! And from the present moment we look upwards. There we will immediately find the relationship with God. God speaks to us, we listen to Him, we let him make the programme for our future.

And how do we look up and to talk to God confidentially? All we have to do is to look at Chiara, at her yes. [...] Now it's our turn. I told myself, Palmira, above all it is up to you, in your final flight, but it is also up to you in your initial flight».

*Pilar Fernandez dal Moral, Magnus Mentzel*





# Where the experience of God is made

**The Centers of the focolare and the focolarini met with the Center of the Opera.  
The beauty of a vocation open to the challenges of society**

We prepared ourselves for this important appointment starting from what the Opera has been studying in depth in these past few years on the identity of the focolare and the focolarini (Commission 1 and 2), from the «Guidelines of the General Assembly» and from the prospects presented in the «Guidelines» of the Assemblies of the two Sections: two documents with different nuances but with common topics and pathways to be developed together: «*Ut omnes*» – Formation and accompaniment – Just One vocation (in community and married) – Old age and vocation – Youth and vocation – Caring for relationships (between the Center of the Opera and the Sections, between the Sections, between the Zone and the Sections).

On this basis we presented some projects, in particular regarding the formation and the future developments: integral and always updated formation; continuous formation from the first years of focolare life to the years of old age; formation of formatters; vocational projects prepared with the whole Opera.

A rich dialogue followed with the Counselors of the Center, Emmaus and Jesús. Among the topics were: inculturation, vocation, formation, married focolarini ...

«*The focolare is a place where one makes an experience of God – Jesús said – which is the experience of being with Jesus who shows us the Father. But just as it was for Jesus, who showed the apostles the Father so as to build the Kingdom, also in focolare we don't just live together; we are there to build something which "Ut omnes"».*



Regarding the proposals presented Emmaus said that they were all welcome: «*It seems to me quite evident that there is the presence of Jesus in the midst between the two Sections, and that if there is this root which after all is the only root that we want, the fruits will come. They will come when God wants, how God wants, through roads that only He knows, in the places that He thinks of, but they will surely come.*».

Jesús added: «*We have seen in this morning spent together that the focolare is very much present and current as never before*» and commenting on the many requests for focolares from the Bishops: «*If the Church sees us in this way, God cannot but send us workers,*

*right? But, as I said, we must rediscover the true essence of the focolare, this life.*».

*Agnes van Zeeland, Flávio Rovere*



### Some statistics

Focolarine: 4.388 (2.580 in community and 1.808 married) in 456 focolare centers; focolarine who went to the school from 2008 to 2014: 200; foreseen for 2015: 10.

Focolarini: 2.767 (1.289 in community and 1.478 married) in 225 focolare centers; focolarini who went to the school from 2008 to 2014: 121; foreseen for 2015: 16.



## Media

# Can we communicate? We must!

**Around a hundred people of the Movement involved in the field of communication met at Castel Gandolfo for a workshop that continues**

Everyone protagonists of communication. This could be the «mandate» at the conclusion of the workshop that gathered together at Castel Gandolfo from April 10 to 12 more than a hundred people of the Movement involved in various ways in the world of communication.

Among those present and linked up through live *streaming* that accompanied the entire proceedings, coming from the different continents, were professionals involved in various media, persons responsible for the Sif and the national and local websites, those in charge of the aspect of communication in the different Zones.

We could not do without the «Guidelines» that were made during the General Assembly of the Work of Mary. Communication in fact was a much-talked about topic, both because of its relation to the theme of going out to the world, and also because of its relevance to the unity among all the members of the Opera and the commitment to being suitable prepared.

It was the third gathering that was held since 2011 to today with a team of this kind, in the hope of bringing ahead a process of communion, collaboration and creating projects that will make us more capable of communicating within the opera and outside it in a coordinated way, and to insert ourselves in society's journey with its constantly renewed challenges.

Emmaus spoke of a diffused protagonism, when she came, together with Jesús on the final

morning, encouraging us to be «*not just users of news, but builders of life*»; inviting us to «*use the social network to transmit our ideas*»; suggesting to us «*not to be autoreferential, not to think that we are the only ones who have the desire to do good and beautiful things*», but to give value to what there is of these things in society; inciting us to keep «*the doors open and welcoming and to make our own the problems of the world*».

Jesús spoke of the work of communicators as those who make possible «*the first cultural mediation of the charism*» that produce the «*experience of ut omnes. In this sense we can say that it is an important, decisive instrument. For a charism such as ours - one can ask - how can we not have an instrument of this kind?*».

As the dialogue with Emmaus and Jesús went ahead, they first listened to a summary of the work that was done, and gradually the strong points emerged (the internazionalità of the Opera present also in the hotspots of the planet, the variety of the local communities) and the weak points (the inadequacy of formation and resources, the fragmentation of our numerous *media outlets*, for example).

