

Chiara Lubich and the prophetic dimension of her charism

Eleven years after the death of the foundress of the Focolare Movement events are taking place all over the world to remember her. In Rome, Cardinal Rylko celebrated a Mass in the presence of Maria Voce and Jesús Morán attended by many of Chiara's "people" as well as many civil and religious authorities and friends of the Focolare.

She was the initiator of new ways of living the Christian life, a woman with a profound "Marian" identity who had consecrated herself totally to God which is why God entrusted her with a gift for the Church and the world: the charism of unity. These, in brief, are the cornerstones of the life of Chiara and the Focolare Movement which Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko - former Secretary and President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity - highlighted at the Mass which was celebrated on 14 March in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome's oldest Marian shrine, on the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of Chiara Lubich's death.

As well as the President of the Focolare Maria Voce, the Co-President Jesús Morán and a large group of "Chiara's people", civil and religious representatives from the diplomatic world and various Christian movements were present. It was a varied assembly which seemed to embrace humanity just as Chiara did. "How often did you hear Chiara say these words", recalled Cardinal Rylko, "what counts is love. It is love that makes the world move forward, so if someone also has a mission to carry out it is all the more fruitful the more it is imbued with love". →

Dear Readers,

So much is happening!

This will probably be your first impression as you scan through this issue of Mariapolis. We have had a wealth of items to choose from - including those published on the website (You can read them all at this link: www.focolare.org/en/mariapolis). All this news speaks to us of the future, of the commitment and loyalty to radical choices made by so many, of dreams coming true and of new and original initiatives. All this is happening eleven years after the death of Chiara Lubich - almost as a fruit of her fidelity to her "great love" - Jesus Forsaken.

Among the articles I invite you to read two with particular attention - the article on the retreat of the General Council in the Holy Land - linked to the creation of a "Center for Unity and Peace" in Jerusalem (pages 5-7) and the important letter from Maria Voce and Jesús Morán concerning the protection of minors (pages 10-12). Despite it being a long and detailed letter, it is worth reading in full because the last paragraphs provide a key to reading the entire document.

Happy Easter to you all!

*Joachim Schwind
Focolare Communications Office*



“The challenges we face today collectively and as individuals are no less significant than those Chiara had to face when she started out”, said a girl who has just got to know the Focolare. Nothing is more relevant than her message of unity today and her vision of a world which with its diversity and its contradictions can go ahead united even in the midst of polarizations that seem to be tearing our relationships apart.



In the words of Cardinal Rylko, one could sense the fraternal friendship he shared for many years with the foundress of the Focolare - “We travelled a long stretch of road together” - and his deep awareness of the gift that God had given her. “In the life of a Movement, it is very important to remember its origins,” he stressed. “Just as water is always clearer at the source, the beginning of a charism always presents itself in all of its fascinating beauty and newness. This is how the Movement can better discover its identity.

Your most profound identity is contained in the very name of your Movement: the Work of Mary. A special presence of Mary has accompanied you right from the

“celebrating and encountering” Chiara, as the motto of the centenary goes.

As the President of the Focolare said, “We would like to celebrate the wave of new and universal life that the charism of unity has brought to our own personal stories and those of many peoples and cultures. We want to do this by giving as many people as possible all over the world the opportunity to ‘meet’ Chiara today so as to get to know her as a person and rediscover the relevance of her charism and the vision she had of the world as a family of brothers and sisters. It is a vision which goes against the current in this age of resurgent individualism and sovereignty. I am sure that a personal and collective encounter with Chiara will continue to inspire people, ideas and projects animated by the spirit of unity.”



Celebrations will begin in Chiara’s hometown of Trent, on 7 December this year with the inauguration of a large multimedia exhibition dedicated to Chiara which will also be replicated in various capitals around the world. Groups of people will be visiting Trent throughout the year to learn more about Chiara and her spiritual heritage.

start. This Marian dimension characterizes the whole of your missionary commitment in the world. Pope Francis often speaks of a ‘Marian style of evangelization’ as the one best suited to our times”. He then defined the Focolare people as a “new generation” of men and women, young people and new families who are all in love with the love of God and the ideal of unity.

During the year, in and around Rome there will be various events giving people the chance to discover the life and work of Chiara in everyday life from the house where she lived to the chapel at the Centre of the Movement where she was laid to rest. ■

Stefania Tanesini

At the end of the celebration, as she thanked all those present, Maria Voce announced that the year dedicated to the centenary of the birth of Chiara Lubich would begin on 7 December. In fact, 2020 will be marked by numerous initiatives and events of various kinds aimed at

Chiara, spouse of “Jesus forsaken”

We have to admit that eleven years after her death, and as we approach the centenary of her birth in 2020, Chiara Lubich is someone yet to be fully discovered.

The best way to reach into the depths of her soul and understand the abundance of light, joy, and fruits that characterised her life, is to see her as she herself wished to be remembered: “the spouse of Jesus forsaken”, the spouse of Jesus on the cross who felt forsaken even by God.

Chiara herself said this in one of the monthly conference calls in which she gathered together the *focolare* communities around the world as one global family.

“I would like to be remembered solely as the spouse of Jesus forsaken”. She added: “The fact that it might be possible to define my life in this way (may God help me!) seemed wonderful to me, even though it is so high and even though it is still ‘what I must become’. Yet I perceived it as my vocation”.

History and the Church will decide whether Chiara was right and if she reached this goal, but many signs tell us that her “marriage with Jesus forsaken” was the golden thread woven through her entire life and that gave it meaning.

While she was still young, she confided in her mother a prayer that she often said to Jesus in the depths of her heart, “Grant that I may experience something of your sufferings, especially a little of your terrible forsakenness, so that I can be close to you and more like you, who in your infinite Love have chosen me and taken me with you”.

In the summer of 1949 Igino Giordani asked to make a vow of obedience to Chiara. She transformed his request into a plea to Jesus in the Eucharist to establish between them the kind of relationship He wanted, and said to Giordani, ““You know my life: I am nothing. In fact, I want to live like Jesus Forsaken, who made himself completely nothing”.

The pact then sealed in Jesus in the Eucharist marked the start of a period filled with such abundant light that Chiara called it Paradise '49. When it drew to an end and Giordani convinced her to leave that heaven and go back to the city where humankind was awaiting her, what came direct from her heart was her most

ardent declaration of love, “I have only one spouse on earth: Jesus forsaken”.

