

# MARIAPOLI

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Trip to China  
**In unity  
beyond  
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**Pre-Synod**  
The voice  
of the  
youth

**#10Chiara Lubich**  
A prophecy  
that has become  
history



A detail of the altar tablets *Mary Mother of the People of Ave Cerquetti* - Church of "Jesus divine worker" (Arezzo-Italy)

## Mary Desolate

# «Another kind of Motherhood»

When Jesus [indicating John] says:  
«Woman, here is your Son»  
(Jn 19,26), Mary is no longer his Mother.  
It is the moment when Mary returns  
to God the divine motherhood  
that he had given Her through participation.



It is a “yes” different from her first. With the first she gave up her virginity (apparently); with the second she gives up her Motherhood — also apparently. Only like this is she Mother of all. She acquires the divine Motherhood of an infinite number of souls by giving up the divine Motherhood of her First Son. And all this too is done according to the economy of God. She gives one and gets a hundred.

But what pain she must have felt at Jesus’ cry of abandonment is beyond thought. It was the hour in which she would have wanted to stay closest to Him. But by this point she had been dismissed by him as his Mother. She no longer had any right to have been His Mother and in the face of the shift to another Motherhood pointed out to her by Jesus, she could not complain or collapse in sorrow.

In that moment therefore Jesus had neither mother, nor Father. He was the nothing born from nothing.

And Mary as well was suspended in nothing. Her greatness had been her divine Motherhood. Now it was taken away from her.

So in that moment Mary Desolate — through God’s will — did not participate in the Redemption.

She was excluded by the Son who offered himself for all, including Her.

And at the same time she participated in it with infinite intensity because precisely then, she was made our Mother. [...]

And it is here that our greatness can be understood. We are truly destined to be *another* Jesus, divine like Him. Mary paid for us. And for Jesus who she has given, she cannot have in exchange many half Jesuses, but *real and true Jesuses* with his light and with his love. Like Him. «Love them as you have loved me» (cf. Jn 17,23).

How beautiful is Mary Desolate in this turning of herself towards humanity to gather up the fruit of her Son’s death. [...] I see her with him running towards humanity which has become their God [their ideal] out of love for God! Both ready to leave everything for us. We too — like Them — must leave God for the people, to leave Unity for the Jesus Forsakens scattered throughout the world. To make Unity the launching pad towards humanity. We must come, to live for sinners and not for the righteous: like Him, like Her.

*Chiara Lubich*

A writing of 2 october, 1949 in *CHIARA LUBICH Mary*, edited by B. Leahy and J. Povilus, Città Nuova, Rome 2017, pp. 38, 41



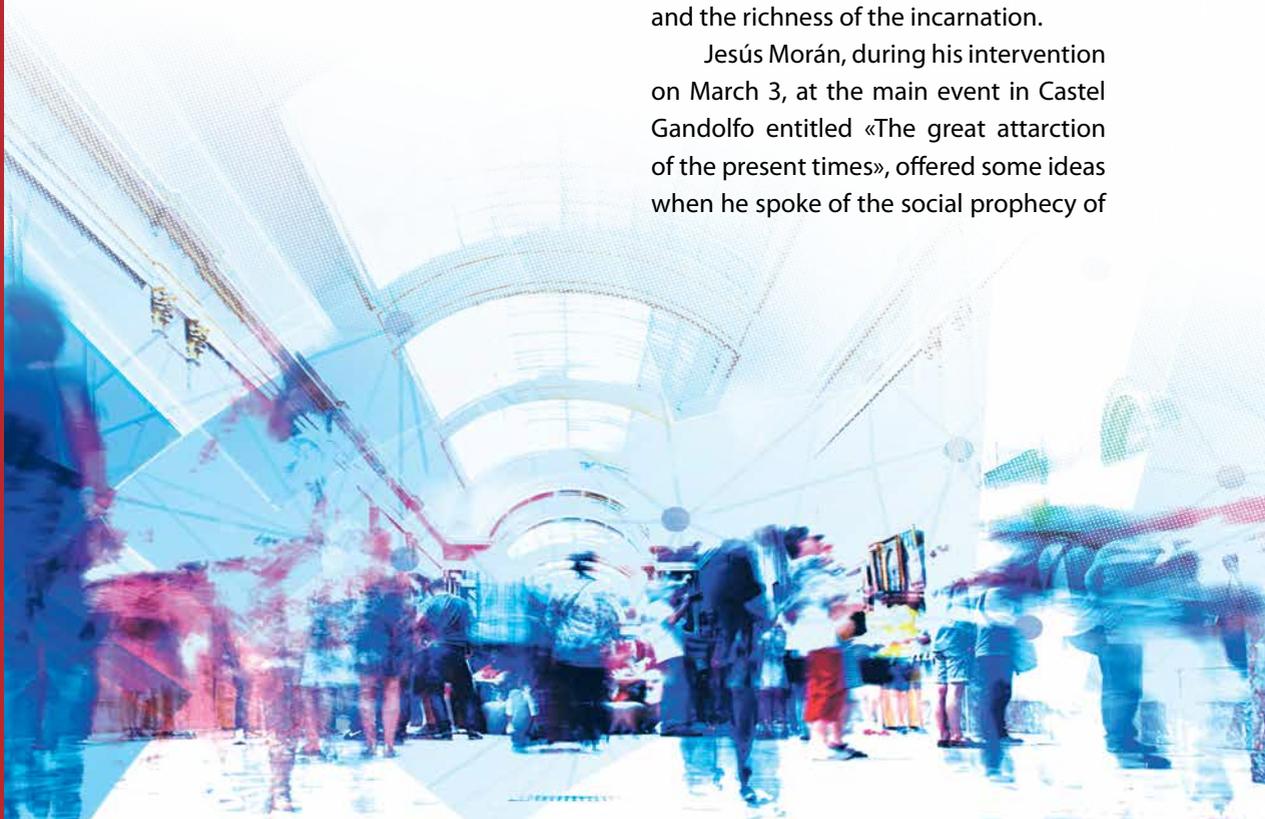
# A prophecy that becomes history

2018. Ten years.  
2008 is the year when  
Chiara left us. Many voices  
were raised to speak of her.  
With a special emphasis  
on the social impact of the  
charism of unity.

Chiara Lubich knew how to look far ahead. Docile to the touch of the Spirit and immersed in humanity, she was able to give a face and a voice to a God who is near, who lives in our midst and who speaks the language of our people. who gives concrete answers for our co-existence.

This is what we are going to look at in this 10° anniversary, that will be celebrated all over the world, with the beauty and the richness of the incarnation.

Jesús Morán, during his intervention on March 3, at the main event in Castel Gandolfo entitled «The great attraction of the present times», offered some ideas when he spoke of the social prophecy of



Chiara: «Chiara was not a social reformer, and neither was Jesus. The dream of Chiara, in effect, aims higher and more profoundly, which means at the anthropological and theological foundation of every social reform: universal brotherhood and unity, just as the God-Man, Jesus did too».

Reading the news that we receive from all over the world regarding the initiatives to commemorate Chiara on this her tenth anniversary, what is evident is the universality of the diffusion of the charism and the diversity of its colours.

Wherever there is a community of the Focolare, one can feel the need to meet together. In many places where traditional Catholicism is lived, Masses are celebrated almost always with the presence of the Bishops, accompanied by meetings and moments of friendship. To rekindle the light, love and the sense of being a member of her family: precious opportunities to offer to others this chance to breathe the atmosphere of fraternity. Mariapolises, Day gatherings, anniversaries of the arrival of the focolare, etc. are often celebrated during this anniversary.



lare, etc. are often celebrated during this anniversary.

In the places where the ecumenical or interreligious experience prevails, there was the participation of Christians of various Churches and faithful of the great Religions, that showcased a portion of humanity that lives the experience of reciprocal love even in its diversity.

In many places, the communities celebrated this anniversary publicly.

Emmaus Maria Voce, on March 3 said: «We continue to receive the spirituality of unity from Chiara today, a spirituality centered on Jesus, God and man, who is present – as he promised – among people who love one another, but also



Castel Gandolfo, 3 marzo 2018 ©foto CSC Audiovisivi C. Mendes



Emmaus continued: «To the question “What are the concrete actions that you are doing?”, Chiara answered: “The Movement is precisely characterized by love. What does love do? It pushes us to make ourselves one with the others in order to be of service to everyone because Christianity is love and love means service [...]. So in all the nations, wherever we go, we try to identify what is

Castel Gandolfo, 3 marzo 2018 ©foto CSC Audiovisivi C. Mendes

along the road of their human story both concrete and unforeseeable. It is a collective way that irradiates, infects, opens up to those who come in contact with it and produces a reaction that can affect and transform all the aspects of society and of history. Even the tragic situations of war or genocide can become stories of hope. Let us allow ourselves to be transformed by the words of the Gospel: just one could change the world. Chiara said: “The Gospel is not truly understood, because, if it were, there is no need for anything else to bring about a social revolution”».

The Gospel, therefore, when lived by men and women in a precise socio-cultural context, pushes us to listen to the concrete questions and needs of those around us.

the first thing we must do for that nation, for that populace, for those persons. In this way the various forms of service and the different actions take shape which are not the end in themselves ...”but answer” to the needs of that populace and that is when the social actions and projects are born”».

### «The great attraction of the present times»

During the main event in Castel Gandolfo, on March 3, there were 2,000 participants from the five continents. Present too was card. Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, who underlined the «trust» with which Chiara entrusted herself to the Church waiting for when «the times of the Spirit will be



fulfilled» in such a way that, he said, «her charism was able to become a gift not only for the Movement but for the entire ecclesial community».

The social impact of the spiritual doctrine of Chiara became evident in the words of Emmaus: «It is Mary who informs the sociality of the Work generated by Chiara and who imprints her characteristics on it. One of these is being a mother, one who generates life. Chiara lived this maternity, transforming the life of thousands of people [...] Everyone is and will forever be a living part of the unique Design, embraced by the



Castel Gandolfo, march 3. Card. P. Parolin greeting the Lutheran bishop C. Krause. On the left, Card. F.X. Kriengsak Kovithavanij

Work of Mary in a maternity that knows no bounds and which goes beyond every earthly belonging, recognizing her children always and everywhere».

Jesús, saw the social prophecy of Lubich and identified its root, that even today remains as a source of always new initiatives: «We can say that the first social action of Chiara was the very same community of the Focolare, born in Trent immediately after the war which, literally taking the words of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2,42-48), lived a radical communion of goods and worked to care for the poor and the many suffering people left behind by the conflict. This root has never been lost, rather it has become the source of in-

spiration for all the social actions and projects started by her and by all those who have made the ideal of unity their own throughout these years».

The event of March 3 highlighted two perspectives of just one reality. On one hand there are the events that have transpired up to this moment, the past that developed from 1943 up to today: expressed through daily life experiences, from Syria to Italy, from Brazil to the Philippines, to the Ivory Coast. These were embellished by songs, dances, choreographies, and revealed the weight and value of a serious and profound witness.

The other perspective points us to the future. We must not underestimate the fact that Chiara has formed thousands and thousands of people to become bearers of peace, of fraternity, capable of generating a new social model in the world, who can still acquire new vigour. And we will see them become builders of small cells spread all over the world. But the «small» things, we know, are seeds of big trees.

## In the footsteps of Chiara

looking at the totality of the commemorative events, we can see the



composition of all the dimensions of the Movement. A network spread throughout all the five Continents of which we can only give you a glimpse of some of them.



Fortaleza (Brazil)

It began on February 24 in the **Czech republic**, followed by the 1° of March in **Washington D.C.** and on March 3 in some cities of **Pakistan**, in Manaus, **Brazil**, and in Seoul, **Korea**.

The events continued even after March 14. In Garissa (**Kenya**), in a zone where there is much tension due to the insecurities and challenges of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims. In Luanda (**Angola**) they took advantage of celebrating the 25° anniversary of the arrival of the focolare. In Johannesburg and Hartswater (**South Africa**) there were persons of different cultures present, some of whom were experiencing for the first time something totally new and different. From **Burundi** they wrote: «The Ideal of Chiara is not a utopia. The commemoration was an intense moment of sharing experiences

Bangalore (India)



that show a people who have chosen God as their Ideal following Chiara and confirming the title of the Meeting: “With Mary, we renew humanity”».

In Cairo and in Sohag in **Egypt**, present were members of the ancient Christian Churches (copts, melchitesi, caldei, etc.). In **Jordan** the event was reported in the



Bujumbura (Burundi)

news by the television network *Noursat jordan* and the website *www.abouna.org*. They also met in Ainkawa, in Iraqi **Kurdistan**.

The network spread in Asia touched Countries like **Vietnam** and **Thailand**. In Chiang Mai, the participants came from five different ethnic groups. They shared: After the Eucharistic celebration, with the children and adults we walked for seven kilometers to go to a poor village of our friends belonging to the Kachin tribe. We began to clean an area in the village and to prepare a place where the children can play freely.

We came from different tribes, working together to help that tribe which was in need because we are all brothers and sisters belonging to one family, just as Chiara Lubich has always taught us. We want to continue to live her legacy so as to realize her desire to bring God to the world ... one village at a time».



Madeira (Portugal)



Tokyo (Japan)

In **Japan** the presence of Buddhists was evident with a strong turnout of members of the Rissho Kosei-kai together with the rev. Nichiko Niwano and other leaders.

In all the European nations there were one or more events presented in the most varied ways. In the **Balkans** their meeting reflected the complex situation of the Countries in that geographical area, which have experienced historical, cultural and social conflicts. That is why today, following the trail of Chiara, they felt called to enkindle a new light of under-

standing, unity and cooperation, as in the event held in Ljubljana (**Slovenia**) where the Economy of Communion was presented as a prophetic sign of our times.