If these days were lived like a workshop instead of a convention, it is clear for everyone that communication cannot be a permanent laboratory. Also because no conclusions were reached at the end of the work done and the





method itself placed everything on the table. Some were asked to offer points of discussion, reports (also through skype in order to facilitate the international viewpoint and not only from persons who are members of the Opera), but everyone was asked to intervene during the group work that characterized the three half-days and which dealt with specific topics: communication within the opera, communication of the Opera to the outside, how to communicate current events with the spirit of the Ideal of unity. three different levels but all closely linked to each other, all of them strongly oriented towards «*Ut omnes*».

One request was quite common: there is a great need for formation on all levels that would help us to grow in awareness of and in the use of the means of communication. For those already working in this field and above all for those who find themselves working in a field that is not of his or her expertise because the world of communication is complex, in continuous evolution and, if we want to exert an influence on society, we must be well-prepared. Someone proposed a week of formation once a year, or maybe a periodic worldwide formation *online*. We also saw the need to get to know the means of communication that we are already have at our disposition.

An aspect that is surely interesting regards the new generations, young people born in the time of social media and therefore are quite comfortable in this galaxy. Some of them present at the workshop, asked the question of what is the contribution that we are expecting from them. What emerged was the need to work together, youth and adults, in all the stages of development with a reciprocal enrichment.

They tried to identify some lines of work so as to find answers,

even as ulterior developments are still being awaited.

For example: the topic of sustainability in terms of human and financial resources of our communications facilities. To invest in them seems to be indispensable, while making the proper evaluation.

And still more: how to orient ourselves in the multiplicity of the things our media offers? Simplify, therefore to coordinate much more with each other come, develop synergies.

Are we up to date with the times? A «traditional» way of communicating is no longer enough, that is why we must increase our presence in social media and the production of short videos to spread on the web. Just as what has already been done with the news of the CH Link-up.

How do we move between the risk of giving absolute answers and that of not taking any stand? A third possibility: to offer our vision of things, without imposing it as «the truth».

In what way can we continue to dialogue with everyone? To be clear on what is our identity and to offer it within the context of a style of dialogue. For this reason, we must also re-think the way in which we present the Movement outside, so as to make it and what it does clearer to others.

To give value to the life of the local communities, the experiences, the stories; they are by themselves a strong message that is understandable, universal.

*Aurora Nicosia*



## Publishing houses

# Motivated and sustainable

At the end of the international convention of communicators of the Movement, at Castelgandolfo a one-day meeting was held of the publishing houses in the world

Around twenty nations in all, either «live» or via Webex, were represented. A strong communion, frankness in talking about certain situations, realistic questions regarding the editorial world: these were the salient points of this brief meeting.

Cecilia Capuzzi and Paolo Loriga, after giving a brief but incisive panorama of the general situation of our publishing houses in the world (critical points: economy, management, efficiency, presence in the market; strong points: strategic role, passion in those who work there, appreciation from the outside), they posed «the» fundamental question: is it obligatory to have a publishing house in a Country? If there is none, what would happen?

The answers were thorough and substantially convergent on some points:

- a) they are necessary but must be sustainable and suited to the new demands of the Opera and to the characteristics of the new media;
- b) international, continuous, active and effective coordination is needed;
- c) what the Center needs is an identity (personal or collective) that will help the individual New City Presses in the world;
- d) «to let the Movement know» how the Città Nuova publishing houses are essential for an Opera that would like to be «going out»;
- e) in various degrees, all the publishing houses should look outward in order to understand how to widen their readership, even beyond the Movement itself.



Luca Gentile dell'editrice italiana  
e Klaus Brüsche di quella brasiliana

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Maria Voce and Jesus Moran, in conclusion, came to greet all the publishing houses. A frank dialogue started wherein some precise points emerged:

- a) the Opera reaffirms that the publishing houses are an integral part of our «mission»;
- b) we must see to it that financial and economical sustainability should go hand in hand with the editorial demands, even considering eventual support from the communion of goods;
- c) for an Opera that is changing after the departure of Chiara and under the evangelizing encouragement of Pope Francis, the instrument that the publishing house represents is even more essential now not only for us, but for our irradiation.
- d) the cultural coordination of the Opera cannot do without a useful and continuous presence of Città Nuova.

*Michele Zanzucchi*



# With the Center of the Opera To Plan beyond the crisis

The role of *Città Nuova* as a privileged instrument for an Opera that is going out

Present were the Center of the Opera, the newly-born Administrative Council of Città Nuova, the Delegates of the Italian Zone and many working at the Publishing House. They met for a moment of presentation and of dialogue. This was the reason behind the meeting that was held last March 11 in Rocca di Papa. The new Director General, Stefano Sisti, briefly outlined the economic status of the enterprise, then it was the turn of the other employees of Città Nuova to share the work that each one was doing and to present the projects that were ongoing.