In 1980, when thoughts of death troubled her, she asked Jesus to give her a decisive push forward to be able to end her life well. He reminded her how she had begun: seeing and loving no one else but Him forsaken. It seemed to Chiara that he said to her, “Look, I have waited 20 centuries to reveal myself to you in this way; if you don’t love me, who will love me?”

And in the year 2,000, when she wrote a book summing up her life story, she described it as being, “Like a love letter to Jesus forsaken” explaining, “Naturally, I



Watercolour by Annemarie Baumgarten

will not be able to express all that I feel or ought to feel for the one whose love I have often affirmed has given my life a second name: Thank You.”

For decades Chiara saw the face of this her Spouse in her own personal sufferings and in all parts of humankind most struck by suffering, and sought to console him. Finally, during the last three years of her life, she was completely united to Him in a dark night that was so deep she described it as the “night of God”. “God has gone far away. He, too, goes out towards the far “horizon of the sea.” We had followed him up to that point, but at the far edge of the sea, he disappears beyond the horizon, and one can no longer see him at all. At least this is how the person feels. Therefore, while we had believed previously that the nights of the spirit ended by embracing Jesus Forsaken, we realize that in this instance we enter into Jesus Forsaken. ■

Michel Vandeleene



Pathways for a United World

Exploring six themes in six years, starting with the field of “economy, work and communion”

The idea of a united world is a most challenging goal, but not an impossible one if approached from many different angles. This is the mindset of the new generations of the Focolare Movement. Chiara Lubich encouraged them to embark upon the many “pathways” which could lead to a more united world, deepening their knowledge along the way in order to achieve this ambitious objective. Taking inspiration from her, they have launched what has become known as “Pathways for a United World”: a six-year rolling program exploring and acting on six big issues, one each year. Over the coming months, this platform will share life experiences on the first of these themes: economy, work and communion.

Giving away what we don’t need – When we got married, we decided as a couple every year to share with others anything we owned that we were not using. In fact, we started doing this even when preparing our wedding and we received many gifts, including financial help. Together, we decided to make a donation to support children in need in East Timor, through an organization run by the priest who married us. We were astonished to see how, once having given this money away, afterwards we received exactly ten times the amount we had given! Also we have made a commitment every year to give a part of our income to contribute to the “communion of goods” lived by the members of the Focolare Movement. This time, the very same morning that I transferred the money, I received a gift of a beautiful coat. It’s stylish, exactly to my taste ... and my measure!

(S. & C. Italy)

A child’s empty pocket – G. is five years old and lives in Aleppo, Syria. When she heard that a group of Focolare young people were going to visit and take food to a convent which cares for old people, she wanted to be part of it. However, the day before the visit, she fell ill and had to go to the doctor. During the appointment,

she told the doctor all about the plan and asked her: “Doctor, tomorrow with my family, I want to go and visit the home for old people. I’ve already shared all the pocket money I had saved. Can I go?” The doctor replied, “Yes, you are well enough to go. But I will also give you back your medical fee, because I too want to take part in your initiative!”

(G. Syria)

Mobilizing a community – Many people I know are struggling to manage even the basic necessities. I felt I had to respond in some way. But how? I started talking about this problem with my colleagues at work, and spontaneously many of them began sharing. They gave me lots of items which I then distributed to families in need. As word spread, more things were given to me, so I needed more space and some help! One couple offered me the use of a shop. Another colleague – actually someone with very different ideas and beliefs to my own – joined with two more friends to offer their time to the initiative. One month later, the “Community Bazaar” was launched, in the presence of the Head of Social Services and several Regional Councillors. We soon found ourselves forming a network with the city’s social institutions, and were able to draw up a mailing list to link up people who have something to give with people who have a specific need. Since then, we find ourselves welcoming collaborators and contributions of all kinds, both from individuals and businesses. The Bazaar has also turned into a hub for people looking to find a way to be useful in society. One day I asked one of my colleagues to accompany me because I needed to go and find a washing machine urgently for a social laundry project. Afterwards she told me, “This is the first time I end the year doing something for others. And I feel so happy. Thank you for letting me know about this initiative!” ■

(M.D.A.R. – Portugal)

Anna Lisa Innocenti

Reclaiming a radical Gospel lifestyle

Annual retreat of the General Council in the Holy Land / 1

The Ecumenical Institute at Tantur, located on the border between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, is an oasis of hospitality and fellowship. It welcomes anyone who wants to immerse themselves in the complex reality of Jerusalem, with its many cultures, peoples, religions and Christian traditions. That is why it is a suitable location for the annual retreat of the General Council of the Focolare Movement, being held there from 10-17th February.



Friederike Koller and Angel Bartol, the central delegates of the Movement and organisers of the retreat, said this meeting embraces past, present and future. “A journey to the Holy Land is always a pilgrimage that calls on us to look to the past, to the historical foundations of the Christian faith and its roots in Judaism. Regarding the present, we will address one of the principle themes of the year 2019, which is the aspect of the ‘communion of goods, economy and work’. The intention is to reclaim within the Movement as a whole a radical Gospel lifestyle concerning the communion of goods, including material goods. Then, on the basis of an alternative lifestyle imbued with the charism of unity, we will seek answers to the economic challenges that present themselves today. We will also look to the future, considering two important subjects: work for and with the new generations, and preparations for the General Assembly in 2020.”



Angel Bartol emphasised the importance of thoroughly applying the chosen working method, considering there are 62 participants at the meeting. “Whether we work in plenary or in small groups, we are always on pilgrimage. We feel we are continuously journeying with Jesus who wants to be present, living and ac-

tive in our midst. This is possible when each one of us is ready to offer our point of view without being attached to it”. Friederike Koller added, “In this way we too can make a small contribution towards peace, which the Word of Life for this month encourages us to pursue and that the world, and especially this city, need so much.”

Bringing the Risen Lord to the world

Annual retreat of the General Council in the Holy Land / 2

“Jesus, who was buried here and rose from the dead, wants to live in our midst so that we can bring his presence throughout the world.” Those are the words of Jesús Morán, Co-President of the Focolare Movement,

after celebrating Mass for the General Council in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Everyone rose at dawn to be able to enter that extraordinary place – one that seems deeply connected with their week-long retreat in the Holy Land. →



Standing before the tomb left empty by the Risen Jesus, they too posed questions about the future, just as the disciples must have done. Where is the Risen Lord leading the Focolare Movement today? Where should the Movement focus its strength, energy and resources?

These questions permeated discussions on the three key subjects addressed in Jerusalem.

Concerning the “communion of goods, economy and work”, the General Council noted that in all the various parts of the Movement there is a great desire to go back to the radical life of the early days and live the communion of goods with new consistency and commitment. Ways in which this could be enabled concretely were discussed.