In Stockholm, **Sweden** they presented the book *Enhetens Nyckel*, a swedish translation of the book of Chiara on *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*.

Among the variety of the numerous conventions and meetings in **Italy**, there was the event at the Palazzo Vecchio, in Florence, entitled «*Conoscenze plurali*». Starting from the theme of Dialogue, as the basic instrument in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, interreligious and globalized society, the event highlighted a way to face the present-day crisis which was defined by Chiara as the «night of culture», and suggested the modality: to aim at unity among peoples and persons, respecting diversity.

*prepared by the editorial board*



Florence (Italy)

A trip to the chinese world

# Persevere in unity fly beyond boundaries

**Taiwan, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macao and back again to Hong Kong: the trip of Maria Voce and Jesús Morán to discover a world that is hard to imagine coming from the West**

*«Persevere in unity, fly beyond boundaries».* These were the words written on a big poster that adorned the wall of a Catholic school located within the compound of the Hong Kong Cathedral. It seemed to summarize this trip of Emmaus Maria Voce and Jesús Morán to the immense chinese world (March 7 – April 4). Taiwan, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macao and back again to Hong Kong: to discover a world that is hard to imagine coming from the West. In front of a vertiginous progress characterized by efficiency and constant economic growth, one could also find differences and barriers, often invisible, to those who come to this part of the world for just a few hours or a few days. To the complex socio-polit-

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Hong Kong. Nam Liem Garden,  
an oasis of meditation  
in the midst of skyscrapers

ical situation of these Countries, for the Church there are delicate knots with complex facets that vary from Country to Country and from Zone to Zone, which does not allow for any generalizations. And then, there is a variety of languages, dominated without a doubt by mandarin, but with a substantial presence of cantonese in Hong Kong, Macao and in the province of Canton and others too. There are tens of ethnic groups throughout this immense geographical area.

The Work of Mary, present in this area since the early Seventies, developed in these past decades especially in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and in some areas of the People's Republic of China bringing important contributions of communion and dialogue both within the Catholic Church as well as in society. The trip of Emmaus and Jesús was planned precisely to meet the communities of the Movement and, at the conclusion, to have moments of reflection on the present complex situation of the Movement here, and on its role on a social and ecclesial level, and to discern the prospects for the years ahead.

## In Taiwan

The trip began in Taiwan where the Focolare community has been present since the end of the Seventies, but where the request for a focolare center dates back to the Mariapolis in the Dolomites where Mons. Yu Pin, who later became a cardinal, understood how the spirit of communion of the charism of unity was particularly suited to the Chinese soul and culture. In the Taiwanese context- where Catholics



Dharma Drum Mountain Monastery near Taipei. Rev. Huimin welcoming Emmaus Maria Voce and the delegation from the Center of the Movement Offerings inside a traditional temple

are around two hundred thousand – the Focolare community has remained small, but very much alive both in the capital Taipei and in other corners of the island like in Kaoshiung, in the south. On the occasion of the visit of the President and the Copresident of the Focolare Movement a Mass was also organized to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the departure of Chiara Lubich. The participation of around 150 people with the presence of the Archbishop of Taipei and of other Bishops, among whom was mons. Ti Kang, archbishop emeritus of the capital and a friend of the Movement, showed how much Chiara is alive in this corner of the world. At the conclusion, Emmaus, in greeting all those present, invited everyone to remain faithful to the spirit of family that Chiara taught us with her life and, with this attitude, to serve the local Church so as to bring unity «That all may be one» as expressed in the liturgy of the Gospel that day.

But the value and significance characteristic of the presence of the Work of Mary in this island was particularly highlighted in the days that followed. After the beautiful day-meeting with the members of



Offerte all'interno di un tempio tradizionale

the Movement wherein the developments and the presence of the Movement in this Country were presented, Emmaus and Jesús had a dialogue with some of those present regarding the typical aspects of the society and the local Church. The succeeding days saw several important moments both on an academic and interreligious level.

At the prestigious Fu Jen University of Taipei, on March 12, Maria Voce and Jesús Morán interacted with around ten professors holding chairs in different universities in Taiwan and in various disciplines: education, biblical theology, German linguistics, economy, marine ecology, cinematography, Italian literature. On this occasion, Jesús underlined the importance of the role of these academicians

in their efforts to inspire the different disciplines and teachings towards the charismatic dimension of Chiara Lubich which is also strongly cultural in nature. He encouraged them to go ahead and, possibly to find ways for a true interdisciplinary reflection. A short while later, at the Hall of St. Paul an official ceremony was held to launch the book that is a collection of most of the texts and papers presented in the occasion of the conference on Chiara Lubich that was held at Fu Jen in 2013. The title remained the same as the convention: *Patterns of Unity: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on the Thought of*



Taipei. At the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Monastery

*Chiara Lubich*. The hall with a capacity of 80 was almost filled up by a highly qualified audience. Among them was Ambassador Tou, who used to represent Taiwan in Rome at the Holy See, as well as other personalities



Con la comunità di Taiwan

of the government. The ecclesial world was also well represented by the Nunciature and some SVD priests, owners of Fu Jen, together with some Jesuits and representatives of the Bishops' Conference of Taiwan. The main part of the programme was the talk of Jesús Morán, who underlined some fundamental aspects of the anthropology of Chiara



With the community of Taiwan

Lubich. It was followed by a round-table discussion with various interventions, that highlighted the multi-facetedness of Chiara from the point of view of dialogue, pedagogy, the care and assistance of the sick, sciences, economy and mariology. They were all brief interventions but they facilitated an academic reflection on a highly significant spiritual charism.

The visit to the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist monastery was also important, where in April 2017 a Buddhist-Christian symposium organized by the Center of Interreligious Dialogue of the Movement and various buddhist organizations in Asia, was held. Rev. Huimin welcomed Emmaus and Jesús with great warmth and thoughtfulness which showed how the journey of dialogue undertaken is a reality and can continue in the future. Emmaus underlined

the significance of the location of this monastery, at the top of a hill, which expresses very well the climb towards the Absolute.

## People's Republic of China

The trip continued, then, in mainland China where the spirit of unity and communion has been spreading for many years now, contributing to the harmony and reciprocal co-existence among various social and ecclesial components. The communities are diverse, spread also in some of the farthest areas in the immense Country, animated by lay people and priests, seriously committed to live the Gospel in a context that is not easy due to the rapid process of



At the entrance of the steps that lead to the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai

urbanization and the economic growth that imposes a lifestyle, especially in the big metropolises (in China more than a hundred cities have more than a million inhabitants each), that is almost prohibitive for parents and children, creating all sorts of tensions that put family relationships at risk. At the same time, the youth are immersed in a globalized world characterized by a very high influence of technology, even as they express profound spiritual needs that are not found in other parts of the world. These aspects were discussed among the members of the Movement and with Emmaus and Jesús, during the moments of celebration and joyous cultural exchanges that were both profoundly motivated and motivating at the same time.

An important moment of the trip in China was the visit to the Shrine of Sheshan, where the statue of Mary raising the Infant Jesus above her head, placed at the steeple of the church, is venerated. It is a significant image, as Jesús said, which makes us reflect on our evangelization that consists in presenting Jesus and protecting Him just as Mary had done in other moments of her life.

## Hong Kong and Macao

The last part of this long trip was spent in Hong Kong and Macao, two centers in



Our Lady of Sheshan  
in the Shrine in  
Shanghai

the southern part of China divided by the Pearl River Delta, both being autonomous regions of the People's Republic of China. They returned to Chinese sovereignty after centuries of being colonies respectively of Great Britain and Portugal.

The two cities, are nevertheless very different from each other. After the crisis experienced during the years before its return to China, Hong Kong has bounced back to become a fundamental commercial and financial hub not only for China but also for the whole of Asia. Macao, has been transformed from a small portuguese colony into an Asian Las Vegas, with the ever growing number of casinos and gaming halls that deal with dizzying amounts of money everyday. The panorama of the city seems to summarize this socio-economic evolution:

the ruins of St. Paul, once an emblem of the portuguese colony, is now evidently surrounded by the majestic buildings of the casinos. It is a historical and architectural contrast that has important implications on daily life and behaviour of the people.

In these two cities the spirituality arrived towards the end of the Seventies, gradually developing in the succeeding years. The meeting of all the men and women focolarini (including the married focolarini) of the Zone was held in Macao. The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the trip, and at the same time, in the light of all that has happened, to discern and identify the future prospects of the presence of the Movement and its diffusion in this immense geographical and cultural area.

Maria Voce and Jesús Morán highlighted three big topics of their trip, that can be summarized in the role of the Movement in the face of the socio-political and ecclesial challenges that China is now going through.



With the communities of Hong Kong and Macao

They underlined the need to involve the various local communities in decision-making and in the programmes to be carried out in the future and in the search for ways of closer collaboration with the other surrounding Countries, especially with Korea and Japan.

The dialogue among those present, in light of the different experiences and sensitivities related to the context wherein each one lives, evidenced some important paths or lines of action that are largely shared by most: to continue to go ahead towards a closer collaboration with Korea and Japan,

more visibility of the spiritual family of Chara that should draw inspiration from the image of the Madonna of Shehsan and the need to reinforce some focolare centers with the possibility of new ones being opened in order to contribute to the realization of unity, dialogue and harmony in these socio-cultural contexts.

The meeting on Easter Sunday with the two communities of the Work of Mary in Hong Kong and Macao confirmed the diffusion and maturity of the Movement in these



In Macao with the focolarini and the focolarine. Present also some from the other Asian Countries

## New Publications

# Resurrection of Rome

It is one of the more famous writings of Chiara Lubich, which appeared for the first time in the magazine *La Via* in 1949. A fruit of the impact of the contemplation of Paradise which was lived during that summer and the city of Rome during the difficult postwar period, the *Resurrection of Rome* became a «manifesto» used to read every urban phenomenon and an itinerary of immersion into the human reality in order to realize the design of God. A real programme, a «*magna carta*» for the renewal of society, a paradigm for the «resurrection» of every city. *Resurrection of Rome* is also one of the most important writings of *Paradise '49*. It is in a central part of the composition and expresses a crucial moment in the entire experience, that of «going back down to the world», when Chiara left her «paradise» so to speak, to return «to earth» and to look

at the human reality where she was immersed, with the light «from above».



Having considered the relevance of that page and its importance in the experience of 1949, the Abbà School thought of making it an object of a special study. It is publishing this as the fifth volume in the series «Studies of the Abbà School», dedicated to the in-depth study of *Paradise '49*. Three introductory essays situate the writing in its historical context, and explain the internal dynamics, comparing it with its contemporary, *I have only one spouse on earth*. These essays are followed by five themes elaborated by all the members of the Abbà School, including some «externs», using its own typical methodology. With substantial homogeneity, the different contributions are articulated with slightly different methodologies one from the other, giving priority to direct dialogue among the writers, then to the more linear sequences of the contributions of the individual members of the thematic group.

All the chapters, including the introductory essays, are the fruit of an authentic extended dialogue among the members of the Abbà School who shared with each other suggestions and intuitions, enriched by their different cultural competencies. This is the first attempt in transdisciplinarity, of an authentic communion among disciplines that share themselves reciprocally and are thus enriched by each other's knowledge.

two pocket-sized cities. The more than five hundred people present shared with Emmaus and Jesús the experiences of the local communities, as well as personal experiences, and held a very lively dialogue with them precisely on the challenges that these two cities have to face everyday, on the social as well as ecclesial level. It is clear that the charism of Chiara has an important role also in this part of the world where one can feel a strong desire for spiritual life, dialogue and communion among diverse groups and communities often in tension among them and with a deep rooted Christian formation.

Roberto Catalano

Fabio Ciardi

## Waiting for Pope Francis

# The «laws» of Nomadelfia and of Loppiano

**Pope Francis will be going to the two little towns this coming May 10 in Tuscany. A reciprocal visit among the respective inhabitants strengthens their friendship**

Nomadelfia, a hamlet of Grosseto, which is 10 kilometers away, and Loppiano, in the Town of Incisa Valdarno, at 30 kilometers from Florence, are preparing for the visit of Pope Francis.

In the meantime, a representative group of inhabitants of Loppiano went to Nomadelfia, and a numerous group of children and teens of Nomadelfia, with their teachers, went to visit

Loppiano. A «twinning» that is not a one-off thing but the fruit of a profound friendship. There are many common factors between the two realities, inspite of having histories and Charisms that are completely different.

**Nomadelfia**, bears in its name the law that regulates the life of its citizens: fraternity as the way to reach unity («*Ut unum sint* [That all may be one]») is the motto of the city).

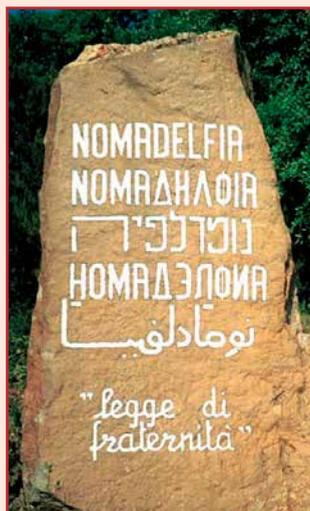
There are 50 families living there who, inspired by the values of the Gospel, open their homes to warmly welcome children entrusted to them by the Tribunal for minors because they are without any natural family. A model for an alternative lifestyle, where children, the elderly, the disabled, the sick



19 march. The children of Nomadelfia during their visit to Loppiano

are especially cared for. At seventy years since its constitution (it was February 14, 1948), the social programme of its founder Fr. Zeno Saltini (1900-1981), is still alive and very much up-to-date. In Nomadelfia the Pope will go there to pray on his tomb and will meet with a «family», and greet all the citizens.