There were many topics covered: from the rather critical state of publishing, especially the religious section, to the mission of the Group, which means its aims and objectives, and the need of combining such aims with the rules of the market; from the cultural project - that of Città Nuova and that of the Work of Mary - to the meaning and the value of media for the spreading of the Ideal in Italy and in the world, from the question of the digital which by now is something that cannot be denied to the new editorial lines entrusted to the directors of the information sectors and of the Publishing House, from the restructuring of the compa-

ny to the journey of the magazine towards a monthly edition, to the magazines for teens, to the recent series.

A lively exchange allowed us to deepen the topics which emerged and the better analyze the critical points and the merits of the Group. Maybe, Emmaus underlined, Città Nuova was left a little bit on its own in these last few years. Now, also following the mandate of the Assembly, it is the wish of the Center to go back and to care for the first work of the Opera with a renewed passion especially in this moment of big social and economic challenges. Città Nuova, has in fact called itself, the Opera «outside»: the role that it plays within the context of dialogue, relationships, information and formation, knowledge and giving value to the national and international activities geared towards the Common Good is very great, rather it is undeniable. Also for this reason an Administrative Council was set-up to which some of the counselors of the Center and two technicians will be a part. It's task will be to supervise the work of the Group in order to guide it and help it to overcome this moment of crisis.

Luca Gentile



## Publishing houses in dialogue

François Hollande visited  
the stand of Nouvelle Cité  
at the Book Show in Paris

François Hollande, president of the French Republic, during his official visit last March 21 to the Book Show of Paris, stopped at the stand of Nouvelle Cité.

It was Bénédicte, literary director of Nouvelle Cité, who presented it and its typical characteristic to him: a collective stand collettivo put together by Christian, Muslim and Jewish publishing houses, in accordance with the direction of the publishing house of the Focolare Movement to increase interreligious dialogue and to work together. «Continue your work, it is important, there is much need of it!» commented the President.

Emmaus, answering to the letter of Dominique Bonnet, Bénédicte Draillard and Muriel Fleury who had shared with her this news, encouraged them to go «ahead together, renewing our commitment to live the Ideal everyday until dialogue and fraternity will spread more and more throughout the world».

*a cura della redazione*



A source of inspiration  
for languages and peoples...

## «to say is to give»

The First international Convention of linguistic  
and literary studies in the light of the charism of  
unity was held at Castel Gandolfo (Rome)  
from April 10 to 12.

It has been long-awaited.

The meeting was graced with the qualified presence of 91 participants - among whom were university professors and students, some just having met the charism of Chiara Lubich for the first time - coming from Hong Kong, Costa Rica, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, and from various cities in Italy, for a total of 17 languages represented, «in a relationship of love among them». The presence of the men and women translators of Chiara was important, as the active protagonists of the Convention. More than 900 immediate contacts through *streaming*.

The organizers of the event was the study and research Group of the Abbà School in the field of literary-linguistics (LFL), who is already preparing the book *Come frecciate di luce (Like darts of light)*, in collaboration with the Chiara Lubich Center and the magazine *Nuova Umanità (New Humanity)*.

Drawing inspiration once again from fragments of *Paradise '49* and the subsequent comments of Chiara, the group LFL proposed the theme for this event «"to say it is to give it": (C. Lubich). the word as a gift and relationship», which profoundly involved all those present in a dynamic of reciprocal love-gifting.

The programme, organized into three sessions and prepared through an intense exchange of ideas, competences and suggestions, within the reality of Jesus in the midst continually strived for and desired, touched on very important topics such as: «Mystical Experience and Literature», «Genres and literary contexts in Chiara Lubich», «Transmission and translation», which were presented through 22 interventions, defined among other things



as «high-level», «well prepared» «beyond all expectations»: they in fact gave a glimpse of all the power of the charisma and the strength of the novelty that is born from it also in the field of linguistics.

In an atmosphere of profound listening, generously imparting fragments of the text of *Paradise '49*, the fundamental object of study, they were able to experience once more the surprising «energy» generated in renewing, transforming, elevating persons, cultures and peoples.

Aside from the contributions in the hall, a particularly intense moment was spent at the house of Chiara and at the Chiara Lubich Center, in direct contact with her writings.

The Convention was «opened» which was then enriched, in various moments, by the contribution of the other disciplines such as: philosophy, theatre, poetry, music. The concert of Paolo Vergari was excellent. Aside from this, the presence of the magazine *Nuova Umanità*, which for a long time now has been publishing



writings of Chiara dating back to '49, was very important.