Consideration of the new generations of the Focolare Movement, the second main subject, was enriched by evaluating the Genfest held last year in Manila and the recent World Youth Day in Panama. Those two events

highlighted the great potential of young people and teenagers. This is also seen in their work for the “Pathways to a United World” project and their commitment to “Zero Hunger” by 2030. Thought was given on how to give continuity to individual initiatives.

The third subject was preparations for the upcoming General Assembly in 2020. The General Council studied ways in which the Assembly can reflect the various vocations within the Movement and their geographical and cultural diversity. They also discussed how to reconcile the need for continuity and the need for innovation that characterise the Movement at present. A commission will shortly be formed to organise the Assembly and their work will be based on these two areas.

While the retreat may seem to have been made up of questions without answers, that was not the case. While it was agreed not to draw up a statement or guidelines, what came to light is the journey being travelled now, the fruit of the Movement’s life throughout the world. Posing questions about the journey; being challenged by the issues of the day and seeking answers; drawing on the past to look to the future: all this can yield unexpected effects. All this can enable us to meet the Risen Lord on unexpected roads, just as happened to the two disciples who, leaving the empty tomb behind them, set off towards Emmaus.

Seeds of hope

Annual retreat of the General Council in the Holy Land / 3

The 14th and 15th of February were set aside for a full immersion into the religious and political situations of the Holy Land. Together with the thousands of pilgrims who crowd Jerusalem every day, the General Council set off to visit some of the holy places. But that was not all. These few days were also dedicated to deepening our understanding of the political and religious situations of this land. Accompanying us on this journey were two prominent local leaders: Rabbi Ron Kronish and the emeritus Lutheran bishop, Munib Younan.



Rabbi Ron Kronish, Emmaus Voce, the emeritus Lutheran bishop, Munib Younan and Jesús Morán

While speaking about Jewish-Christian dialogue, Rabbi Kronish said, “The war between Jews and Christians is now over.” Both he and Bishop Younan spoke about the political conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence, not only between Israel and Palestine, but also for the entire Middle East. “Two peoples - two states” is the slogan that expresses the essential basis on which to build true peace - according to these two men of dialogue who have been friends for many years.

“Only with two states will we be able to put an end to the violence,” said Rabbi Kronish, the founder of many initiatives of dialogue. He is convinced that once the war is over the economic resources necessary for a policy of education and training for peaceful coexistence will become available.

Munib Younan, who was born into a family of Palestinian refugees, added other elements, which, in his opinion, are necessary for a lasting peace - a Jerusalem that belongs equally to the three great religions (Jewish, Muslim and Christian) and to the two peoples (Jewish and Palestinian) as well as a solution for Palestinian refugees. He also agreed that, after political choices, a training strategy is needed - especially for young people. He gave an invitation to the Focolare - “Start a lay movement like yours among the Palestinian Christians - there is a great need.”

Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Apostolic Administrator in the Holy Land, received the General Council last Thursday in the Roman Catholic Patriarchate. In his greeting he emphasized the power of what is small. “We Christians in the Holy Land are few in numbers, weak and fragile. It’s because of this that we can make the provocative proposal of a Jerusalem that is not only heavenly, but also of this earth, which has, as it says in the Book of Revelation, all its doors open. The task of Christians would be to sow, without expecting to see the effects. Sow seeds, even small ones, and leave it to Divine Providence to make them grow and give fruit.”

This invitation of the Archbishop seemed to come true a few hours later, next to the Church of San Pietro in Gallicantu. Adjacent to the steps on which, according to tradition, Jesus expressed his prayer for unity, Maria Voce, President of the Focolare, planted a small medal in the ground. It is the first seed of an “International Centre for Unity and Peace” that is about to be built right here in Jerusalem as the fulfilment of a dream that Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare, expressed during her visit to the Holy Land in 1956. Maria Voce said, “Chiara, from Heaven, will bless this project and car-

ry it forward.” It was a profound moment, attended by 170 members of the Focolare communities in the Holy Land. These people are witnesses to the fact that the small seeds that have been planted in this land over the course of many years are already beginning to grow. ■

Joachim Schwind



Emmaus Voce with a group of the Focolare communities



Presentation of the “International Center for Unity and Peace”



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I couldn't back out

At times the closest relationships turn out to be the most difficult ones. Such was the experience of Miso Kuleif and her father.

“I have always had a difficult relationship with my father. Neither I nor the rest of the family have ever managed to get along well with him, and because of this we suffered a lot. Yet, there was a precise moment in my life when I discovered that my father really loves me and that I love him too”. Miso Kuleif, a 24 year old girl, introduced her experience with these words. She was born in Jordan, but has been living in Italy with her family for more than twenty years.

Miso's father suffered from health problems for quite a long time, but the situation was at its worst about three years ago when he urgently needed liver transplant surgery. He chose to have the operation done in Jordan, as there, unlike Italy, the donor can be alive. “The problem was to find a donor”, Miso continued, “and therefore to find someone willing to undergo compatibility checks. When I got to know this, it did not take much to decide. I left with my father to undergo the necessary tests”.

“Where did I get the strength from? I have been living the spirituality of unity for some years and this helped” – she explained. “I met the Focolare in my home town through the Diocesan Movement that promotes the spirituality of unity in many dioceses and parishes. During our meetings, we have often spoken about loving others as the Gospel teaches and about being ready to give our life to others. Now I couldn't back out. If we have the chance to save a life, we cannot refrain from doing it”.

Miso left Italy; she interrupted her university studies without knowing when she would be back. Her experience

in Jordan was quite tough. “I was there alone, surrounded by a family to whom I did not seem to belong. If I had to undergo surgery, I could not have the comfort of the ones I wanted to be near”. But she moved on. Tests proved that Miso's organ was not compatible with her father's. After a short while a donor was found; it was her father's brother, the only one who accepted to do the necessary checks.

“It took me quite a while to metabolize this experience. Thanks also to members of the Movement who were quite close to me, I realized that I love my father, even though it is difficult for me to admit it. It is easier to hate someone, but it is much more harmful. The real problem was not the situation itself, but the way I dealt with it. I learned that we can always be happy, and this depends on us. The Gospel says: “Freely you have received, freely give”. Now I know how important these words are. If my life were different, maybe it would have been simpler, but I would not be the one I am today”. ■

Anna Lisa Innocenti

Kenya: “Together for a new Africa”

- Leadership course

“Together for a new Africa” is an innovative leadership course for young leaders from across Africa. Over 100 participants attended from 13 different nations.