**Also Loppiano** has a «law», the «new commandment of Jesus». It wants to be like any other city, to bear witness to what the world can be like if reciprocal love lived by everyone would be the basis of social life. Since 1964 it has seen the birth of structures, enterprises, a cooperative, schools of formation, the Sophia University Institute, thus becoming an «international laboratory». Pope Francis will stop to say a prayer at the Shrine of Mary Theotokos, and will meet the inhabitants of the little city with the presence of Emmaus Maria Voce.



# The voice of the youth

**In the run-up towards the Synod of the youth this coming October, some youth of the Focolare Movement took part in the pre-synodal gathering in Rome**

«Pope John Paul II was supposed to come to Loppiano – Daniele Casprini co-responsible of the Little City shared. Four days before, due to an unexpected change of programme, his visit was cancelled. I think the desire for “that” visit has remained in the hearts of each one of us. In 2015 the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I, before leaving Loppiano after having received the degree *h.c.* from the Sophia University Institute, expressed the desire that the Pope too could “discover it”».

**We remember the emotion** with which Emmaus announced the news of this visit to the whole Focolare Movement: «It is an honour ... – but also – a sign, precisely this year, because Mary is the “Blue” and the little towns have a special place in this aspect».



10 march. The visit of the person in-charge of Loppiano to Nomadelfia. In the photo with the president of Nomadelfia Francesco Matterazzo (on the right)

The joy of waiting is filled with an intense vitality. Emmaus invited everyone to renew the commitment to live reciprocal love, to correspond to the Word of life day by day, to embrace Jesus Forsaken in every difficulty saying: «It is for this!». So that the Pope «can see in the Little City a reflection of the Trinitarian life here on earth».

*prepared by the editorial board*

During the opening of the Pre-Synod of the Youth, held in the Vatican at the International Pontifical College Maria Mater Ecclesiae from March 19 to 24, Pope Francis encouraged the youth to speak courageously, without shame, to «have the nerve», without filters, without sugar-coating one's feelings, but at the same time to listen with humility. «You create a new culture – he reminded us – but beware: this culture cannot be uprooted. A step forward but watch out for the roots! [...] The roots are the elders, the elders are good». With these words he em-



19 marzo 2018.  
La meditazione  
condotta  
dai gen alla  
Plenaria con  
Papa Francesco

phasized the importance of listening to the elders, and he reaffirmed a concept that is close to the heart of the prophet Joel: “The elders will dream and the youth prophesy”. We need young prophets, but beware: you will never be prophets if you don’t consider the dreams of the elders».

For the first time, the pre-synodal gathering welcomed 300 youth coming from all over the world– not just Catholics, but also from different Churches, Religions and convictions– to listen to their voices. The youth, the object of study of the forthcoming Synod of Bishops in October, have become also subjects, thus fulfilling the desire of the Church to realize not just a Synod on the Youth, but also and above all with the youth.

In this event, called epochal and prophetic, the youth of the Focolare Movement also are protagonists, taking on different roles. Aside from the presence of a representative of the Work of Mary (Noemi Sanches), there was a delegation of 17 gen from the international Center and the gen School of Loppiano, coming from the five continents. Card. Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, entrusted them with the preparation of the moments of prayer and the

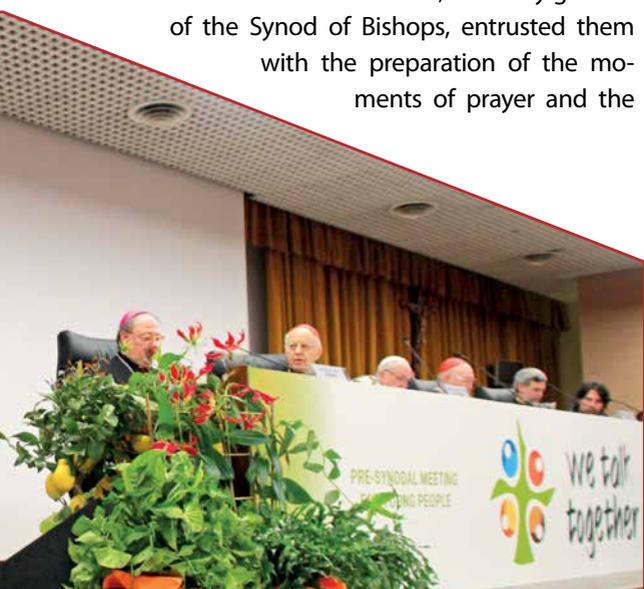


Anche al Pre-Sinodo si getta il «dado dell'amore»

meditations, as well as the animation and the songs for the Eucharistic celebrations. Two of these gen were also included in the language groups as «facilitators» and representatives of their own Countries.

There was also the important presence of the gen who were sent by other realities and ecclesial communities such as: Santiago Emanuel Tognetti, for the National Commission of Youth Pastoral Care of Argentina, and Mena Yousef Fahien Askharon, Egyptian student at the Sophia University Institute as the representative of Catholic schools and universities. Aside from them, Robert Georg Daiser, a genS, represented the Seminary of St. Johannes der Täufer in Germany and a genRe from the Czech Republic, Oto Medvec, represented the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The working method of the Pre-Synod was articulated into two phases: work in language groups and then at the Plenary Assembly where they worked together to elaborate the final Document that would include the results of the group work and the material received from the online<sup>1</sup>. This document, presented to Pope Francis on Palm Sunday, will then become part of the



<sup>1</sup> through the facebook page *synod2018* and in the website *synod2018.va*

*Instrumentum laboris* in view of the Synod in October entitled «The youth, faith and vocational discernment».

The discussions were rich and fruitful. Tense moments were not lacking, but they eventually found a balance in the language used that would include the different voices without diminishing the desire for the truth. The discrete presence of card. Baldisseri and of mons. Fabio Fabene, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, as well as the assistance and support of their collaborators, who encouraged the youth to express their thoughts, was important in order to achieve the objective of the meeting.

Among the salient points of the Document is the strong desire of the youth to have coherent role models, whether they are religious or lay leaders, who will be able to guide them in their decision-making. Moreover, the youth are asking to be protagonists, together with the adults, asking for their complete trust. They expressed the need to continue to speak with frankness and openness within the Church about certain current controversial topics and of the world of the youth. Among the young Catholics what became evident was the need for more

Piazza San Pietro, domenica delle Palme.  
I giovani dei Focolari alla conclusione del Pre-Sinodo

formation in order to understand the essence and the truth about the Sacraments, how to live sanctity today and how to continue this enriching intergenerational dialogue. The same too with the relationships with the different Churches, the dialogue with the great Religions and the various human realities. The need for a greater commitment of the youth in society and in the resolution of today's problems was also made manifest.

The gen who did not participate as members of the Pre-Synod played an equally important role: that of being «witnesses» at the service of everyone, living the Ideal being Church and with the Church. They were fully aware of making an important contribution, through the reciprocal love among them and with those of the first generation who accompanied them.

The Eucharistic celebrations were well-participated in spite of the time (7:30 in the morning). Some shared that the songs attracted them to come and to live better what they expressed. A non-believer also expressed that the songs attracted him.

Some gen experienced personal growth and a greater closeness to the hierarchical Church and even more. «I felt the Church as One, one body» – one of them said. There was an increased awareness of loving the Church and through the Ideal of Chiara the desire to live more for her.

«It was a grace and a school for us to be here» – a gen boy confirmed.

*Noemi Sanches*

Other information can be found in Mariapoli online: «With the gen towards the Synod»  
1 and 2





# A retreat in the spirit of Mary

**At the end of February the General Council of the Focolare Movement held its annual retreat in Castel Gandolfo**

I must admit that I entered Hall B of the Mariapolis Center in Castel Gandolfo in that second week of February, with a certain respect. This was where the General Council, one of the «governing bodies» of the Focolare Movement, held its retreat. For the first time in the «post-Chiara» period, an external observer and journalist, was offered the possibility of participating in the main events of this annual appointment, during which the General Council evaluated the situation of the Movement and identified the paths to work on in the future.

The respect is born also – I would say almost – from the sacredness of this instrument, given the demanding task that it is entrusted with by the General Statutes of the Work of Mary: «(It) summarizes the entire Work of Mary and manifests its unity. It is responsible for maintaining and increas-

ing unity throughout the Work of Mary». My respect grew as I looked around the hall and the first thought that came to my mind was: «Who could ever have imagined something like this?».

This is the question that inevitably arises, when one begins to go deeper into this reality a bit more. It is made up of 66 people, which in itself is an impossible number of members for a «governing body». Moreover its composition is very complex. The large geographical areas are represented; there are also the persons responsible for the 27 branches of the Movement, the Councillors of the various aspects, those in-charge of the different fields of dialogue. But here one can already see a reality that many administrative bodies and government structures all over the world dream and hope for: a guaranteed gender equality.



Such a «body» cannot function, cannot be operational without a principle that transcends this diversity and continuously opens up to the unity of the entire body. «In the final analysis what unites us is a mystical principle – explained Ruperto Battiston, co-responsible for the aspect of economy and the communion of goods. Our spirituality constantly invites us to love each other “to death” – as Chiara Lubich said – so as to give God among us the possibility to act. This means to constantly offer up one’s area of responsibility, to consider the other’s interests before one’s own and to give more importance to the common goal of working for a united world, rather than for one’s own objectives ».

What does this mean concretely and how can this principle function? It was visible during the week-long retreat. Just a little more than half-way through its mandate received during the General Assembly of 2014, it is opportune to make an assessment of the last three-year period and to look at the future prospects, also verifying if the «mystical principle» is truly and still the supporting element that binds all the work of the General Council.

The agenda of those days was long. It began with a verification of the priorities that the Council itself established in its first three years. What were those that they were able

to realize? Maybe there were too many? Should we identify the priorities among the priorities? The work done reflected three main objectives: the fundamental one of the Movement, which means to contribute to the unity of the human family, a greater integration of the new generations and the ever current question on how to incarnate or better concretize the great ideals of the Movement.

The second important topic of the retreat was linked to this last objective: the so-called «mass movements» – for example New Families, Youth for a united World, Parish and Diocesan Movements, New Humanity – realities described by the co-president Jesús Morán as the «expressways of the incarnation».

The third day was dedicated to the «focolare», as the central vocation and main supporting structure of the Movement.

The fourth day was dedicated to a question that, for these past two years continues to be discussed and studied by the Movement on all levels. What are the criteria to be used to decide in the future where to commit ourselves in a particular way? And as a consequence, where to invest our economic and human resources? The communion and discussion in the groups and in the plenary will serve as working points to be considered for the work that will continue in the coming months in the different geographical areas of the Movement and in during the next meeting of the Delegates in september.

Nourishment for the «mystical factor» was not lacking: meditation to begin each day – followed by ample time for communion – made everyone experience the presence of Chiara in a profound way and kept alive her dream «to which we had all given

# An experience of the whole Movement

**In Mariapoli online the video-message  
at the conclusion of the retreat  
addressed to the whole Movement.  
Here are some excerpts:**

**Emmaus.** «It seems to us that this “going out” can be reconciled in two ways: horizontally and vertically. We want to extend as much as possible the action of the Ideal, universal brotherhood. [...] There is the root for this: the focolare. The focolare is that fundamental structure which Chiara gave life to, under the inspiration of God, so that it can continue to give this light. Everywhere and forever».

**Jesús.** «What is the status of “That all may be One” today? We are convinced that this has already begun, and this is the meaning also of the word escatological: something that must still be fulfilled but which has already begun. Now we want to see where [...] to extend this very formidable experience of God that the Charism of unity gives us».

**Emmaus.** «It is an experience we have made and that we would like to make with everyone, which we will continue with everyone. In the spirit of Mary. Because she is the mother of “That all may be one”».

The complete message can be found in:  
<http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli/it/un-saluto-vivo-dal-consiglio-generale/>

our lives, following a call of God», as one of the participants expressed. On this foundation it was possible to realize that very special practice of the «moment of truth»: for a whole afternoon the members of the General Council – in small groups followed by a plenary session – chose some persons and the relative realities they represented to express, guided by a great charity and respect, what they saw as good and realized and those things instead that could still be improved.

The atmosphere of communion was strengthened by a trip to Rome by the Council members, to visit some churches of artistic and historical value, dedicated to Mary, Mother of God, a trip in harmony with the spiritual theme of 2018.

«An experience in the spirit of Mary», was the experience of this retreat as summarized by Maria Voce, in a message to the whole Movement. It is from Her, from her way of listening and accepting the will of God, that the General Council was able to learn how to harmonize its twofold vocation: on one hand to be a mirror of the vitality and the diversity of the Focolare Movement and, on the other hand, to realize and safeguard its unity.

*Joachim Schwind*

foto © J. Schwind



# New Humanity School

## The Beauty of diversity

An appointment inserted during the Oncity meeting, which started in 2016 with the convention of the same name held in Castel Gandolfo<sup>1</sup>



ity; at the same time, there are also «tunnels», often dark ones, that must be illuminated through dialogue.

Thus an initial stimulating round-table discussion was presented, to discover the beauty of cultural, religious, conditional and linguistic diversity. It served as a necessary premise in order to enter totally into the dynamics of the proceedings, proposing on one hand the anthropological vi-

The features and colours speak of diversity: it is enough to look at the audience from the stage to realize that these are 300 people, belonging to various vocations of the Movement, coming from 31 Countries in the world, with 11 simultaneous language translations. From February 28 to March 4 they participated in the event called «The Beauty of diversity», which was inserted in the programme of *Oncity*, which started in 2016 with a convention of the same name held in Castel Gandolfo.