«We witnessed once more the powerful intervention of God on our smallness – this was the common impression of the «externs» of the Abbà School belonging to the field of linguistics-literature; it was the extremely precious opportunity to live, with Jesus in the midst fully that "going out, together, suitable prepared". Truly *Paradise '49* is a text for everyone! We saw in action the word as a gift!».

There are many projects for the future, with various proposals from the participants.

The papers presented during the Convention will be presented in a future publication.

*prepared by the study and research group of the Abbà School in the field of Linguistics-Philology-Literature (LFL)*

## New publications

### Unity becomes history

#### Pasquale Foresi and the Focolare Movement

The book follows the story of Fr. Pasquale Foresi, first focolarino priest and co-founder of the Focolare, and his contribution to the birth, development and in rooting the Movement in the ecclesial, cultural and civil fabric. After the story of his life, interspersed with talks of Foresi and texts of Chiara Lubich, his priestly ordination is presented in depth, being the first focolarino to receive it;

his contribution in the birth and growth of the *Città Nuova* magazine and the similarly named Publishing House; the role he had in the development of the Little City of Loppiano; his contribution to the project of Economy of Communion and its realization.



## Fifth Dialogue

# Inundations: variety, diversity, dynamism



A multi-colored fan, that of the ten inundations that were presented during the meeting of the Center for the Dialogue with Culture (V Dialogue) with the Center of the Opera (the other two, MPU and the EoC, already had their meeting). The presentation made by the respective persons in-charge together with the data relative to the activities of each one, made us understand the rich and fecund life that there is, the variety, diversity and dynamism that each one contains. Each Inundation has its own path, its own journey, its own methodology: some, after many years of work, are now launching themselves towards new goals; some others have introduced an innovative approach that is making headway in the various cultural environments of the different disciplines, still others are going through a phase of restructuring or of «growing towards an ulterior maturation» as Palco Toth, person in-charge of NetOne, underlined.

The paths being taken in collaboration with some university professors are also important. The Inundations are also very ac-

tive in the youth sector both through the meetings made by the youth for the youth and also through the planning of a Summer School or other initiatives that have been quite fruitful in presenting a different way of organizing studies and for a greater deepening of the light of the Charism.

During the dialogue with the Center of the Opera the prospect of a new stage in the life of the Inundations emerged: a change of mentality in this «moment of grace» as Jesús said, to go beyond what has been done so far. Emmaus underlined that, the identity of the Inundations, as a school of thought, as a culture and as a relationship with the world of culture, was highlighted during the presentations made, and that now is the time to become more aware that this dialogue is done by the life of the Opera and by the thoughts influenced by the Inundations. The five Dialogues manifest a «dialoguing Opera» that expresses itself in five ways, it is the Opera that dialogues and each one contains everything. But it is everything if there is a profound unity among all.

*Rinuccia Mulatero, João Manoel Motta*



## The Fourth Dialogue

# Humankind thinks, observes, and looks out towards God

The international meeting of those responsible for dialogue with people of non-religious beliefs. Keynote talk by Co-President Jesús Morán.

The school for those responsible for the Fourth Dialogue was held at the Mariapoli Center at Castel Gandolfo from March 27 – 29. It was short but packed with interesting talks and much sharing amongst all. There were 50 participants from 7 European countries, together with ten gen from the gen centers. The aim of the school was to “re-ignite” the passion for this dialogue which is more than ever significant for the life of the Movement today in view of the guidelines that emerged from the 2014 General Assembly: to go out, together, suitably prepared. There was valuable input by people who have been working in this field for many years, which gave encouragement and enthusiasm for the journey ahead.

Of particular importance – given that all the presentations were excellent – was the talk by Jesús Morán, who first shared some of his experiences in contact with friends of different beliefs. He went on to explain the difference between theological concepts and theological ones. «The theological concept – Jesús explained – is about a human dimension which is concerned with divine reality, a dimension that looks out onto the divine. It is as though we think of a person as being like a room with many windows and that one of those windows looks out onto the problem of God. We all have this window. Some people have opened it wide, some have kept it shut, and some let a little bit of light through the window from time to time». «Instead the theological concept – continued our Co-President – is about God, starting from what God has said to us. The theological approach is

about human beings who think, observe and look out towards God. In this sense all people have theological experiences, even if not everyone has theological ones».

Jesús talk continued with other quotes and observations, rooted in wisdom, making some very helpful suggestions, so much so that someone said it was an «historic talk, that everyone in the whole Movement should know about. Jesús words set us off on the right track towards putting into practice the guidelines from the Assembly».