“Find your passion, whatever it may be. Become it, and let it become you and you will find great things happen FOR you, TO you and BECAUSE of you.” This famous Allan T. Armstrong quote sums up the spirit of the leadership course for over 100 young leaders from 12 nations of East Africa as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo which took place in January at the Focolare “Mariapoli Piero” centre near Nairobi. It was the first in a series of Summer Schools under the ambitious title of “Together for a new Africa”.

One of the pioneers of this course is Melchior Nsavyimana, from Burundi a lecturer in political studies and currently Coordinator at the Institute for Regional Integration at the Catholic University of East Africa. He described the aim of the first course as “to explore and experience an idea of leadership which is both rooted in the values of the African continent and also able to respond to today’s challenges; leadership which acts in a ‘communitarian’ way, which builds community, using the instruments and language of universal fraternity. If this is something which will affect our future, it deserves our commitment now. And we turn to the fundamentals of the culture of unity”.

The effectiveness of this endeavor is facilitated by the close collaboration of a network of interested bodies: Sophia University Institute, The Politics for Unity Movement, the New Humanity NGO, with the cooperation of UNESCO and support from Caritas and Missio.

The idea was the initiative of an international group of African students attending the Sophia University Institute, in Loppiano, Italy. Together they decided to make a joint commitment to work for a new Africa, starting from the transformation and cultural renewal of its leadership. Twenty lecturers from East Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sophia Institute delivered the first sessions in a three-year interdisciplinary and intercultural program covering themes such as responsible citizenship, leadership, a ‘culture of fraternity’, in order to tackle head-on the difficulties facing this continent.

“The journey has just begun,” announces the program’s website [togetherforanewafrika.org]. “Africa (particularly Eastern Africa) is undergoing a very complex series of demographic, political, social and cultural changes. One of the effects of these changes is the increase of uncertainty they produce. Young people often lack the tools required to understand the changes in progress, and remain passive in the face of the conflicting demands of politicians, armed groups, multinationals etc.

Having analyzed this context, we African graduates of Sophia University Institute, understood our responsibility as African young people to define actively with fellow youth the Africa we want in future as it is proposed by African Union Agenda 2063. The contribution of our initiative is to offer African young people an integral training on responsible leadership and create a network among them for acting together for the Africa they want.” ■

edited by Stefania Tanesini





The protection of minors: formation, prevention and zero tolerance

After the first international meeting for those in the Movement responsible for the protection of minors, Focolare President Maria Voce and Co-president, Jesús Morán, have written to all the members of the Movement on the Focolare's commitment in this field.

“We invite all of you to commit very responsibly to this very important aim of promoting the wellbeing and protection of minors.” Focolare President Maria Voce and Co-president Jesús Morán addressed these words in their letter, sent on 27th March, to all the members of the Focolare Movement in the world after the first international meeting of those in the Movement who are responsible for the protection of minors. (See letter next page)

The meeting, held from 14th – 17th March at Castel Gandolfo (Rome), was attended by 162 participants from 38 countries and all continents. It was an opportunity to take stock of the Focolare's commitment to the wellbeing and protection of every person. This commitment has always existed in the Movement and can be seen in the many training events, initiatives and projects organised all over the world to promote child and adolescent wellbeing.

Guidelines and commissions for the protection of minors - In April 2014 the Movement adopted “Guidelines for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and the Protection of Minors” (see the introduction to the Guidelines attached) and in 2015 a Central Commission for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and the Protection of Minors (CO.BE.TU (in Italian)) was established. Around the world, local commissions have

been created in various countries or there are well qualified people responsible for this role. Their task is “to protect, but also to promote formation activities for our members, especially those who work with minors.”

The commissions also have the task of receiving reports of alleged abuse and undertaking a process of verification within the Movement. Maria Voce and Jesús Morán explain in the letter that over the years about 20 reports have been received and they communicate that, “It deeply pains us to recognise that, also in our own large family of the Focolare, some cases of abuse regarding minors caused by people who belong to the Movement, or by people who have taken part in meetings organised by us, have occurred. Most of these episodes occurred in the remote past (even over 20 years ago), but unfortunately some have occurred in the recent past. Consecrated members of the Movement were also involved in these.”

The President and Co-president affirm with deep gratitude that the establishment of the Central Commission and the local commissions has helped not only to facilitate the reporting of alleged cases of abuse, but also “to understand how to do justice to the victims, how to accompany them and their families and what provisions to make within the Movement regarding the authors of the abuses, in addition of course to the judicial procedures envisaged by the laws of the respective countries.”

Zero tolerance

Maria Voce and Jesús Morán re-affirmed the Movement's zero tolerance approach to any form of violence, abuse, mistreatment or bullying, carried out directly on through the Web, towards any person, with particular attention to minors and vulnerable adults. They go on to explain that, "This means reporting to the local commissions and to the Central Commission every suspicion of abuse or violence." They consider it to be "a real temptation if anyone thinks of not reporting cases for the good of the Movement, to avoid scandal or protect someone's good name."

In particular they add that, "Every single case represents a deep purification for the Movement. We accept

it with humility and deep compassion for those who – perhaps through our lack of attention – have undergone indescribable traumas."

It is a worldwide commitment, not limited only to the members of the Focolare Movement and that, as Maria Voce and Jesús Morán observe in their conclusion to the letter, should be ever more open to the whole of humankind: "We cannot fail to make our own the cry of pain of all the children and teenagers in the world. ... It is part of our vocation to go towards them. That is why we must be on the front line in defending those who are weaker, wherever they are victims of any kind of violence or abuse." ■

Rocca di Papa, 26th March 2019

To the members of the Focolare Movement all over the world

Dear All,

As you know, it is almost eight years now that the Movement, here at the Centre and in the zones, has been working to develop structures, rules and procedures that can help us improve within the Movement the promotion of the wellbeing and protection of minors.

The reflections of recent Popes, and the directives regarding conduct given by Pope Francis to the Church, have been light on our path to enable us to define, in April 2014, the "Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and the Protection of Minors".

As foreseen in these Guidelines, a Commission for the Wellbeing and Protection of Minors" (in Italian: Commissione per la Promozione del Benessere e la Tutela dei minori CO.BE.TU.) was established in 2015. Its work is overseen by a central supervisory body. This Commission has the task of protecting, but also of promoting formation activities for our members, especially those who work with minors. Local commissions in various countries have been created for this purpose and well qualified people have been appointed to be responsible for carrying out this task.