From many parts of the world, they expressed the need to make a greater contribution to the incarnation of universal brotherhood. In this tenth year anniversary of Chiara Lubich's departure, she is becoming more and more recognized as an instigator of social change. In fact there are existing networks of human, professional, political, neighbourhood relationships, that are capable of developing a new way of living social-



sion of the Charism, and on the other hand the instruments and experiences that show some of its concrete realizations. The text: the *Resurrection of Rome*, which is being studied by the Abbà School, was presented as a methodological proposal to look at the city with different eyes.

The city is a privileged laboratory, where the Charism takes shape and finds the occasion to showcase all its power and influence.

The New Humanity Movement, made up of thousands of people all over the

world who are building their cities with tenacity, has a kind of «toolbox»: environmental cells, ambits and professional fields, social actions; incisive instruments to continue, for example, the fight against poverty in a territory, the defense of the dignity of the person in another area, to answer to that particular ecological need, or to face the challenges of an economy more at the service of man, as shared by the Singaporean entrepreneur Lawrence Chong, who highlighted how the thought and actions of Chiara are a prophecy for our times.

To lend support to this life, to illuminate it, to provide it with instruments that will make it available for everyone, a thought, a cultural elaboration is necessary: the School had to enter into dialogue also with the other cultural agencies of the Movement such as: the Sophia University Institute and the center for Dialogue with contemporary culture. A school, therefore, with an integrated methodology, made up of thought and life, that become a patrimony for everyone, creating relationships that generate trust, listening, an improvement of society. The economist Benedetto Gui shared: «One of the topics I studied was



«relational goods», intangible goods that are born from the relationships among people, such as “listening”, recognition, a feeling of being accepted (rather than rejected), an atmosphere that is created in a working environment ...».

Two participatory workshops were offered: «Words for the city», with the elaboration of a «civil password», inspired by the culture of unity, to be shared with friends and city-mates, and «Belonging to a territory and to a civil community», where they elaborated on proposals for participation in societal life, so as to be involved and active in our territories.

Thanks to these workshops the «civil vocation» that is in each one of us became evident. It was deepened from different facets and showcased in all its beauty, also thanks to the collaboration with the Movement of Politics for Unity, which demonstrated with facts that it is not only possible but extremely effective to live in a city that is more just, more cohesive, more fraternal.

The dialogue of life and of thought among peoples from such diverse cultures, was maybe the truest sign of the profound unity in diversity that every participant experienced.

*Fanny Bava, Luca Moser*

Castel Gandolfo 3 march. The participants to the New Humanity School during the event of the tenth anniversary of Chiara's death



# Families for society

## The «sign» of a greater love

**250 couples of men and women Volunteers together to focus on a dual vocation that is capable of bringing fruits within and outside the family**

«Tenderness, affection, sacramental dimension»: these are the perspectives from which marriage was viewed during the international meeting of Volunteer couples, held in the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo from March 1 to 4, with the participation of more than 250 couples of 14 language groups.

This meeting was planned and desired by the two Centers, to be held every three years, with the collaboration of the New Families. Its aim is to focus on the two vocations – the personal one as a Volunteer and that of marriage as a couple, and to highlight the radical demands of both and of how much they reinforce each other reciprocally, bringing fruits within and outside the family, for a society renewed by the Charism of unity.

Meditations and reflections made the participants discover how these two vocations complement each other. In fact,



the first place where the man and woman Volunteer live their specific call in the Work of Mary is in the family. This vocation acquires such depth and importance that it brings about a new journey of sanctity: a lay sanctity, modern, for the masses, that makes one's state of life the venue to discern and to make life changing choices, capable of realizing one's humanity and one's personal call to follow Jesus. The considerations on marriage as a Sacrament in the light of the indications contained in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* of Pope Francis, as well as those on affection and tenderness

in the life of a couple or the topic regarding a renewed awareness that the family must take on in the face of a wide-spread con-



From the left. Gianni and Maria Salerno, persons responsible for New Families with Patience Lobe and Paolo Mottironi responsible for their respective Centers of the women and men Volunteers

sumeristic mentality, highlighted the historical and social importance of the family as the primary fundamental cell of society and of the Church.

Responsible parenthood, education of children, the relationship with relatives, the encounter with suffering, choices of going against the current; opening up of family boundaries, welcoming the discomforts

you» ..., indicate a journey that requires «losing» oneself, the daily struggle to give oneself, the habit of forgiveness, the unloaded weapon of patience. «A new caress...» of the Holy Spirit sealed this new pact to «honour» the other – for all the rest of one's life – as a sign of a love that can be compared to the love of Jesus and of Mary.

There was the lasting impression of a strong ideal and social vitality. Many of the couples present are animators of groups of New Families in their local territories and many, individually or as a couple work in social action projects.

Referring to the talk of Chiara in 1993 «Like in the

family, so too in society» we can see the grace that we Volunteers have, that is why we must build the Christian community starting from that neighbour beside us from the moment we wake up in the morning...

Among the numerous impressions: «The speakers told us about falling in love, with the light in their eyes and their gaze on their beloved. People who have been married for many years expressed the most intimate realities of their relationships with frankness and freshness even in front of a large audience. Even at table or during the couple's meetings it was easy to open up to each other because of this atmosphere of profound communion, without which it would have been impossible. This being child-like has given me the confirmation and guarantee of being able to live the Gospel, and of Truth». «We go back home "armed" with the experience lived here, not just to tell others what you have given us, but to bear witness to it with our life!».

*Patience Lobe, Paolo Mottironi*

and sufferings of families around or those met through others, the readiness to share space and time with other men and women Volunteers, prayers in common in the simplicity of asking for our daily bread, the fiery pride in saying and in teaching the children to say «no» to consumerism and other fleeting fashions were shared through the experiences. They were like the hubs that indicate the possible roads to take, that many in the Work of Mary are already doing.

The «precious pearl» that must be safeguarded was once again highlighted: this is the intimacy between the couple as the way to live interiority that involves both spirit and body; this freedom in sharing becomes the «secret» and their «hidden treasure».

A solemn and particularly vibrant moment was experienced in the morning of March 3, when a never-ending line of buses headed to the Shrine of Divine Love where the couples were to renew their marriage vows. «In good and bad times...», «to be faithful to you forever», «to love and honour



# Volontarie e volontari

## An unforgettable date

**The Centers of the women and men Volunteers with Emmaus Maria Voce and Jesús Morán to assess the prospects and the challenges to face**

In the room of the Abbà School at the Center of the Movement the two Centers of the men and women Volunteers met last February 2 with Emmaus and Jesús together with the central delegates, Friederike Koller and Ángel Bartol. They shared with simplicity the activities and the prospects of the two branches, without hiding the difficulties that they are facing. The President and the Co-president, after listening attentively to them and appreciating the course that is being planned for the future, they pointed out some essential aspects to consider.



With regards to formation, for example, Emmaus recalled Duccia Calderari, the first focolarine and the women Volunteers of Trent, saying among other things: «Most probably they did not receive a regular formation, but they launched themselves in living and so this life of the Gospel immediately became the norm of a new life, also in society. The norm of a life with diverse relationships: with the poor, among them, with the situation in the city... So, the more they lived the more they were formed, the more they lived these relationships also in

society, in humanity around them, the more they were formed in this specific vocation of being a Volunteer. Then logically they need their nucleo meeting, which is without a doubt essential in order to be nourished, but these two things go together». Jesús added: «every Volunteer, must be who he or she is and therefore [they can be seen as] these people who live the Gospel and transform society».

It was what a «historical» meeting that further highlighted the potentiality of the vocation of the women and men Volunteers of

God. What emerged was a greatly refined awareness of the responsibility that each one has to make more effective and wide-spread the incarnation of the charism.

This is what Jesús wished for them: «To be active, well formed, committed Volunteers...» and, Emmaus added: «who transform society around them together

with all the others, not alone».

It was the day of «Candemas», a liturgical celebration of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Jesús took advantage of this to say that it is now up to the men and women Volunteers to correspond to these expectations, consuming their life out of love, like a candle: «All of your humanity is consumed, human life is consumed, family life, social life, everything is consumed by Christ...». This image will be a great help for everyone.

*Patience Lobe, Paolo Mottironi*

# Building the community

## A pastoral care of the «we»

**530 animators of the Parish and Diocesan Movements discuss on how to build «generative communities»**

In a seminar held last february 2017 around forty participants of the Movement began the task of elaborating a guideline for pastoral care that is born from the Charism of unity, after more than 50 years of its presence in the local Church (see *Mariapoli* n. 3-4/17). After a year the deepening of this theme was entrusted to the congress for animators of the Parish and Diocesan Movements held last March 15 to 18 in Castel Gandolfo. More than 530 participants from the various continents came together to discuss on how to build «generative communities» in the light of the Charism of unity. They opted to extend the reflection also to those who are directly involved in this field.

The experiences shared were quite interesting: 50 years of the presence of the Parish Movement in Vallo Torinese, 40 in Teramo with the Diocesan Movement (Bishop Leuzzi was also present, and he will begin the process of beatification of a committed youth who died at 17 years old, Pietrino Di Natale), 20 years in Latina... so experiences of communities who have in the



course of time generated life and continue to do so.

The video of the talk of Chiara on «The passion for the Church» made its mark on the Congress, in which various themes on formation were presented by

some experts. Mons. Giuseppe Petrocchi, archbishop of Aquila, highlighted the life of the first Christian communities, while mons. Vincenzo Zani, secretary of the Congregation for Catholic education, pointed out that we already have a programme for an integral formation: the Charism, the Movement.

A lively theme on Dialogue gave the audience the instruments on how to establish dialogue in the truth and in charity, by building relationships in a trinitarian dynamics. They then also touched on the topic of our relationship with other ecclesial Movements, in ecumenical dialogue and the dialogue with people of good will.

Then they also shared concrete experiences on pastoral work that is born from the Charism. They highlighted the life of the Word as expressed in the «art of loving», the love for Jesus Forsaken giving life to the presence of Jesus in the midst in our parish communities and in the relationship with the local Church– a pastoral programme characterized by the «mystical» “We” of Jesus in the midst. There were also the experiences of the impact of the life of the two Movements in society which confirmed the commitment of everyone to bring the charism of unity to all of humanity.

*Fr. Mariano Frigerio, Sameiro Freitas,  
Marco Bartolomei*



## The Religious men and Consacrated women

# New creativity

Together more than ever at the service  
of the charismatic families in the Church



«The religious men are an added ecclesiality in the Work of Mary. On the other hand, the Work of Mary is an added ecclesiality for you, because it is Mary who puts you together, it is Mary who makes you go out of your ecclesial ambit. It is this circularity, it is thanks to this unity that we are all more Church».

Proof of this observation of Emmaus Maria Voce was evident during the annual retreat of the 90 Religious men and 80 Consacrated women adherents of the Focolare Movement. They came from the various European zones, with participants from Asia, Africa, South America. Their religious families, born from old and new Charisms were made even more heterogeneous. The meeting was held at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo from February 20 to 23 for the religious men and from February 22 to 25 for the religious women, with two days together.

Prepared by the two Centers, they hoped to underline the commitment to «walk together» even in distinction. The common programme encouraged an intense communion that allowed us to see in unity, the next steps to take that are necessary to bring ahead the Movement of the men and women Religious.

Contemplating Mary through one of the pages of *Paradise '49*, Fr. Fabio Ciardi opened up for everyone a new relationship with Her,

through a more profound understanding of the design which we are called to as the Work of Mary.

The themes presented profoundly touched the audience. The talk of Chiara of 1966 on the «Passion for the Church» was seen as very much suited to the present times, and the reflection given by mons. Giuseppe Petrocchi, bishop of Aquila, entitled «The marian profile of the Church and the charism of unity: pastoral aspects» emphasized a way of life that is inherent to every ecclesial vocation.

The topic of ecumenical dialogue was also presented, through experiences of contact with the religious of different Churches; in the ambit of interreligious dialogue it was mentioned, among other things, the desire of a group of Buddhist monks from Thailand to spend a period of time in Loppiano.

Some members of the General Council of the Movement made their contribution:



Pace Nasr and Antonio Borges introduced the theme of the year «Mary and the Word»; Renata Simon and Francisco Canzani deepened the theme «Mary seat of wisdom and mother at home» – according to the beautiful definition given by Chiara Lubich; Gloria Duarte and Tim King, focused on the «social» aspect of Mary, who in the *Magnificat* indicated that way and the strategies to realize that «overthrowing the powerful from their thrones, raising up the humble».

A journey of incarnation according to the text of Chiara *Resurrection of Rome* published in the magazine *La Via* in 1949, was presented by Fr. Hubertus Blaumeiser and Anna Maria Rossi.

In one afternoon, the young religious men and women made a lively presentation rich in hope about the journey they have started through meetings and initiatives done together.

But the apex of the meeting was during an intense moment of *focolare* life lived with Emmaus and Jesús. It began with the experience of the men religious and Consecrated women from Northern Italy who shared their evangelical zeal and tenacity to insert themselves fully in the local Church. This experience allowed President and the Co-president to express their closeness to them, saying with humility and strength: «The religious are an added ecclesiality in the Work of Mary». These words resounded like a beneficial challenge: «If the barnches

of the men and women Religious are enriched, the Movement too is enriched, therefore consider it as a gift that you are giving to the Movement; the Movement becomes richer if there will be more religious men, religious women who live the Ideal» (Emmaus). «The presence of the religious since the very beginning, also in the «visions» of Paradise [...] is impressive, because there is a connection that obviously comes from the Charism, here there is all the density of the history of the Church» (Jesús).