What emerged clearly from the discussion amongst everyone was the great importance of the Dialogue Groups that have developed in different parts of the world (Italy, Spain, Argentina, Uruguay, the Balkan countries). These groups need to be maintained and multiplied because they enrich the identity of the whole Movement. What also emerged was the energy and enthusiasm of those responsible for this dialogue, perhaps because they are constantly questioning, seeking to find suitable language, growing in trust and mutual understanding with our Friends in this Dialogue.

During a panel discussion what came much into evidence was the need for all those who work in the various dialogues to engage with others as “people of dialogue”, together, without categories. Another essential thing was the importance of the presence of our Friends – who are a living part of the Movement – in the environmental cells, local communities and solidarity groups.

*Vida Rus, Andrew Camilleri*



## Ecumenism Bread broken for all

### In Germany a study day was held with Catholic and Evangelical participants

«The Eucharist and the Sacred Meal» was the central theme of the day held at the Mariapolis center of Zwochau (Germany) last February 15, with seventy participants, Catholics and Evangelicals, members and friends of the Focolare Movement. There were three theologians among whom were Dr. Manfred Kießig, a well-reknowned personality in the German Lutheran world, who brought light to the common foundations of the Christian faith in the Eucharist. Dr. Kießig concluded his intervention with the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: «The day of the Sacred Meal is a day of joy for the Christian community. Reconciled in the heart with God and with the brothers, the community receives the gift of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and with this gift received forgiveness, new life and beatitudes. He receives a new communion with God and with men. The communion of the Sacred Meal is the highest fulfillment of the Christian community». The effects are the same for everyone, even if we have to celebrate the meal- and this is always a suffering – still in different tables. The main fruit of our experience on the Eucharist seems to us to be the widening of our capacity to love up to the point of giving ourselves, of consuming ourselves, like the bread which allows itself to be broken and distributed to all. Fruits that everyone can experience, in whichever Church they belong.

*Monika Maria Wolff*

## Acquaintance and respect which is reciprocal

### In Genoa a mini-school on the ecumenism of life

Our mini-school on ecumenism is now ten years old. We don't remember who had the idea to give it this name, but it best describes the little school that was born in order to deepen the ecumenism of life and to get to know the different Churches through those who are living in them their own religious experience. In the beginning the school was open only to a small number of members of the Focolare Movement, but later it was also open to all those who would like to know in depth about ecumenical dialogue.

The outline of every meeting has already been tried and tested: a brief video to present the ecumenism proposed by Chiara Lubich and then the sharing of specific themes prepared in such a way that during the entire year, the participants will be able to listen to the same theme from an Evangelical, Orthodox and Catholic viewpoint. The participants, usually around thirty to forty for every meeting, come from some of the Italian Regions, belonging to different ecclesial Movements, pastors and brother of different Churches and, sometimes friends of other convictions. Each time it is an occasion to establish fraternal relationships of reciprocal respect with everyone. We are endlessly surprised by the profound silence with which everyone listens. One of the participants confided to me: «Today the theme of Chiara Lubich and the entire meeting has opened wide an aspect of being a Christian that I have never known».

*Tiziana Brunengo*





## Renée Rebmeister

*Rooted in the love for the Spouse*

Renée, a French focolarina of the zone of Rome, arrived in the heavenly Mariapolis on April 9, after a long illness and supported by the unity of the focolarine who took turns beside her. During her last days at her hospital bed, with a feeble voice and trying her best to smile, she often repeated: «The present moment».

Renée was born in Strasbourg in 1943. She and her brother Gérard were orphaned of their mother at an early age, but they received the affection of Léonie, their stepmother. Then a sister and brother were added to the family: Christine and Francis. Her family was very loving and nurtured a solid faith that led to the blossoming of the vocation of Gérard to the priesthood and of Renée to her consecration to God as a focolarina.

She was twenty years old when she met the Focolare Movement in August '63 during one of the first Mariapolises in France. It was a folgoration, so much so that in November of the same year she left the family to go to the school of formation of the focolarine.

Returning to France, Renée contributed to the newly born life of the Movement there. The difficulties were not lacking, but she often recalled: «I consider it a grace to have been able to experience also financial scarcity in a difficult period for the Opera during the first years of the focolare in France: I only had a pair of shoes and not even a coin in my pocket». For many years she shared in all the responsibilities, without being stingy with her commitments and her hard work.

In the '80s she became a part of Centro Foco. Many focolarine can attest to this period which

was rich and fecund. All are unanimous in remembering her as one who had «a heart that loved and welcomed everyone».

Her health started to become unstable and for this reason she had to lie low for the time being. She adhered totally to this new will of God even in the midst of suffering. She said: «The means He uses is not important. Everything is useful so that He grows and I diminish... Everyday I offer this poor "rag" to Jesus...

so that with His grace the little strength and the few resources that I have will multiply».