Members of the Commission and the people responsible in the zones met for the first time at Castel Gandolfo (Italy) from 14th-17th March 2019 to take stock of their work. It was a very fruitful meeting, characterised by great maturity and a professional approach on the part of the 162 participants who came from 38 countries and all continents. The meeting was also an opportunity to make an important contribution to the current work of revising, updating and rendering more global the "Guidelines" which will be finished shortly.

In addition to the precious work regarding formation and prevention, the commissions also have the task of receiving reports of alleged abuse and to undertake a process of verification within the Movement. This is not an easy task and we are deeply grateful to them.

It deeply pains us to recognise that, also in our own large family of the Focolare, some cases of abuse regarding minors caused by people who belong to the Movement, or by people who have taken part in meetings organised by us, have occurred. Most of these episodes occurred in the remote past (even over 20 years ago), but unfortunately some have occurred in the recent past. Consecrated members of the Movement were also involved in these.

With the help of the Central Commission and the local commissions we have taken into consideration every single case that was reported (up to now about 20) to understand how to do justice to the victims, →

how to accompany them and their families and what provisions to make within the Movement regarding the authors of the abuses, in addition of course to the judicial procedures envisaged by the laws of the respective countries.

We take this opportunity to invite all of you to commit very responsibly to this very important aim of promoting the wellbeing and protection of minors. There are various ways of doing this.

Without doubt, our Movement too adopts a zero tolerance approach concerning any form of violence, abuse, mistreatment or acts of bullying/cyber-bullying with regard to any person, paying particular attention to minors and vulnerable adults. This means reporting to the local commissions and to the Central Commission every suspicion of abuse or violence.

In this context, it is a real temptation if anyone thinks of not reporting cases for the good of the Movement, to avoid scandal or protect someone's good name. Hence we strongly urge you, even those who up to now have not had the courage to do so, to report cases of violence or abuse, or situations that a person considers might constitute a situation of risk for the wellbeing of persons and the protection of minors.

Recently, Pope Francis has spoken of a "great purification" occurring in the Church with the abuse scandals. For us too, in our smaller context, every single case represents a deep purification for the Movement. We accept it with humility and deep compassion for those who – perhaps through our lack of attention – have undergone indescribable traumas. And let's commit ourselves to direct or re-direct our behaviour, as individuals and as a Movement, towards an ever more conscientious and mature commitment regarding protection and wellbeing, especially of minors.

Furthermore, we invite all of you – and not only those who are directly engaged with minors in our Movement – to study the "Guidelines" and take part in training opportunities on these subjects, because all of us have something to do with youth realities.

We encourage you, in addition, to look beyond our Movement. On the journey towards the fulfilment of unity, we cannot fail to make our own the cry of pain of all the children and teenagers in the world. The violation of the rights of minors and the abuse of all kinds perpetrated against them in every part of the world, are one of the greatest wounds of our times, one of the countenances of Jesus Forsaken today. It is part of our vocation to go towards them. That is why we must be on the front line in defending those who are weaker, wherever they are victims of any kind of violence or abuse.

United in unconditional love for Him, our Only Good,

Emmaus Maria Voce

Jesús Morán



The Commission for the Wellbeing and Protection of Minors, together with Emmaus and Jesús (seated). From the left: Orazio Gabrielli, paediatrician (Italy), Olga Maria Rodriguez, economist and Area Adviser to the President of the Focolare Movement (Uruguay), Encarnacion Javaloyes, Middle and Secondary school teacher (Spain), Pinella Costanzo Macciotta, Middle and Secondary school teacher (Italy), Viviana Valevaris Colonnetti, psychologist (Argentina), Dorival Spatti, lawyer and Area Adviser to the President of the Focolare Movement (Brazil), Orazio Moscatello, criminal defence lawyer (Italy).

Youth unite to say no to bullying



The project “Why fai il bullo?” (Why are you a bully?) aims at training teenagers help their peers deal with this phenomenon. Teenagers are trained to understand bullying, to prevent it and also to be upstanders in bullying situations.

Bullying is repeated aggressive behaviour through which school-aged children intimidate and abuse their peers. This is a widespread phenomenon among teenagers, both on a personal level and also through cyberbullying. It involves the bullies, the victims and groups of friends, who are often either frightened or become accomplices. What can be done? A project set up by the bNet Association, a branch of “Rete Progetto Pace” (Peace Network Project), which is an international network of schools, bodies and associations that collaborate to promote a culture of peace, aims at training children and empowering them against bullying. Marco Provenzale, president of the Association spoke to us about this project.

What does the project “Why fai il bullo?” consist of? Bullying is the product of conflict, and we believe that the best way to stop it is to make children understand its origin, and give them the necessary tools to understand conflicts and solve them through the support they give one another. At the core of this project one finds the “Peer Mediation Group”, set up in each school. The students in this group are trained to manage and resolve conflicts. Lessons and role-plays help them acquire well-developed skills not only to solve conflicts, but also to prevent them. They are trained to detect potentially damaging situations in their daily school life in order to address them before these degenerate into more serious ones. The group also offers a mediation service through techniques and rules agreed upon by each school. We deal with students aged between 11 and 15 years. This European project was set up in 2015 after some associations answered the call to “Join Forces to Combat Cyberbullying in

Schools”. It can also be implemented in other countries.

Does the project also include parallel activities? Yes it does; it offers monthly training sessions and organizes annual events, amongst which is an intercultural and humanitarian journey. Training sessions for teachers and parents are also being planned. We consider the joint effort of the association, school and families as one of the added values of this initiative.

This project is promoted by bNET Association, a branch of “Rete Progetto Pace”. What are the objectives of this network? For almost thirty years, “Rete Progetto Pace” has been contributing to an integral education for children. It promotes collaboration between schools and associations, at a local and international level; it studies young people’s views on current issues and promotes experiences of voluntary work. The project also encourages artistic and expressive talents, leadership skills and technical skills in positive use of the media. ■

edited by Anna Lisa Innocenti

Further information may be found on: www.reteprogettpace.it or by writing to: direttivo@reteprogettpace.it.



Kenya: Refugees seeing the future

Insights from Congolese journalist Liliane Mugombozi, currently based in the Focolare centre in Nairobi. She works at the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Kenyan capital: “African migrants? The majority are not going to Europe but are moving within the African continent”.