Sr. Tiziana Longhitano e p. Salvo d'Orto

Sr. Tiziana Longhitano and Fr. Salvo D'Orto, responsible respectively of the Consecrated women and the Religious men of the Work of Mary, then presented to everyone all the emerging prospects for the future. There was a general consensus to walk more and more together, religious and consecrated, at the service of the charismatic Families, including the lay realities linked to charisms. And thus to offer to the Church our specific contribution, of the Charism of unity, offering answers always more ecclesial in nature just as what had already effectively happened during the Year of consecrated life established by Pope Francis. Joy and the total readiness to «widen one's heart» at the service of the entire Church.

sr. Tiziana Longhitano, fr. Salvo d'Orto

## Engaged couples

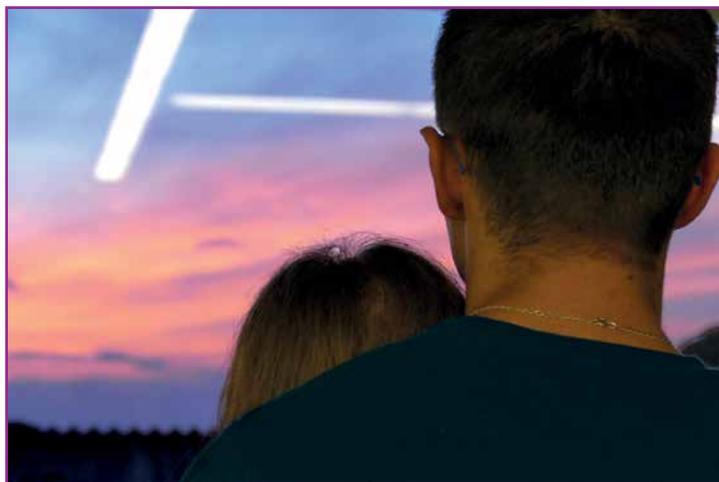
# The «forever» of marriage

**An international course  
in Castel Gandolfo to  
overcome the challenges**

Small red hearts that decorate the tables made for couples, dimmed lights, soft background music, a special menu by candlelight: this is the traditional romantic dinner setting, an integral part of the course for engaged couples that concluded last January 28 at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo. The table service was done by the animator couples, by the experts and the priests who carried out the programme, wearing cute aprons to make the evening more memorable.

The 65 coppie who are attending this special international preparatory course for marriage come from nine European Countries and three Asian ones. Also some couples from Syria.

In the first three days they worked hard. They tackled one by one the typical challenges that engaged couples today face all over the world: fear of making a definitive choice, doubts of not being able to make it in the long run, precarious employment, long-distance relationships, diversity of culture and of religion, critical points



in the relationship with the respective families, etc. This dinner, seemingly only «romantic», has many other purposes. It is the moment in which, after having reflected on the different themes presented, the various workshops facilitated by experts, the dialogues with mature couples, the engaged couples now have the chance, in this atmosphere typical of those in love, to share the deepest things that they have in their hearts. And in the light of the new insights and knowledge they have received, to «choose each other again» as persons by making a pact based on that love that Jesus brought on earth. A love – and in these days the youth fully realized this – that is without measure, is the only one which will be able to satisfy the deepest desires of every couple in the world. It is a pact which, they know this well, must be renewed everyday, even when they are already married, just as both of them must make sure to be personally linked to the divine source of this new kind of love.



Seeing the emotion with which the couples went to their tables, dressed in their best clothes, we realized how seriously they took this dinner. In fact we saw how they tried to find the right ways to start—maybe it was also something new for many of them – a dialogue that is not only affectionate or sentimental but also spiritual: a communion of their souls. We also knew that not all of them, at least for now, share a common Christian faith. In fact, if some of the couples were made up of gen or youth of the Movement, in others one of the components of the couple declare themselves to be non-believers or agnostic. Nevertheless all those who attended this course came with a surpris-

ing disposition of openness and willingness to listen and, pushed by the love for the other, we saw them strongly motivated and invested in the sacrament of matrimony. We clearly perceived – especially after the private talks that all the couples had with some of us, which is also an integral part of the course – that it was God himself who called each one to attend this course.



The dialogue with the experts

In the various wide-ranging exchanges the participants became aware of the beauty and importance of the «forever» of a Christian marriage, supported by the experiences of married couples, both young and mature. A surprise for many of them who said: «It is so precious and encouraging to see couples happily married for 30 years!». The stories of those who have already travelled along a stretch of the road were occasions to open up a dialogue among the two partners, laying the foundation for building up the eventual «us» of the

couple and opening themselves up to other couples so as to bring the riches of their own experience and culture.

In this course too we saw that God was working in His Work.

*Maria and Gianni Salerno with the secretary of New Families*



## Adherents

# The *revolution* of the «Magnificat»

**In 1300 at the Congresses of Castel Gandolfo coming from numerous Countries where the ideal of unity has put down its roots**

The internationality of the participants, diverse in age and commitment to the Movement, made visible both the beauty of the Charism which unites everyone without distinction as well as the wealth of the diversity of the local Communities that reflects the specificity of every peoples.

In her welcome message to the two Congresses held in Castel Gandolfo (from January 12 to 14 and from March 22 to 24), Emmaus said that those days would be an occasion to get to know Mary more deeply, thanks to the what Chiara Lubich had understood about Her. «You will have the chance – she wrote - to discover Her and her loftiest qualities, but also discover her as the perfect Christian, as One who is “totally clothed in the Word of God” and who is a model for us on how to live the Gospel fully in our daily life and in every stage of our life».

In fact, in an atmosphere of simplicity, freedom and total sharing many found or found again the hope and courage to go ahead in living the Gospel in the joys, sufferings and efforts of every day. A big help also came from the presentation of Lucia Abignente, who focused on some writings about the life of the early times of the Movement that were full of the life of the Gospel, and by the strong and incisive experiences that were shared, with a «transforming» effect.

Just to cite some of them, like the one of an adherent, who had passed through the dark tunnel of drug addiction, relapsing over and over again in his search for the meaning of life that brought him all the way to India. Having reached a total physical and moral breakdown, he was welcomed by a family who simply loved him. He saw their authenticity and was fascinated; he married his childhood sweetheart after he was released from prison, and they would

eventually have two children one of whom is adopted. He discovered that the family who welcomed him into their home belong to a group of people renewed by the Gospel that is called the «Work of Mary». Being with them gave him the strength to overcome



all and even the most difficult trials, such as the abandonment by his wife, up to the point of being able to forgive her and be beside her during her illness up to the moment she died. He made his

own the prayer he directed to Mary: «Make me an instrument for for her redemption!».

Or also the experience of someone who had undertaken, using his own funds, a trip to Brazil to film the experience of a group of consecrated persons who are transforming the lives of the marginalized living in a *favela*. Or that of a married couple which touched on many aspects, referring to a situation where



courages us to work so that the evangelical social revolution will happen also through us in the world today». As a concrete realization – among others – they presented incisive experiences on the project for a new economy, the Economy of Communion.

«We welcome therefore without being afraid, that which God will ask from us during the year and we go ahead with courage

and in putting into practice the Word of life accompanied by such a Mother», concluded Emmaus. As a reply, the participants wrote her: «We leave from here with a new light and a new desire to love what Mary is telling to us to do: “Do whatever he tells you».

Someone who came for the first time said: «I have found a personal relationship with Chiara; she herself spoke to our

hearts». And another: «At 65 years old I am already retired, and I am still making the most beautiful discoveries of my life».

To increase the participation to these Congresses for adherents, and to repeat them wherever it is possible in the different regions of the world: this was the hope of everyone, above all with regards to the youth, given the richness of their formation, and for those who represent the members of the local Communities.

Gloria Duarte, Tim King



there are no easy solutions. A young girl from Burundi also shared her experience lived in the context of a war, of poverty, recurring political crises in her Country. «This ideal – she shared - gave me the light that I was missing. To live the Will of God, in the same way Mary did, it gives me the courage to go ahead and to believe in the love of God even in the difficult moments».

The message of Emmaus continued, saying that the «song of the “Magnificat” is a “magna carta” of social action, which en-

## Eastern Europe

# Looking for the frontiers

### A new focolare in Iași in Rumania

Iași, ancient city of Rumania, is the home of the oldest university in the Country. Founded in 1407 it is proud of having about a hundred Orthodox churches of great beauty and a lively cultural and artistic life. The dream of having a focolare center has long been in our hearts.

God surprised us in this tenth anniversary of Chiara's birth in Heaven, with this «miracle of love». The opening last January 13 of the focolare center was a joyous event. Emmaus, in her message to us, indicated the programme for this focolare. Among other things she said: «I am united with you all in thanking God for the "dream realized", for this new stage that begins for the Focolare Movement in Rumania, enriching your communities with a beating heart of wisdom and warmth. [...] My wish is that: the presence of Mary in the focolare will always be alive and irradiate light everywhere so as to experience the "on earth as it is in Heaven"».

It was the new generations and their numerous participation in our meetings, that made us understand that the «new set-up»

During the Mass for the inauguration of the focolare, present were Chiara Cuneo and Redi Stefancic (in the middle), delegates of Eastern Europe



13 January 2018. The sharing of the youth during the inauguration of the focolare center of Iași

is asking not so much to move or to close a focolare but rather to consider a new distribution of our resources, looking at areas that could be considered as the periphery, a frontier area. We identified this location, in the northeast of the Country, which we rarely visited and which was quite difficult to reach, but where, in spite of this, the Ideal had spread including a big number of young people.

**A bit of history.** In the '70s some women and men monks and priests of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, taking advantage of the scholarships offered by the Ostkircheninstitut of Regensburg, came in contact with the Focolare Movement in Germany. It was providential and allowed the entrance in Rumania of what became considered as a current of profound spiritual renewal, even before the focolarini started to make trips to that Country.



The first to meet the Movement was Bishop Marton Aron, now a servant of God, of the Rumanian Catholic Church. He went to Rome soon after the Second Vatican Council, and he encountered persons who were living the spirituality of unity according to the charism of Chiara Lubich. He exclaimed: «From now on I will pray until this “virus” contaminates and spread in Rumania».

In spite of the control of the communist dictatorship this evangelical Ideal spread passing from one person to another. After the fall of the regime, in December 1989, it reached the different regions of Rumania and, from '92, it also entered the nearby Republic of Moldavia. There the priest, Fr. Anton Coşa, who later became a bishop, like a true missionary, nourished the faith and with it also the life of the Ideal of unity, giving new life to the Church starting from zero. In Moldavia since 2001, Mariapolises have been held in the Rumanian and Russian languages.

**The new focolare center in Iaşi** was blessed by the two local bishops, mons. Petru Gherghel and mons. Aurel Perca, together with Bishop Anton Coşa of Chişinău, with the wish that it «will continue to sing the *Magnificat*». The three focolarine that form this focolare: Maria Butacu (Rumania), Dolores dos Santos – Uni (Brazil) and Marianna Gyöngyi (Hungary) came prepared personally by God.

For Maria it was a dream that she was nurturing for many years: «After 15 years in the focolare center of Cluj and then almost three years in Bucharest, now I am very happy to give life to Him among us in this new focolare and to bring the fire of the Ideal in this portion of the Work of Mary».

Marianna: «When I told Jesus of my desire to give myself totally to Him I under-

stood that to be Mary is intimately linked to the life with Jesus Forsaken. The fruit is the spread of unity throughout the world. In the year dedicated to Mary, I think that the most beautiful thing for me is to be able to bring her presence in Eastern Rumania and the Republic of Moldavia».

Dolores – Uni: «I was in Italy at the Mariapolis Center for 13 years. I would have wanted to go to a place to start a focolare center, to start from nothing, just like the first focolare of Chiara, without thinking of where it will be, the climate, a new language to learn. This is the way it is for me!».

Before the focolare opened, they had gone there several times. The snow and the



From the right Maria, Marianna and Uni in the second row of the focolare of Iaşi

cold did not stop them, just like Mary who was looking for a place to give birth to Jesus. The apartment had to be furnished and providence came in the most unexpected ways. The most beautiful gift was that from a gen3 boy who brought all his savings to the focolare!

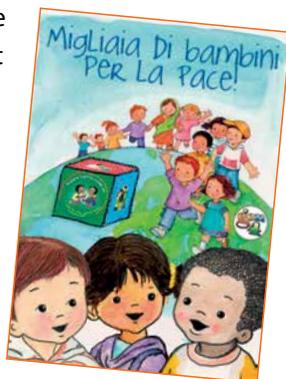
They shared with joy: «We often hear our people and the persons of the local Church telling us: “It is so beautiful that you have come, we need you!”. We feel that the most beautiful attitude to have is that of being protagonists with everyone. If we live reciprocal love, if we live it together with everyone, God will certainly answer us by opening new pathways for “That all may be one”».

*Marta Andro, Bodnar Sandor*

# When peace becomes contagious

The commitment of the children takes in their friends, parents, local communities, exciting even the gen5

«There is no peace in the world because they don't know about love [...] You gen 4, you know how to make acts of love, you must [...] then bring this love to the world and peace will come». In 1996 Chiara Lubich said these words to encourage the gen4 to be builders of peace, a challenge that they continue to face and bring ahead all over the world. This year they welcomed with enthusiasm and made their own the recent invitation of Pope Francis to pray for peace. They throw the «dice of love» everyday and live what it suggests. «Every Saturday in school – Urielle from **Congo** shared – we have to clean the floor. One day nobody wanted to do it. I remembered: “be the first to love”. I took the pail and I began to clean. One by one my classmates came to help me and we worked together». «In my class – said



Noemi from **Serbia** – one of my classmates, who buys her snack everyday, one day didn't find anything that she liked. I realized that because of this she wouldn't eat anything. I had brought breadsticks. So with some of my friends we went to her and each one gave her a bit of our own snacks».