She wrote to Chiara in '93: «I feel greatly incapable, but I trust in the mercy of God. I want to be rooted only in the love for the Spouse so as to be a small but radiant ray of your light».

In '93, Renée is in Rome to work in the secretariat of the Vicariate of the Vatican City. With great industriousness and absolute discretion she fulfilled her trusted task in close rapport with different Cardinals and their successors. The present Cardinal, His Eminence A. Comastri, knowing that she was recently confined in a clinic, went to visit her several times bringing his blessing and to pray with her.

She also collaborated to bring ahead the ecumenical dialogue, loving and appreciating each person of a different Church that she met. In 2000, when Chiara launched the *Roma-Amor* Operation in Rome, Renée adheres to it at once and she began to take care of a small group of people whom she followed regularly. She also had a beautiful relationship with her family, without putting her consecration to God in the second place.

Lately, as she tried to take care of her health out of love, she went to a specialized



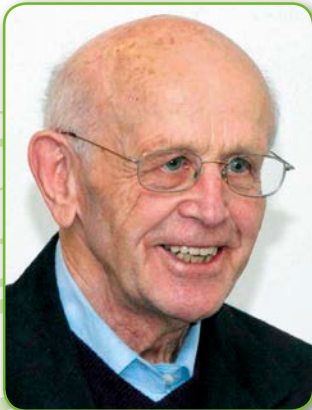
clinic, but her body no longer responded to the treatment. She was deeply tried physically, reduced to skin and bones because of her illness and she walked with great difficulty; in spite of this she used all her diminished energy to say words of encouragement to everyone. In fact, when the news spread about the seriousness of her condition, there was a continuous stream of visits from all kinds of people, not to mention the affectionate presence of all her colleagues.

In '99 Renée confided to Chiara: «You gave me the Word of life: “Come, arise, hurry my friend, my beautiful dove and come, because winter has passed!” (cfr Ct 2,10-11). And now after many years I can only answer: “Yes I want to live with the Beloved of my heart because I know that I can always find Him. And the one and only reality is this answer of love”».

Thinking of her as having arrived to Jesus the Risen One, let us offer prayers for Renée and let us pray for her family.

## Helmut Rothmann

*A pillar of the Opera in East Germany*



On March 26 Helmut, focolarino of Zwochau (East Germany) unexpectedly returned to the house of the Father at the age of 88. He was born in 1927 in a poor family without any religious belief, in a village of present-day Poland. Since elementary school he developed a great

interest for Literature and a special relationship with nature that nourished his dreams of a world of beauty and without boundaries.

At 12 years old he experienced the painful death of his mother and life went on without any family ties, in various colleges which at that time were steeped in Nazist ideology.

A few days before the war ended, Helmut, then 18 years old, was called to the army. Two of his companions were killed and he was taken prisoner. This experience of death will accompany him for the rest of his life. A few months after he was released, he was welcomed by a family in Dresden where he met Margot, his future wife.

Disoriented by Nazism and then disappointed also by Marxism, he continued to search for the

meaning of life. The impact with Christianity was a blinding realization for him, he wrote: «During my work at the university, I happened to open a book and my gaze fell on just one phrase “The Father and I are one” – it was a revelation, an experience of God». After an intense preparation with the Jesuits, in '62 Helmut became a Christian. His conversion created some tension with Margot, who would become a member of the Church only ten years later. Also at work, serious difficulties arose, so much so that his academic career was compromised. He had to leave his teaching position to work in the library of the University of Leipzig.

His encounter with the Ideal came through a visit of Dr. Margaret Frisch, focolarina who lived with Natalia Dallapiccola (the first companion of Chiara): «What fascinated me - he confided - was the discovery that I could meet Jesus in every person. This was a revolution for me. I looked at my wife and children with new eyes and I was even able to see Jesus in that hostile professor/colleague».

The frequent contacts with the focolare led him to put God in the first place and to become a focolarino. He wrote in '76: «The life of a focolarino for me means a deepening of my entire existence as a Christian. To be able to start again always and to be in love I owe to the focolare». The discovery of God Love made him see everything in his past in a new light. He wrote to Chiara in '81: «I understood that the only thing that we must live is unity so that Jesus can always be present - I believe I have experienced this reality of the Risen One - and it is Him who transforms us».



In '86 he says his perpetual promises and after 35 years he resigns from the University of Leipzig and accepts a new job offered to him by the new Bishop of Dresden. In 2004 he moves with his wife to the Little Town of Zwochau, where the following year Margot, after 53 years of marriage, died. Helmut wrote then: «The time with Margot is over. She has entered into the new earth... me too I can do the same». And so at 79 years old, he decided to enter the focolare and during a solemn Mass - with his five children present, together with fourteen grandchildren and great-grandchildren - he transformed his promises into perpetual vows.