“According to the international media, Africa is a continent of mass exodus. But this is not true in reality. Most of these migrants are moving within the continent itself. From 2015 to 2017 nearly 19 million people have moved to destinations within Africa”. Liliane Mugombozi knows what she’s talking about when she describes this under-reported phenomenon. She has been observing it closely through her journalistic lens but also with direct experience over the past two and a half years working at the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

“Since September 2017 more than half a million refugees are living in Kenya. They come mainly from the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and Central Africa, but also from Myanmar, Afghanistan etc. Most of them are living in refugee camps at Dadaab and Kakuma; around 64,000 refugees are living within the city of Nairobi itself”.

Last December Liliana helped to organize a workshop for 48 young refugees, from many different African countries, including South Sudan and Somalia, to investigate their living conditions as refugees and offer tools to deal with the daily challenges they face, from human rights violations to cultural difficulties. ‘When I look at you – Liliana told them – I don’t see refugees, I see the future of this continent, I see the future of the world. Each one of you has experienced suffering, so who better than you would know how to build strong and fair institutions?’

“From the moment I arrived at JRS in Nairobi, where I work for the secondary school and university students who are able to continue their education because of scholarships and sponsorship, I immediately realised that my service would demand huge flexibility on my part, going way beyond a simply administrative approach. I felt called to share in the suffering behind each one of their stories, to actually meet the person. I understood that the key was to build truly reciprocal relationships with each one.”

In the face of so much hope and so much suffering, Liliane was careful not to fall into the trap of confusing the person with their need. “This is a dangerous temptation which would have closed off my heart from a true encounter with these young people, their families, teachers, and with all those around”.

The Focolare community in Kenya, especially around Nairobi, has worked in collaboration with the Jesuit Fathers, organizing collections of clothes, food and other essential items, household necessities, books and toys from friends, relations and parishes. Liliana reflects, “We understood firstly we had to overcome our prejudices and get to know the refugees’ own stories in order to create a culture of encounter and of welcome. We are all too aware that we cannot resolve all their problems, but we can become a brother or sister for them. Of course we are only just beginning, but we believe that with Jesus among us, we will find a response to this cry of Jesus on the cross today, in this our own land”. ■

Stefania Tanesini



New Zealand - When two cultures meet

Esther is a Maori and Tom is of Irish and Scottish descent. Their story turns on its head the principle that there can be no real communication between very different cultures.

Son of an Irish mother and a Scottish father, Tom was 26 years old when he arrived in New Zealand. While the Maori people were the first inhabitants of New Zealand, after numerous successive waves of migration it has become a multicultural country. Tom arrived with one of the low-cost flights that the British and New Zealand governments offered to young people willing to stay for at least two years overseas. Esther, on the other hand, is 100% Maori and the oldest of 13 children. The two of them met at a disco and it was love at first sight.

“I never noticed that we came from two different cultures,” Tom remembers. “And I didn’t really think about the fact that he was white,” Esther adds. “When I saw her I simply fell in love,” says Tom.

The complications came later, when they announced to their families that they wanted to get married. His mother reminded him that he would not be able to take her to England because she isn’t white.

Even Esther’s grandmother was not quite sure about Tom. She had already chosen another man for Esther, as she had done before for her own daughter, Esther’s mother. The traditions in the Maori community are strong and difficult to disregard. However, after the initial shock, Tom’s parents learnt to love their Maori daughter-in-law and Tom was welcomed into Esther’s large family.

By mutual consent, the children were baptised and educated in the Catholic Church - where Esther belonged and where Tom felt the desire to belong.

The first contact with the Focolare took place in 1982 through Father Durning, a Scottish priest who was Tom’s catechist and a missionary to the Maori community. Having been invited to spend a weekend with the women focolarine, Esther and Tom set off with their children. They felt a bit of trepidation...

“I was trying to read the Bible - Tom recalls - but I got nothing out of it. Instead, I was struck by a phrase that one of them had said: “Try to see the presence of Jesus in whoever passes you by.” I said to her that if she knew my job at the railways, she would have agreed with me that it just wasn’t possible! I explained that it was such a difficult environment - but she insisted. So

I did try it, and my faith became stronger. I had found what I was looking for – a way of living my faith in my daily life.”

At their first Mariapolis Esther and Tom found themselves listening to people who shared personal experiences and events “interpreted” in the light of the Gospel - and these stories struck a chord with them. But theirs was not a simple story to tell because Tom had started drinking, a habit that had begun at work.

Tom explains what happened next. “One evening, while I was about to have a beer, Esther asked me what I was doing. I understood that I could not continue to live like this; I had a wife and four children. Alcoholism was destroying our family, so I decided I had to stop.”

But the life of a family like theirs is never boring and as soon as one challenge was over, another one immediately presented itself. And that’s what happened - after an accident, Tom was forced to leave his job and they decided to swap roles.

“Esther went to work and I stayed home to look after the children,” says Tom. “I had to learn to do many things as well as the difficult ‘art’ of loving at home. To our friends, our choice seemed totally against the current. We can’t say that everything went smoothly, but even with our ups and downs, we always found ourselves united. Even when we have different points of view, or when I get fixed on an idea, I remember that Chiara Lubich taught us to always be the first to love, to apologize and never to lose the courage to keep on loving.”

As Esther says, “For 46 years the spirituality of unity has become our daily lifestyle. I understand that God has given us a beautiful life. He has set us high goals and given us the faithfulness we need to reach them. So, for now, we keep going ahead.” ■

Gustavo E. Clariá



School strike for climate



The teens for unity of the Focolare Movement and the members of Prophetic Economy support «FridaysForFuture», the global initiative for environmental protection promoted by Greta Thunberg

This morning in the garden of the international headquarters of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa (Italy), Focolare President Maria Voce and co president Jesús Morán planted a tree in support of the international initiative #FridaysForFuture promoted by Greta Thunberg. Greta is a sixteen year old from Sweden who has recently become a symbol of environmental activism.

The world first began to notice Greta when she decided to go on strike from attending school every Friday morning at the beginning of the Northern Hemisphere's school year last September. Her strategy was to sit in front of the Stockholm Parliament with her home made sign that said "School Strike for Climate." She went there to protest against the failure of political leaders to take a position on what is happening to the environment.

Then in late January, in the town of Davos in Switzerland, Greta became the focus of the world's media when she spoke in front of the world's business leaders, political leaders, economists, celebrities and journalists at the World Economic Forum: "You are destroying my future! I don't want you to hope, I want to see you panicking" she told them.

The Teens for the Unity of the Focolare Movement, together with the groups involved in Prophetic Economy, have decided to join the international initiative scheduled for today, Friday March 15th 2019. Their goal is to demand that international conventions to safeguard the planet are respected, and that world leaders stop just talking and start acting decisively.