In Bujumbura (**Burundi**) the gen4 boys went to share their experiences in Radio Maria. Assisted by a journalist they talked about the «dice» and the Word of life which they try to live. There were many positive comments received. In **Brazil** instead, they invented a gen4 song writing contest to spread their message. With the help of the expert judges they chose 12 songs, which were then recorded on a cd with the voices of the gen4 and some gen3. Many of the children were experiencing difficult situations but gave everything they had with much love. The owner of the recording studio was touched by their joy and gave them a discount.

Aside from the «dice of love» the gen4 also have the «dice of peace» which has a special side: an invitation to forgive. «One day I was playing with my friends – shared Josiane from **Congo** – when my brother asked me to accompany him to buy something. I didn't want to go and so he hit me hurting my eye. Thanks to the “dice” I learned how to love my enemies,



I gen4 brasiliani con il loro CD

so I found the courage to forgive my brother and we became friends again».

To believe that peace is possible means also to ask Heaven for it as a gift, involving even the littlest ones. «Last week – they wrote from **Rome** (Italy) – some gen4 helped by the gen3 and gen2, prepared a clock for the gen5, highlighting that in every moment of the day one can always love and... when it is 12.00 noon it is the moment for the *time out*, a minute of prayer for peace». A few days after Felicitas, two years old together with her parents, celebrated her birthday in her kindergarten with the theme of peace for the party. With the help of the grandparents she prepared a «dice» for each of her classmates and a giant one for the teacher which they could throw every morning. Many of the mothers were very happy.

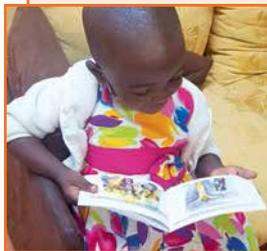


In Irlanda ripuliscono un parco

In **Sicily** various local communities were involved in the formation of the gen4 girls and boys, and are trying to work together as one with the presence of Jesus among them. «Go ahead like this! – Emmaus Maria Voce wrote them. I will remember all of you in my prayers as you readily give yourselves for this important collaboration and I pray that each one of you will have the joy of seeing Jesus born and grow in every gen4 and gen5 entrusted to you».

## Mary in the *kirundi* language

The book *Era bellissima* (She was very beautiful), dedicated to Mary and translated in the *kirundi* language has just been printed in Burundi. This was made possible thanks to the assistance



of the episcopal Council of the Laity. For many of the gen4 it will be their first book ever. With the money received from its sale they hope to be able to print another one, which will be a colouring book.

For the local communities bringing peace means also to enter, together with the gen4, into the cracks of our cities, where marginalization and exclusion is strongest. In the **Philippines** the gen4 received many things as gifts and, accompanied by some adults, they went to give them to the children in a poor area. «For three years now we have been going to a gypsy camp – they wrote us from **Pistoia** (Italy) – and this year for the first time we proposed to the gen4 to prepare the statuette of Baby Jesus which, we distributed to the families in the camp during a celebration. These are small steps to bring peace in an environment of extreme poverty but open to love».

*Anna Lisa Innocenti with the Gen4 centers*



Nelle Filippine con i bambini di un quartiere disagiato

Together for a new Africa

# A responsible and active leadership

Faced with the challenges that the African continent is experiencing today, a group of students of the Sophia University Institute coming from 12 Countries of Africa felt called to give their own contribution

«It's our turn, the new generations, to think of what kind of Africa we want and how we can build it. We all dream of a new Africa, that is peaceful and prosperous». To realize this dream, with the support of the Sophia University Institute, the international Center of the Mpfu (Movement of

for a formative three-year programme.

At the Mariapolis Center Piero of Nairobi, there were more than 30 professors and tutors coming from the Countries of East Africa and from Sophia

who participated. They committed themselves with generosity and passion to be credible role models, teachers of a participatory and responsible leadership; above all they accepted the responsibility of voluntarily accompanying the youth who will be participating in this formation programme and even afterwards, by supporting the different national initiatives that they will organize, for the purpose of forming an active and responsible citizenry.

The impact of the project on the continent



could be felt in the corridors of the Mariapolis Center Piero, with the participants affirming that: «now it is no longer a project of these youth, but it is ours, that is why we felt that even the name should change from "Come back to Africa" to "Together for a New Africa". From this day onwards we want to walk together to promote a new leadership and above all in the formation of the new generations».

This is the generation that will dictate political and social norms, that will influence the ways of governing, adopting or rejecting extremist ideologies,



politics for unity) and the Focolare Movement in East Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, these young people took the first step in the beginning of January 2018 in Nairobi, where they organized a formation seminar for tutors and professors who will accompany 100 youth from East Africa (seven nations)

corruption, politics for human rights, etc. It is this generation that will be able to transform entire regions making them more prosperous, more just, more secure. Or they may be the cause of instability and manifold violence. Or both of these things.

The future of this project, which is already deeply ingrained in East Africa, are the youth themselves who are running it (supported by the tutors and professors). To ensure its sustainability they are meeting with different institutions (UNESCO and other organizations) to establish a collaboration and the results are promising. The next schools are already being organized, that will involve more than 100

youth from the Countries of East Africa, participating in three regional meetings, accompanied by different local activities organized by the youth themselves, for a three-year project.

Their commitment and determination comes from their experience at the Sophia University Institute, which they also saw in the life of the great African leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, who once said: «I appreciated the ideal of a free and democratic society where everyone can live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope I can live for and which I hope to realize. But if necessary, it is an ideal for which I am also ready to die for».



It is with this vision that one can see what the youth are promoting, giving everything that they have for this dream. It is only in the realization of this dream that we will be able to view the world in the next decades starting from Africa.

*dr. Melchior Nsavyimana<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Project Coordinator "Together for a new Africa". Coordinator, Institute For Regional Integration and Development. The Catholic University of Eastern Africa – Nairobi, Kenya



## Loppiano city of dialogue

# The *Renata Borlone* Award given to a man of peace

The recognition dedicated to Renata Borlone, on the 28° year of her birth in Heaven, was awarded to the Palestinian astrophysicist Suleiman Baraka



The award is given to cultivators of scientific research used as an instrument of peace and harmony among peoples. This was the dream of the young Renata who was in search of the truth, assuaged then with the discovery of God love when she met the Ideal in May of 1949. «An event which was beyond all my expectations... wherein one could perceive the SPIrit acting in all of us» – affirmed prof. Piero Benvenuti, delegate of Card. G. Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, in the occasion of the IV edition of the «Renata Borlone woman in dialogue» Award, last February 25.

Promoted by the Renata Borlone Cultural Center in collaboration with the Sophia University Institute, the award was given in the preceding editions to prof. Ugo Amaldi, physicist of the CERN in Geneva (2006), to prof. Piero Benvenuti, secretary of the International Union of Astronomers (2013), to dr. Fabiola Gianotti, director of the CERN of Geneva (2015). This

year it was the turn of the astrophysicist of Palestinian origin Suleiman Baraka who, in the midst of the tragic death of his little son due to an airstrike, redirected his passion for science in favour of peace. This is what was read by prof. Sergio Rondinara as the reason for the award, and expressed in a piece by chinese sculptor Lau Hung: a group of youth who, inspite of their fear, contemplate the beauty of the sky with the telescopes that prof. Baraka sent to Gaza city. Among the personalities present, the mayor of Incisa and Figline Valdarno, Giulia Mugnai; commissioner for culture of Civitavecchia, Vincenzo d'Antò, accompanied by a numerous delegation from the hometown of Renata and by two young winners of the Scholarship named after her. Two representatives of the Palestinian Embassy in Rome were also present.

This is the the wish of Emmaus in her message to prof. Baraka: «(May) the charism of unity encourage you to continue to live for universal brotherhood». The professor confirmed this as he was leaving and confided «the most important prize was: the marvelous people that I met here... It was an experience for a lifetime».

As the conclusion, the Mass was celebrated in the Theotokos that was filled with the friends of renata who came from many cities and was presided by Mons. Meini, bishop of Fiesole. It seemed to us as a step towards the coming of Pope Francis on May 10.

*Lida Ciccarelli, Valerio Cipri*

## In Fribourg

# A school on the spirituality of communion

### Three days of formation for seminarians and lay pastoral workers of French-speaking Switzerland

«La spiritualité de communion: fondements et expériences» was the title of this session which was held in Fribourg for around seventy people from February 5 to 7. Giovanna and Michel (focolarini, theologians) received an invitation to animate this meeting from the «Centre catholique romand de formations en Eglise» which plans and is responsible for the formation of seminarians and lay pastoral workers of French-speaking Switzerland. Encouraged by a renewed ecumenical commitment brought about by the «Declaration of Ottmaring» (cf. Mariapoli n. 3-4/2017) we also invited Pastor Martin Hoegger, Volunteer of God and theologian of the Reformed Church of Lausanne, to join us in this project.

The «medal» given as a symbol to all the participants had «unity» written on one side and «Jesus Forsaken» on the other side, while the thickness was made up of all the words of the Gospel summarized in the «new commandment of Jesus». There were three main topics discussed from the point of view of biblical and dogmatic theology, as well as from the thoughts and experience of Chiara Lubich. A plurality of viewpoints, rich and fecund, fruit of a long and intense preparation done by the three of us. In fact the rector of the seminary said that we not only talked about ecumenism but we lived it.

The afternoons were spent listening to strong experiences shared by

members of the Focolare Movement, which showed the concretization in daily life of the lessons presented in the morning.

The meeting also had its practical aspect aside from an academic one. Everyday the participants were encouraged to put into practice a Word of the Scripture and then to share the experiences made with one another. There were also moments for personal reflection in a "one on one" with God, small group meetings and plenary sessions. An evening was dedicated to the Eucharistic celebration followed by a fraternal dinner with games animated by a group from Montete. There were many fruits as well as much joy.

We had the impression that we received the grace, guided by the circumstances, to create a «prototype» to offer the spirituality of unity at the service of the Church, combining life and thought, theoretical reflection and personal commitment, prayer and dialogue. It is a winning formula.

*Martin Hoegger, Giovanna Porrino,  
Michel Vandeleene*



## Venezuela beyond the darkness

In the Country brought to its knees by the serious political and social crisis of the past years, the light of the Ideal penetrates and forms citizens and communities. Starting from the new generations.



«We can really say that we are living in a hellhole, but we are called to live Paradise here on earth and to bring the light to illuminate the darkness. It was the most beautiful and the most intimate meeting that I have experienced ever-since I met the Ideal». This was the similar thought expressed by many of the participants of the third edition of the School of formation that was held in Venezuela last February. We met around 250 people.

Light, communion, depth, family, the warmth of Jesus in the midst, joy, an experience of «focolare», these are just some of the expressions that have

defined this school, where everything was formative.

A School but not only, because in fact it was a special edition that was totally different from those held in the previous years, in which we were able to reach simultaneously, six local communities, addressing their financial difficulties and the

difficulty of moving around in this moment. These were the Communities of: Merida (Venezuelan Andes); peninsula of Paraganà (state of Falcòn); Valencia (state of Carabobo); Puerto Ayacucho (state of the Amazzons; Maracaibo (state of Zulia); Gran Caracas, in the Mariapolis Center «la Nuvoletta (the Little Cloud)».

We began by telling Mary that we are ready for Her surprises. We were very enthusiastic because we were embarking on a collective experience!

The gift of reciprocity made us plan the programme together with





the Communities; everyone was a protagonist. The theme was centered on the vocations of the Movement, and was aimed at the new generations, whose presence was characteristic of each school due to the significant number of youth, teens and children. The power of the experiences of the gen4, gen3 and gen2 which presented every reality, and the going in-depth and penetrating into the vision of Chiara made an adult say: «Now I understand that the gen are not just "a small thing". They are a design of God and they will never die».

In some of the schools the genS were also present, enriching the youth reality. Through their experiences they showed what could happen in

a seminary where the Ideal is lived.

We watched the video of Chiara's third lesson on Paradise 49 given to the gen, which generated an examination of conscience in everyone and a new awareness and conviction that what matters in life is to love. The fruits that Paradise brought to the souls, satisfying their thirst and teaching them how to live, was for us a confirmation of what is asked of us today.

Every difficulty was an opportunity that generated much communion - also of goods - making the miracle of the «multiplication of the bread and fish» a reality and which, coincidentally was in the Gospel liturgy of those days. Even in the precariousness of life, love "infects". The baker of the neighbourhood where we were meeting,

gave us free bread for five days, and for the celebration of Carnival he gave us pastries. The experience of Juan is very moving: the small van which he uses as a taxi was broken. We learned of his intention to go to the jungle to conclude some «business» that would allow him to have some money to repair his «source of income». We remembered that we had an amount of money that we had set aside to cover our basic needs and so we decided to give it to him. Deeply moved he said: «Today I thought of leaving Elsa and the children (gen) in the meeting, to coordinate my trip to the jungle. No I said, I must think about the Kingdom of God first, and the rest will arrive. It is impressive how His answer came immediately!».

*Roberta Munegato,  
Marquinho Barbosa*



## Local communities in Brazil

# An injection of courage

For the first time the representatives of the numerous and lively local communities of the Brazilian Zone met together

The three Brazilian Little Towns («Gloria» in Belém, «Ginetta» in S. Paulo and «Santa Maria» in Recife) were the venues from January to February, of three meetings with around 700 representatives and animators of the local Communities of the Zone. The presence of the Councillors for the aspect of Irradiation and apostolate, gave them a wider view of the reality of the local Communities in the world.

The «lessons» of Chiara to the gen on the experience of light that is called with the name of Paradise 49, introduced by Vera Araujo, created an intense supernatural atmosphere, making

### For a wider «irradiation»

The name of «Local community» became more evident when Chiara Lubich reviewed the general Statutes of the Focolare Movement, at the beginning of the year 2000. The article that talk about it is found in the part regarding irradiation and the apostolate which says: «by their nature, because of the mutual love that binds them, are a point of unity for the Work of Mary in that given area and an effective means of spreading the Gospel». They are, therefore, an expression of the bond that must exist among all the members, which is what makes them a family – a family of God, the family of Chiara – in a specific place.