The focolarini can say how beautiful his help was in the practical life of the focolare, but that his most important role was which was related to his age was that of being the mirror for knowing if there was truly Jesus in the midst. His observations showed his balance, sobriety and wisdom. They felt that he was a father, friend, son, brother to them. He had a preferential love for the people who had no religious convictions, because he used to be one and he knew very well how to walk in their shoes!

Some *flashes* of his spiritual life in the final years: «I really must make a final push to overcome my way of life which is individualistic to a collective spirituality with Jesus in the midst» - «I understood in a totally new way what it means to become saints together: the brother truly helps me to find God».

Helmut also passed through moments of darkness, in a process of interior maturation that brought him to a more profound union with God. In 2013 he suffered a stroke and from that moment on he is aware that everything that he says or does could be the last act of his life.

He was very sensitive and gifted with a sharp intelligence. His many poems showed him to be a lover of beauty and passionate about the ideal. He was a gift from God for whoever was close to him, he remains a living pillar of the Opera in East Germany, aesthetic and faithful witness of the charism of Chiara.

Grateful to God, let us pray for him, entrusting him with our going out to humanity.

## Bruder Walter Pollmer

«I was there»

On January 25, the day of the conclusion of the Week of prayer for Christian unity, Bro. Walter of the Bruderschaft von gemeinsamen Leben (Evangelical Fraternity of community life), concluded his earthly life, totally dedicated - with passion and great humility - to the visible unity among Christians.

His presence in Ottmaring goes back to 1968, when he transferred there together with Bro. Günther Rattey and others in the community, to put themselves at the service of the newly born ecumenical Center; his profession was as an accountant. But his contribution went beyond the aspect of economy; he was a constant, profound, secure point of reference for all those who formed the heart of Ottmaring, and its expressions in public. Among the many initiatives, he contributed in organizing annual trips to Rome and big ecumenical summer meetings, where up to 1,000 people participated.

Bro. Walter was one of the «first stones» of the Ecumenical Center, as he loved to call himself. Already in 1962 with 40 members of his Fraternity they had visited the Center of the Focolare in Rocca di Papa, remaining «impressed and inspired by these Catholic brothers and sisters of ours, who live in a way that is similar to ours».

«A word characterizes our daily commitment - he explained in 2009 at the School of ecumenism promoted by the «Uno» Center in Ottmaring: the New Commandment of reciprocal love of Jesus (cf Jn. 13,34-35) so that through the dialogue of life and the common faith in the Gospel, the promise of the presence of Christ in the community will become a reality (cf Mt 18,20). It is Him who gives us the strength to continue along this way, and - in spite of the difficulties and the disappointments that are part of our life - we must remain faithful to the design of God and to each other».

Bro. Walter also worked towards the reciprocal acquaintance and collaboration among Movements and Evangelical Communities, help-



ing professionally whoever was in need. With a special joy he followed the birth and the growth of «Together for Europe». He said: «I am amazed by what has come about through the Focolare Movement. This is the greatest gift for me, because this relationship for the past 50 years has influenced and enriched my life. I cannot show you the great things I could have done but I have participated in them: I was there and this makes me experience gratitude and amazement».

We too, have received the gift of knowing him, we experience much gratitude in our heart for the witness that this brother has left us: a life offered for the unity of Christians.

*Maria Wienken, Diego Goller – Centro «Uno» per l'unità dei cristiani*

## Alan Henry Gunn

*«What would Jesus do in my place?»*



Alan, belonging to the Anglican community of Griffith (Australia), met the Movement towards the end of the '70s. He adhered immediately, convinced of having found in the Ideal of Chiara that which would have improved and deepened his life. He never lost an occasion

to participate in the different activities of the Movement, even undertaking extremely long trips. Soon he became a Volunteer.

As an active member of the Anglican Church, he worked untiringly to bring God to everyone he met: in his family, at work, in sports, which he considered as a great bridge that facilitates encounters among people of different Churches and faiths.

Alan was in fact a profoundly ecumenical person, and he was able to transmit this spirit also to his other nucleo members who were Catholic, to the local community and in the meetings of the Word of life. In 1993 his passion for unity brought him to England to participate in

a school of ecumenism organized by the Focolare, happy to meet persons inflamed by the same spirit. In his relationships with Catholics, the differences were never a motive for division, but considered as something beautiful to share. A way of life which he continued to live even in the last years of his life, when, retiring from his job, he had even more time to establish contacts with many people.