"The positions taken by many politicians show that the top-down approach is not enough," explains Luca

Fiorani, the coordinator of EcoOne, the international Focolare network for those who work in the fields of ecology and sustainability.

The UN's major international climate conferences demonstrate how difficult it is to make decisions together about how to combat global warming. So this is where the bottom-up approaches come into play - where the people put pressure on those in power to make effective decisions to avoid climate change. These initiatives by young people are vitally important because they are the ones who will suffer the most from the effects of climate change in the future. That's why it's important that these young people act globally - so they can stir up the consciences of everyone around the world. If we don't act now, within 20 or 30 years it may be too late.

Pope Francis often reminds us of this. His 2019 message for Lent is focused on ecological conversion. He encourages us to pray, fast and give alms, but always with care for creation in mind.

So, too, the commitment of the Focolare children and young people to reach the "Zero Hunger" goal heads in the same direction as Greta Thunberg's initiative. ■

Lorenzo Russo



Focolare President Maria Voce and co president Jesús Morán planted a tree in support of the international initiative #FridaysForFuture



Apart from in his professional role, Klaus lived his vocation in many other environments: accompanying the many people who turned to him for help, support or advice; offering the benefit of his deep Biblical knowledge through talks and articles; personally sharing his experiences of life. He had that rare combination of a wide-ranging cultural knowledge together with a clarity of expression and a ready sense of humour which he employed so effectively to reduce tensions!

A great listener

Full of good sense and good humor, Klaus Purkott knew better than most the value of listening to others.

A man of few words, throughout his life Klaus Purkott forged relationships through his exceptional capacity to listen deeply. He helped and accompanied countless people, wherever he was, and lived to fulfilment his dedication to God as a focolarino.

For more than twenty years he worked as a legal practitioner around Berlin's Civil Court, where he was well known for accepting the cases of people who could not afford legal fees. He was held in high esteem by clients and colleagues alike for his ability to resolve even the most problematic cases, often in surprising and unconventional ways! He was always particularly happy to get involved in those situations which seemed impossible to solve.

Klaus attributed this preferential love for those people who found themselves in real trouble to his communist upbringing. He was born on 31 December 1936, in Upper Silesia, a largely German-speaking region which became part of Poland at the end of the Second World War. Undeterred by his congenital blindness (he had only about 5 per cent vision), Klaus, after completing his high school education, went on to university to study Marxist philosophy. His father, a basket-maker, had been one of the founders of the Polish Communist Party, and like him, the young Klaus hoped to find the truth of life in Communism. But, as Klaus later explained, "Through my blindness, God soon made me understand how ineffective all my efforts were, and He prepared me to meet Him".

Klaus found a particular light in the figure of Jesus on the cross, who while experiencing the greatest interior darkness, entrusted himself to the Father. This discovery which he made in meeting the Focolare spirituality, transformed his life and led to a new and radical life choice: as a consecrated Focolarino, living his life for others.

In 1999, Klaus had retired from his legal work, and was called to Ottmaring, the ecumenical Focolare village in Germany. His moral authority was immediately recognized by the citizens there. "He was a real older brother to us," some of the Focolarini recalled. "He knew how to build relationships, and was someone you could trust." Remembering Klaus, people say: he was so well-balanced, full of good common sense, so sincere. People sensed his deep relationship with God.

In 2008 Klaus returned to Berlin. Then just over two years ago, he suffered a serious accident and the extent of his injuries meant he had to move to a nursing home. This was a new environment for him to witness to living the Word of God. And it was not long before a "Word of Life" group formed around him. Here, he is remembered for his exceptional way of living in the present moment. Not least on January 18, 2019, when he quietly and unexpectedly passed to the next life, during his afternoon nap. ■

Joachim Schwind

Other members of the Movement who have concluded their earthly life:

- 01 January 2019 Antonio Santos Garcia - married focolarino from Spain
- 14 January 2019 Marie-Claire Malandrin - married focolarina from France
- 16 January 2019 Lionello Cadei - priest focolarino from Italy
- 24 January 2019 Mario Giostra - married focolarino from Italy
- 30 January 2019 Matilde Cocchiaro - focolarina from Mariapoli Romana
- 31 January 2019 Atalia Floridi - focolarina from Mariapoli Romana
- 31 January 2019 Ines Gomes de Mello - focolarina from Brazil
- 05 February 2019 Colette Heugens - married focolarina from Belgium
- 07 February 2019 Sara Signorello Kucich - married focolarina from Italy
- 11 February 2019 Giuliana Mazzarani - focolarina from Mariapoli Romana
- 15 February 2019 Magdalena Schilgen - focolarina from Germany
- 05 March 2019 Benedetto Pietrogrogrande - married focolarino from Italy
- 05 March 2019 Thérèse Zientara - married focolarina from North America
- 08 March 2019 Claudio Giannotti - married focolarino from Italy
- 11 March 2019 Giovanni Damilano - priest focolarino from Italy
- 17 March 2019 Peter Husi - priest focolarino from Switzerland
- 17 March 2019 Anna gioblesi - married focolarina from Italy
- 27 March 2019 Don Giuseppe Castellani - priest focolarino from Italy



A gift right to the very end

Pierre-André Blanc's death has been defined "a mystery" and "a shock" by many people. Pierre was a Swiss focolarino who died after a period of deep depression. Those who knew him, however, are sure that he found peace in that God-Love to whom he gave convincing witness in many different situations.

"Your departure, Pierre-André, was too sudden for us. But your word of life, taken from the book of Isaiah (43:1) 'I have called you by name: you are mine' gives us an intuition of the love with which we think God welcomed you into paradise." These words concluded the address given by Denise Roth and Markus Näf, jointly responsible for the focolare town of Montet, Switzerland, at Pierre-André Blanc's funeral. They summarized the conflicting feelings of many of those present: on the one hand, an indescribable perplexity about his death and, on the other, trust and, indeed, the certainty that he has found true life.

The fifth of six children, Pierre-André was born on April 2 1962 in Sion, Switzerland and grew up in Ayent, a small village in the Valais. His family was always very loving. He trained as a specialist educator and later completed theological studies.

In 1980, he went to the Genfest in Rome, an international youth event organised by the Focolare Movement and it was there that he first came into contact with the spirituality of the Movement. He was impressed "by the quality of the relationships between people and by the joy that was evident on their faces" as he would later write. When he returned home, he began to allow the words of the gospel to impact upon his everyday life. He had been accustomed to "meeting" God when he was skiing during retreats in the mountains but he then discovered a new way of relating to God as he loved the people around him in concrete and practical ways.