Emmaus Voce in 2014 wrote: «The Local Community cannot be understood as a structure or a strategy to meet the demands of the "new set-up", but it must be considered as a rediscovery of the vocation of the One Movement, a point of convergence of the different vocations for a wider irradiation of the Gospel lived and of the gift of the Ideal, similar to the foundational experience of the first community of Trent».

all those present experience the communion with God and with Chiara. The certainty was strengthened that, together, with Jesus in the midst, we will be able to go ahead with courage and determination aiming always at «that all may be one».



After the merging of the Zone, these are the first meetings of the numerous local Communities all over Brazil. Sharing the joys and the challenges gave everyone more courage to go ahead.

The experiences showed how even small acts of love can generate fruits not only in the Movement but, through concrete actions, also in the Church and in society.

In **Ananindeua** (zonetta of Belém), the community has involved the different secretariats of the town councils for the inauguration of the Chiara Lubich Sports Complex. There they presented the «dice of love» and the «project for Peace», which will be adopted initially by four public schools. The mayor of this city, which is known for an atmosphere of violence, expressed his hope that «Chiara Lubich, will never be forgotten»



and that «peace and unity will reign more and more». Together with the children present, he turned the revolving dice that was placed in a central part of the city square.

A member of the community who for health reasons went to live in a place within the Amazon region where no one knew the Ideal, began to «make himself one» out of love and to meet the children, then the youth, the adults and finally the families, sharing the Ideal with them and starting an activity called «Project

Amazzonia» to help a poor village nearby.

In **Goiânia** (zonetta of Brasília) the community, together with two business consultants of the Movement, are doing something to welcome the numerous Haitian migrants in their area. A project called «Preparing to enter the workforce» was started, which aims at helping them to find professional jobs in Brazil, aside from answering to their basic needs such as food, shelter, transportation, schooling, psychological and legal assistance, etc..



The project was welcomed not only by the Catholic Church, but also by the Methodist, Evangelical and Orthodox Churches, and also including the spiritualists and others.

The experience, shared during the National Meeting of the Network for the Protection of Refugees, Migrants and the Stateless by Sr. Rosita Milesi, director of the Institute for Migration and Human rights, was considered as a «pioneer project in Brazil». Thanks to this project, supported also by professionals who offer their competencies on a voluntary basis, our Haitian brothers and sisters have grown in dignity and self-confidence.

In the zonetta of **San Paolo** there are around 70 local Communities. For some years now the more mature ones went to the less developed communities near their territories, in order to accompany them and help them to grow. There are also several parish communities animated by the charism of unity. Some of the catechists participated in the meeting for gen4 assistants so as to be formed and to learn how to give the Ideal to the children entrusted to them.

In **Itu**, after the meeting, some of those in-charge of the local Communities felt the push to organize other meetings for young couples which was a light and encouragement for many.

## Returning from Brazil

Gloria Duarte, councillor at the Center of the Movement for the aspect of Irradiation said: «The experiences of the communities were very rich: from Recife and Petrolina – those who lost and those who gained a focolare center – to a community that excelled with their activities for teens or who had the youth as protagonists; or those «new» communities full of enthusiasm to those who have accepted the challenge of the «new» with commitment and maturity.

In a region of the North, 242 men and women intern member and adherents, together with the focolare centers, visited 58 communities meeting with 2,600 people (564 were new) and six Bishops. Aside from the many moments of dialogue, *Cidade Nova* was also presented, to the youth, during the Collegamento Ch. It was an occasion of formation to the Work of Mary "going beyond the specific vocations" and everyone felt enriched, with a new vision of life in a community. Over and beyond the challenges that there are on various fronts, there is much excitement ; we can touch the power of the Charism and we can feel that Chiara is at work!».

In **Baurú**, the members of the 12 Communities of the territory who were not able to participate were updated about the meeting. Afterwards a youth expressed the desire to meet with the possible focolarini during Easter.

The representatives of the community of **Rio Grande do Sul**, said: «We came back transformed because of the strong experience of unity that we had lived. After receiving Paradise 49 we want to remain there forever, and together with our focolare centers, to become

the guardians of the flame, there where we are so as to reach "That all may be one" together».

The local Community of **Recife** – without a doubt the oldest one in Brazil – experienced a leap in quality because of the transfer of the focolare center to Petrolina («Sertão» of Pernambuco). This has made them grow much more as a community wherein all the realities of the Work of Mary bring ahead together the life of the Movement in their territory.

*Juliana Fonseca,  
João Batista de Brito*

# In India In the «footsteps» di Chiara

An unusual «temporary focolare»

While talking to the Director of my department in the Gemelli Hospital of Rome, an idea for a project was born with regards to may specialization (echography) with the first phase realized in India. He proposed to me to bring two young colleagues to give them a formative experience: Francesca Moro, gynecologist who is 33 years old and Benedetta Ionata, psychologist who is 28.

The news of our arrival was warmly welcomed by Marilù Rossi, focolarina in Mumbai, as an answer of God to her desire to introduce some people who are linked to her in the field of healthcare to some of our members of the Movement in Italy. Marilù organized the different stages (after Ahmedabad - the venue of the congress - Goa, Mumbai, Coimbatore) making the proposal to make an experience as a kind of «temporary focolare».

In the various cities we met the communities of the

Movement, we got to know the joys and challenges of their social projects, we lived moments of family, of interreligious dialogue and of cultural exchanges with persons involved in the field of healthcare.

Francesca, who had just met us, was taken in by this wealth of relationships. On the evening of December 7 we watched a brief video on the story of Chiara and Benedetta - who used to be a gen4 - continued to share her experience in the light of the Ideal.

Among the more significant moments were the days spent in the home of Dr. Vinu Aram, leader of the Shanti Ashram in Coimbatore. It was to touch with our hands the fruits of an experience of dialogue and collaboration between the Focolare Movement and this Hindu-gandian organization, that dates back to more than 25 years ago, with countless projects of social transformation.

In the Hindu temple of Perur, an Australian couple stopped to talk to us; Vij of the Shanti Ashram, a 40-year old man was with us and he began to talk to them about the Focolare Movement and the charisma of unity. In his eyes one could see the luminous light of one, who as a young boy, had seen this light from Chiara's own eyes.

Returning to Rome we showed some photos and shared our experience to the young doctors of Gemelli Hospital who listened to us with enthusiasm. After a month, I met again with Francesca and Benedetta to welcome our Director to our focolare center for a visit. He encouraged us to «go ahead further» maintaining the contacts made (we are planning to invite Vinu for a possible partnership) and to develop networks of professional and scientific collaboration.

*Antonia Testa*



## Carlo De Gasperi

*«Cause of our joy»*

Born in the Trentine region 88 years ago, together with his beautiful family (which included eight siblings, of which two are religious nuns and Lucia, a focolarina who is now in the heavenly Mariapolis) they had to move and start from zero because they refused to collaborate with the regime. It was a trauma that took time for Carlo to overcome. He met the Movement when he was 27 years old and - he shared - in that meeting with Chiara «in the midst of the suffering that I was carrying within me, I found something greater, the love of God [...]. Slowly I discovered the way of the focolare and in the '60s I left for the school of formation in Grottaferrata». Carlo was an agriculturist, but he specialized in carpentry thus becoming an expert in managing a carpentry shop first in Grottaferrata, then in Loppiano; he eventually started one in Manila, where he spent the best years of his life from 1967 to 2013.

Many impressions were shared from the Philippines. Ray Asprer, at present in the Center of the Movement wrote: «I had just met the gen and I was in a meeting in focolare. He could have been my father but we were like brothers. He lived the Ideal with radicalness, and every evening after the many challenges he faced at work, tired but peaceful, he was still able to laugh while we had dinner. At five o'clock in the morning, rain or shine, he would go to Mass and then proceed to the Carpentry shop in the outskirts of Manila. He didn't do this only out of a sense of responsibility but because of his great love for the poor. Through the Carpentry shop - a fruit of his 40-year commitment - he was able to provide work for hundreds of people, he taught a craft to many youth, he built an entire village for the families



of the employees. Carlo gave hope and he knew each one by name».

In '71 Carlo wrote to Chiara: «I was touched by your diary, when you told us: "The small things will make us understand Mary, or rather how to be love". At the end of each day I feel that a glass of water given out of love is more precious than having made a hundred tables». And in '73: «As the years pass, my desire to become a child of Mary grows stronger». His Word of life was: «Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water\* will flow from within him». (cf Jn 7,38)

In 2012 he returned to Italy, where he was welcomed at the focolare verde «Nuova Unità (New Unity)». The more he lost his strength and the possibility to move, the more his being radiated love and light. His relationship with Mary became more profound, as he strived to imitate her by living the litany that Chiara gave him: «cause of our joy».

As his health turned for the worse, he received the anointing of the sick during his last days, and he continued to say «thank you» to those who assisted him. On February 23, in the presence also of some of his relatives, Carlo went back to God, leaving behind so much gratitude for the untiring gift of himself to God and to the brother.

## Rita Carretta

*The joy of belonging to God*

Rita, came from a numerous family of the Basilicata (Italy), and having just finished the teacher's course, she met the Movement and immediately understood that her way was in the focolare. She confided to Chiara: «I chose God as



the only ideal of my life and He calls me to love Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate. My life can be summed up in just one word: love (charity)».

After her formation in Loppiano and two years in the focolare center in Istanbul, she returned to Italy due to a health condition that led to two heart operations. From the hospital she wrote to Chiara: «Today my roommates asked if I was engaged. When I told them about having chosen the Spouse, I felt the immense joy of belonging to Him... I want to sing for joy and to tell everyone that Jesus Forsaken is life, truth, freedom!... I want to make my room (a ward with six beds) Paradise!».

After she recovered her health she participated actively in the life of the Movement and with wisdom, took up the responsibility for the women religious and ecumenical dialogue. In 2002, while she was in the focolare of the Mariapolis Center of Benevento, she took stock of her life: «This past year I felt that the Spouse is digging in my soul, making me penetrate more and more into the Charism. The Risen One is my teacher and Mary is the mother who corrects, consoles, revives me and who makes living water flow from every "yes" to the will of God». In 2013 she wrote to Emmaus: «The Word of life that Chiara gave me: "The greatest of these is love" (1Cor 13,8), has now become the identity of the death of my ego to enter Paradise here on earth and then in Heaven, with the witness of my union with God and with whoever passes beside me». Many confirmed her welcoming, personal and constant love for everyone.

In the last period of her life, her strong and determined character, which during many moments of her illness helped her to go ahead, is further tested by the loss of ability to speak and to move. Rita continued to be docile to the work of God; she participated in building unity in her focolare with a few but very wise words. On February 1, at the age of 80, after a *consenserint* recited by the focolarine gathered around her, she gently left for the heavenly Mariapolis.

## Giancarlo Sina

«You are the salt of the earth»  
(Mt 5,13)

Coming from northeast Italy, Giancarlo was a student of medicine when he met the ideal of unity. Three years later he was already in the focolare in Trent. He confided to Chiara: «I also want to commit myself to strive for sanctity that you spoke of in your diary. I asked Jesus the squeeze as much glory for Himself as he can from my life». He was transferred to Catania and in different focolare centers in Italy, also spending a few months in the former Czechoslovakia.



In '73 he arrived in Fontem (Africa) and dedicated himself to many patients - sometimes up to 200 a day - who would come to the hospital in the little town. He collaborated in identifying effective treatments for the sleeping sickness applying the protocol called «Sina/Triolo» which was later published in the *Medical Journal*. In '81, during the height of *apartheid*, he went to start the focolare center in South Africa. Giancarlo suffered a lot for this wound of society, up to the point of crying everytime this topic was discussed. The unity with the focolarini, his strong and solid faith, nourished by his faithfulness to his prayer life were what gave him the strength to go ahead.

He returned to Trent in '96, and in 2004 he left once again for Africa (Mariapolis Piero, Kenya) where he was responsible for the formation of the young men who wanted to enter the focolare. He stayed there for eight years, before finally returning to Italy for good. He wrote in 2009: «I entered the

focolare a few days before the last Mariapolis of Fiera di Primiero (1959) began and on July 15, five of us went to Chiara who wanted to get to know our stories. She spoke to us about Jesus Forsaken as the essence of the vocation of the focolarino. In these days I am about to celebrate my 50 years in the focolare: a life which is full of mistakes, lack of love, which I entrust all to the mercy of God. But even more, I am reminded of the graces, light, joy, fullness of life that God made me experience together

with the love and unity of all those who journeyed with me all these years».

His was a life at the service of others, brightened up by his smile and his wisdom. This writing of his is quite meaningful: «For the little I have done, I seem to have experienced with fullness and depth the joy and the freedom of living Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate. I lost everything, and all my Wealth is here in doing His will, and then in Paradise». On February 5, at 86 years old, Giancarlo peacefully concluded his «holy journey».

## Anita Goedecke

*Authentic spouse  
of Jesus Forsaken*

Born in Berlin (Germany) in a family with good moral values, Anita enrolled in Medicine so as to be closer to those who are suffering. At 19 years old she met Natalia Dallapiccola, the first companion of Chiara, who had just arrived in Leipzig. Fascinated by the Ideal of unity, she discovered her vocation in the focolare.

After her graduation, she continued her specialization in the hospital where Clari Santanchè, one of the first focolarinos who arrived behind the Iron Curtain, was setting-up the department of anesthesiology and intensive care. Thus they began a very ardent and lively environmental cell, made up of doctors, nurses and patients, with friendships that have endured up to today.