He faced the months of his illness with courage, forgetting himself, both during his stay in the hospital and when he was transferred to a hospice. During the last days, surrounded by his nucleo members, his wife Marie, who was always at his side, they prayed with him the prayers he usually recited. He left for the heavenly Mariapolis on January 18, at the age of 88.

The sharing at his funeral was very touching, especially that of his three daughters, who were grateful for having a father who had taught them to ask, especially in the most difficult moments of one's life: «What would Jesus do in my place?».

*Yob (Augustine) Doronila*

## Nicola Bellisario

*A contemplative at the service of man*

Professor and politician of Lanciano (Italy), Nicola passed into eternal life on March 15, at the age of 94. He was the sixth of nine children, among whom was Vincenzo, who is also involved in politics and is a senator of the Republic.

His *curriculum* is extensive and intense: he graduated with honours in education, diocesan president of the Catholic Action and one of the founders in his city of the Christian Democratic Party. In 1972 he was elected to the Parliament following his brother in the commitment to all matters regarding schools and education. He also gave a contribution in health legislation, introducing the distinction, which at the time was innovative, between psychiatric care and neurological care. Author of many books and publications regarding education and politics, he was also a very loving husband and father.

At a certain point in his life he joined the Movement, becoming a Volunteer of God. In his



# Benedetta Buonomo Fiumara

*A faith that does waver*

All remember her as a breath of fresh air, a crystalline laugh that difuses the most delicate of situations, a joyous «yes» that does not see obstacles. Because of the power of her love everyone follows her. A native of gaeta, she left us last February 15.

Benedetta was born in 1963. Together with her siblings they receive a profound Christian and human formation, which was completed in the environment of the parish, where she met the youth of the Focolare. She deepened her knowledge of the spirituality of unity together with them until her choice to become a Volunteer matured.

She married Fabrizio and they had two children: Maria Sole and Fulvio. In spite of her



commitments at work, she dedicated herself with enthusiasm and creativity to caring for a group of teenage girls, becoming for them a solid point of reference for their human and spiritual growth.

Trusting, a fighter, gifted with a great sense of humour, Benedetta faced the long period of her illness with a faith that never wavered. She asked the Volunteers of her nucleo to visit her every week for their usual meeting, in spite of the fact that this required a great effort on her part. She welcomed with joy anyone who came to visit her.

The pain seemed to overcome her, but Benedetta continued to offer them, with a special intention each time: for the youth, for the teenaged girls she was following, for the many delicate situations that her friends and acquaintances have entrusted to her prayers. In the final moments, she wanted to pray the Rosary with the people who were beside her hospital bed and who saw in her the fulfillment of that phrase from the Gospel which Chiara had given her: «When I will be lifted from the earth, I will draw all to me» (Jn. 12,32).

*Bonaria Gessa*

choice of this way of life he involved the whole family and his field of interest. Whoever knew him well can bear witness that the secret of his commitment both in the civil and ecclesiastical field is due to his faithfulness to the Gospel and his desire as a lay person, to live fundamentally for God, in all his work and all his actions. He was a man of action, cultured and refined, with a contemplative soul, rooted in prayer and in the Eucharist, of which he nourished himself frequently and from whom he gathered all the fragrance of the love of God.

When we met for the last time he did not bother about earthly remembrances. He had only his imminent encounter with Jesus in his mind: «When the will of God wants it – he told us - I will hear him knocking at my door; I will go and open it and I will see Jesus. I pray to that Madinna that she would be the one to bring me to Him in her arms». He wanted to recite the Glory more than once together with us. The glory of God in the service of man gave meaning to all his existence.

*Claudio Battistutti con Lucio Paglione e Angiolino Colasante, volontari di Dio*

## Our relatives

The following passed on to the Next Life: **Marie, sister of Anne (Annova) Pemba**, focolarina in Kenya; **Janina, mother of Andrzej Grabarski**, married focolarino in Katowice (Poland); **Silvina, mother of Sameiro**, focolarina at the Roman Mariapolis and of **Margarida (Guida) Freitas**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Ginetta (Brazil); **Anny, sister of Myriam Yvette Schmittlin**, focolarina at the Roman Mariapolis; **brother of Gehilda Cavalcanti**, focolarina in Brasilia; **Lucio, father of Annaluce Berrino**, married focolarina, and of **Loreta Somma**, Volunteer in Naples; **Mario, father of Luis Fernandez Vélez**, focolarino in Cuba; **Maria Adalva, mother of Marconi Ramalho Albuquerque**, focolarino at the Mariapolis Ginetta; **the father of Sheila (Scia) Padayhag**, focolarina in Ohio (USA), and of **Eleanor Mary Villegas**, married focolarina in Cebu (Philippines); **Luisa, mother of Paolo Vergari**, focolarino at the Roman Mariapolis.



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