While attending a workshop on social issues, he suddenly and unexpectedly found himself in front of someone who spoke of giving his life to God. In Pierre-André a question arose: what if God were to call me to live like this person? He later wrote, "My fears of following God in a totalitarian way were not able to withstand his intervention in my life. I simply tried to show commitment in living the gospel and God did the rest. I understood how much he wanted my happiness and, above all, that in his eyes, I had enormous value. It seemed obvious to say yes to Jesus, to follow him where I felt he was calling me to the focolare."

In 1989, he began his formation and preparation for a life in the focolare. Those who knew him at this time describe him as sensitive to everything that "spoke" of God. They say that was able to grasp the essential in what was happening around him and in other people. At the end of the time of formation, Pierre-André entered the focolare in Geneva, Switzerland, and in 2006 he moved to the little town of Montet. For many years he made a valuable contribution to the life of the focolare community there, assisting other people in a variety of ways but always with generosity, practicality and discretion.

In the professional field, he worked as an educator, first with children with physical disabilities and then with young people with learning difficulties. He always showed a deep capacity to be close to other people who were suffering. He had a fine sense of humour and, in everything he did, Pierre-André gave unreservedly of himself.

At the end of May 2018, he showed the first symptoms of depression. He immediately received medical help but, after a month, he had to be admitted to a clinic. At a certain point he was able to return to Montet at weekends. In October 2018, he left the clinic and returned to the focolare whilst remaining under the care of a specialist doctor. At this time, the other focolarini were especially attentive to him, supporting and accompanying him during this phase of life. He was continuously at the serve of others and it seemed that his condition was beginning to improve. However, in the end the disease was stronger and on November 28 it ended his life in a very sudden way.

In spite of the shock, Pierre-André's funeral was an expression of great gratitude from everyone for his life and for the delicate love he showed until the very end. ■

Joachim Schwind

Dialogue and forging relationships

“A life for unity”: with this headline, the Schönstatt Movement announced the death of Fr Michael Johannes Marmann, their former Superior General, on the evening of 26 February 2019, at the age of 81. He had long been a key figure for this apostolic movement which had its beginnings in Germany in 1914.

Michael Johannes Marmann was born in 1937 in Berlin, Germany, the eldest of three brothers. He studied Philosophy and Theology and was ordained in 1963 in Cologne. He then continued his studies in Tübingen and Regensburg. Interestingly, in 1973 he completed his doctorate under the tutelage of a certain Professor Josef Ratzinger, who never lost contact with his student, even after becoming Pope Benedict. They continued to meet every year – often in recent years at the Focolare Mariapolis Centre at Castelgandolfo – to discuss current theological issues.

At the time of his priestly ordination, Fr Marmann learned about the Schönstatt Movement and its founder, Fr Josef Kentenich, who at that time was living in exile in Milwaukee (USA) at the request of the ecclesial authorities. After a personal meeting with him, Fr Marmann decided to enter the Secular Institute of the Schönstatt Fathers. He was appointed as a spiritual director for youth, and was later involved in pastoral work for priests, families and mothers. From 1983 to 1991 he was responsible for the Movement in Germany. In 1990 the Schönstatt Fathers elected him as their Superior General and Moderator of the Presiding Council.

Fr Marmann’s service in these roles was characterized by his great openness to dialogue and his dedication to the quality of relationships both within the Movement and beyond. His commitment to strengthening the unity of the large and varied work founded by Fr Kentenich, led him naturally towards increased communion with other Movements, firstly within the Church in Germany and then most notably as part of the “Together for Europe” network. He was at the heart of those deep friendships and the spiritual unity which developed between representatives of different



movements, including Helmut Niklas of YMCA in Munich, Germany, Andrea Riccardi of the St.Egidio Community and, of course Chiara Lubich.

In her message of condolence, Maria Voce, Focolare Movement President, recalled the “significant steps on this journey”. One of these was the Alliance of love affirmed by Chiara Lubich, Andrea Riccardi and Fr Marmann in 1999 at the Schönstatt Shrine in front of Fr Kentenich’s tomb. Maria Voce said she was certain that “Mary, Mother Thrice Admirable, will have accompanied Fr Marmann to the joyful encounter with Christ in his reign of peace”. ■

Joachim Schwind

The section “Witnesses / Lives lived,” where we give brief, personal profiles of members of the Focolare Movement after their death, has had to be suspended, we hope temporarily. This is in accordance with the new laws concerning the protection of privacy and the protection of personal data pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2016/679. Once the legal aspects have been further studied, we are confident we will be able to resume this section, which is highly appreciated by our readers.

The editorial office

Living the Gospel: Be merciful

Mercy is a love that fills the heart. It can then be poured out for others in society around us, whether neighbours or strangers.

Alone

When my husband died after just 4 years of marriage, I asked myself - how will manage to bring up my children alone? I found the answer in the Word of God, the Father of all. I just needed to live it. I experienced it so often, especially as the children got older and the problems started to become more complicated – deciding which school to go to, friends, leisure activities ... There are times when I feel the same desolation as so many other people who like me are bringing up a family on their own but as I continue to believe in the love of God, I feel great peace again which enables me to start a new dialogue with my children and discuss even the most delicate subjects.

(I. C. – Italy)

Rain

One evening I felt quite tired and I would have liked to say to the kids to go to their rooms and say their prayers on their own, since I wanted to go to bed right away. But John, our eldest son, asked that we say the rosary together to pray for rain – it had not rained for some time and our corn and potato crops were at risk. So we prayed together. To my surprise, that same ni-



ght it started to rain and continued through the afternoon the following day.

(B. M., Uganda)

In the hospital

An extremely poor woman, a mother who had been in hospital for many months, needed help to eat, but the staff could not do this as well as all their other work. We let all our parish friends know, and one at a time we went to help her. Despite the situation seeming endless, she improved a bit, began responding to medicines and smiled. When the person she shared a room with died, in their will they left her a small sum to help her family. Love is contagious...

(C. C. Spain)

Contributions to the Mariapolis newsletter:

Dear Readers,

This printable Pdf newsletter contains the most important articles published in the "Mariapolis" section of the Focolare Movement's international website (www.focolare.org/mariapoli).

You can download it from the site or receive it by email by activating the link.

*It is a **free service** from the Communications Office.*

We are always grateful to those who wish to continue to support our work financially and in that way contribute to the spreading of the charism of unity.

The editorial staff

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