For thirty years Anita contributed with untiring ardour to the spread of the Movement in other cities of East Germany. The people of the community found in her: «a friend, a sister, a mother», who shared joys, sufferings, difficult situations. Aside from this her heart was



beating for the unity of the Churches. From 2012 to 2015 she stayed in the Swiss little town of Montet. Then she returned to Zwochau (Germany).

From her letters to Chiara: «I am very grateful for the gift of the charism of unity that gives light, joy, peace, hope, strength. But all this would not be possible if we did not receive the

key. Jesus Forsaken, our only Spouse. I want to live for this exclusive love for Him, to die to myself so as to be in the Risen One» (1983). «In living the Word I seem to “touch” the presence of Jesus in the midst, the Saint per excellence. What an undeserved predilection, and what a responsibility this is for me! I want to give everything of myself to become an authentic Spouse of Jesus Forsaken» (1986).

In 2016 the diagnosis of an illness, which Anita faced with courage and faith abandoning herself to Jesus in the midst so as to live in the supernatural even during the darkest moments. She spent the last few weeks of her life in the hospital where she used to work, accompanied with competence and dedication by the doctors and nurses there. «Now – she wrote - I can experience how God is slowly

# August Wilke

*Unwavering faith in God  
and care for the brother*

He belonged to the focolare center of Berlin, and he reached the house of the Father on March 3 in Guben, a small city at the border with Poland where he was born 93 years ago.

August already had five children when he met the Ideal together with his wife Gisela in 1965. Both of them became married focolarini. He recalled in one of his writings: «Meeting the Work of Mary gave new meaning to our search for harmony, that is, to aim for unity, to be of one heart and one soul, creating the conditions for the presence of Jesus among us. From that moment on - not immediately but gradually – the desire for a harmonious coexistence was transformed into a steady will to live unity and to take advantage fully of the sacrament of marriage: the life with Jesus in the midst».

The harsh experiences of the world war, the difficult re-opening of his business after the war and then its confiscation by the communist regime of the the GDR followed by a month of imprisonment, left a very strong impact in his life. August accepted as God's will to pass from being a proprietor to a manager and finally to a simple employee. The political



revolution, with the eventual return of his business was for him an experience of resurrection.

In June '91 he told Chiara: «I understood again and with much greater depth what a marvelous divine adventure I am in...».

For decades he worked in the parish as well as in the local community and in the life of the

Zone. The experience of Gisela and August, which they shared during the zonal Familyfest of 2005 was unforgettable, because of the testimony of their love, both youthful and mature at the same time.

Even if they lived far from the focolare, they always kept in contact. They supported the renovation of the Maripaolis Center in Zwochau (Leipzig), and were always ready to make the communion of goods during emergencies, often giving up even their vacations.

When Gisela (see *Mariapoli* n. 11/2014) left for Paradise three and a half years ago, August suffered greatly and began to prepare too for «his hour». Even if he longed to go home to the Father, he remained active, assuring his unity and prayers through phone calls to the focolare and opening his home to the focolarini during retreats.

During his funeral his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren sang the *Te Deum*, in an atmosphere of profound emotion and gratitude..

The local newspapers also announced his death. The mayor wrote that just the surname «Wilke» already had a important meaning: August in fact was well-known in the city and in 2017 his name was written in the golden book of the Municipality. The spirit of the Wilke family, an unwavering faith in God and the commitment to carry on one's job in a just and right way with a constant regard for the good of the employees remains up to today as the characteristic of their business.

taking me into His passion so as to live in Him. It is no longer I who is doing something, but it is Him, He is carrying me in His arms. I found a new relationship with Mary: I feel her close to me and I ask her to help me to make all the steps. She, in her immense love and greatness, is opening the door for me to go to God. I pray that I can remain faithful up to the end». On February 2, Anita went to meet the Spouse at the age of 75. «Live in love, just as Christ has loved you and has given his life for you» (Eph 5,2): this was her Word of life.



## Howard J. Belcher

*Marriage the way of sanctity*

The first married focolarino of the United States, Howard reached the heavenly Mariapolis

on February 18 at 83 years old, surrounded by his wife Rose, married focolarina, his children of whom Paul is a focolarino, and by his sister Alice, also a married focolarina.

Howard met Rose in one of the first Mariapolises and they soon decided to form a family based on the life of the Gospel. He understood how any suffering reflects the face of Jesus Forsaken and everytime that He presents himself, he tried to say his "yes", to embrace Him and he wrote: «I thank Him for coming to visit me. Then I go back to my work, to love the person next to me, and my life passes from darkness into the light. I realized that I am able to feel the needs and difficulties of the others as my own».

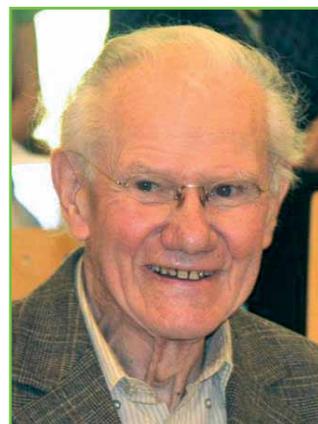
After 20 years of marriage Rose was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. «When we learned about this we were together in the hospital - Howard recalled. Together we said that we wanted to continue to believe that God loves us and that this illness too can in some way be a gift for our family». Much later he wrote: «I feel that marriage is a way to sanctity. I feel that marriage is a way to sanctity. Even with the beauty of being a family, God allows many sufferings so that each one can grow in virtue, in sanctity and in understanding the others». In 1986 with Rose and two of their children, they gave up a life of a certain financial stability in order to move as a family focolare to the newly started Mariapolis Luminosa where they immediately went to work to repair and renovate that different structures. On March 14, 2010, Howard and Rose were given the Luminosa Award for

their incredible contribution to building the Little town.

For Howard too, the moment arrived wherein his health no longer allowed him to actively do many things and instead he could only offer that which he could no longer do. He did this remaining always in charity and reflecting, up to the end, the meaning of the new name that Chiara gave him: Parvi=Parola vissuta (the Word lived) . His Word of life was: «My mother and brothers are those who listen to the Word and put it into practice» (Lk 8,21).

## Karel Van Driessche

*«Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God» (Mt 5,8)*



Married focolarino of Brussels, with his wife Jeanne – she too was a focolarina, already in the heavenly Mariapolis - Karel

was among the pioneers of the Movement in Belgium. A young doctor in search of a way to reconcile the world and the spirit, religion and consecrated life, he met the Movement in the '60s and he understood that he had found what his heart had been looking for in a long time. In the vocation of the married focolarino he experienced that «in the reciprocal communion with the virgins we purify the realities of our world and we go back home renewed. Therefore, we on our part, must love our wife, the children and the community in the right way».

He wrote to Chiara: «To marry Jesus Forsaken, means to love Him in my tiredness, my doubts, in the disunity between us spouses that can happen, in my sick patients with

their physical and moral sufferings. When I began to work as a doctor I would often lose my patience when dealing with the elderly and unruly children, the decaying flesh of those with gangrene repulsed me, but now I see Jesus Forsaken in them, as sick members of the mystical Body of Christ, and I know that it is for them that I am a doctor» (1967).

Karel and Jeanne were responsible for the New Families of the zone for many years. «With many of these families - he confided to Chiara - we have met several times even personally, and with Jeanne we try to be completely empty of ourselves, so that the couples can entrust us with their problems and so that we can receive new intuitions, helping us to assist them in the process of healing their relationships» (1987).

When Jeanne died in 2015, Karel began a very difficult period of his life also because his health also began to decline. It was a time in which he consciously prepared himself for his encounter with Jesus. On February 22, he concluded his rich and intense life (96 years old), and left a very precious legacy to his beloved children and for all those who had shared in his «holy journey».

telecommunication. In the parish he started a musical band and built sports facilities and facilities for social gatherings.

During a camp, he met Orsola. As they were preparing for marriage, they met the Movement and just to be able to participate in the Mariapolis, they delayed their honeymoon. It was the beginning of a life totally filled with the Ideal of unity.

In '81 he wrote to Chiara: «I feel within me the great desire to become a saint». And a few years later he told her about his choice to become a married focolarino. With Orsola they had four sons: Nino, Marco and the twins Luca and Paolo. The illness and death of little Marco was a moment of great trial for him, which he was able to overcome only with the love for Jesus Forsaken.

With affection and the witness of his life Pietro generated a great trust in his sons forming in them the «new men» of the Gospel. Their words read during his funeral were very moving, among which: «... I will never forget the times I would wait for you to come home from your business trips and you would always bring us magazines about dinosaurs and chocolate, or when we would go on vacation with our cousins and friends of the Movement and you would organize olympic games on the beach».

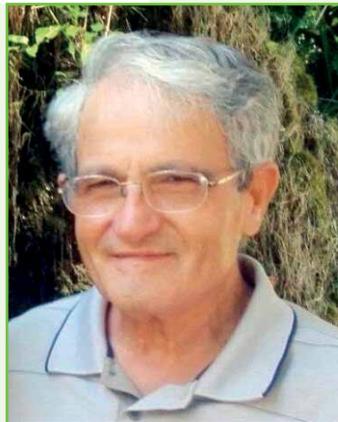
His relationship with Orsola, also a married focolarina, became more and more profound. «Maybe for the first time - he wrote in '83 - we were able to share among us on a different level of such a beautiful spirituality! I cannot explain how I felt, it is ineffable and I experienced what unity in the family means». Pietro and Orsola formed the family-focolare that became

a reference point for many families. For many years they were responsible for the New Families of their region and then of the newly born Economy of Communion.

## Pietro Tierno

### *An energetic life with a Marian touch*

Pietro, married focolarino of the zonetta of Naples, left this world on March 16 at the age of 70, due to an accident at home a few days before. A wise and sage man, concrete, always ready to help others, he preferred being in the background rather than being in the limelight. He was born in a family with good and healthy religious principles and he graduated as an engineer and worked in the field of



The law of his life was the Gospel, illuminated with simplicity and strength by his Word of life: «I am the light of the world, who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life» (Jn 8,12).

When he retired, Pietro assumed the presidency of the Administrative Council of the Mariapolis Center of Benevento, a role which he carried out with competence and the respect of his collaborators. One of them recalled: «After having said his idea, he would immediately lose it as if it were not important at all; instead his thought was almost always the right one, which helped us to take the necessary steps with prudence but with determination».

Emmaus wrote: «Edified by his life that was so energetic and with a Marian touch, we are especially united in prayer with Orsola and with his entire family».

her nieces and nephews to the MShe was an extraordinary Eucharistic minister in her parish.

She was already 85 years old when, in 2007, encouraged by her nucleo member, she invited a mayor of her town to a meeting of «Together for Europe». The bus that was leaving from Trent was already full so the mayor decided to go to Stuttgart (Germany) by car with a friend. They came back very enthusiastic. The relationship with him and the parish priest of Castello - the small village where Chiara used to teach - continued, giving rise to ideas and initiatives to honour her memory and to make her known to the people in their area.

«I deposit my sufferings into Chiara's bank account» she wrote to the one responsible for her nucleo some time ago, who shared that: «Ines believed in Jesus in the

midst with all her strength.

When we went to visit her she welcomed us with a big smile... she did not see us for what we were, with our limitations, but as the bearers of Him among us. Whether she was in the hospice where she chose to live, or in the hospital, she always brought with her the image of Jesus Forsaken beside the one of Mary

Desolate. "They are my all", she would say».

On November 19, 2017, at the age of 95, Ines «flew» into the arms of the Father. In her spiritual testament she wanted to let everyone know that the Ideal of Chiara was the motor of her life. «The world does not know it - she wrote - but they should know this: God loves me, God loves you, God loves us immensely».

*Chiara Negherbon Mose*

## Ines Dell'Eva Levegghi

### *A witness of the early times*

A native of Val di Sole (Trentine region) Ines was a young teacher when she met Chiara Lubich in the sala Massaia in Trent. But they were difficult years for her and she did not continue to attend the meetings.

«During Easter of '45 - she shared - I received a beautiful image of Jesus Crucified signed by Chiara with the writing: "Pearl of Jesus Crucified. May the cry of Jesus Forsaken go through the world". From that moment on that picture became a talking image for me».

She later became a Volunteer. Happy, sweet but determined, she was active and generous with the gifts that God gave her, revealing Himself to her as Love. She brought





## Fr. Rainer Lührmann

«*Consecrate them in the truth. Your Word is truth*»  
(Jn 17,17)

Priest focolarino of Germany, fr. Rainer was still in the seminary in Frankfurt when he welcomed the Ideal of unity with an open and generous heart. He spent a year at the genS Center and in 2000 he was ordained a priest. After seven years as the assitan parish priest he was transferred to the priests' focolare in Osnabrück. In 2011 he became the parish priest in Bremen, but after two years he had to leave this responsibility for health reasons. Thus he began his ministry «from the second row», but with concrete love for every person, specially for the youth whom he followed using the modern means of communication.

Fr. Rainer had a realistic way of looking at things and did not hesitate to put himself and others in front of the truth that led to freedom. Everyone spoke to him willingly: they felt understood and relieved of their burdens. In 2017 he had a mild heart attack which was followed by the diagnosis of a serious illness, but he wanted to return to the parish just the same, especially for the young people who were waiting for him.

In his final months the members of his focolare and his family stayed close to him, doing everything in unity, almost as if they were one family natural-supernatural together. The doctors and nurses said that they have never seen a patient suffer so much and at the same time remain happy and smiling.

On March 5, fr. Rainer went to join the Spouse of his soul at only 46 years old. During his funeral there were 750 people present, among whom were 90 altar boys and many young people. 700 people, with 80 priests participated in a mass the next day celebrated in his hometown.

*fr. Matthias Hembrock*

## Madre Marie-Claire Coustel

«*Keep silent and adore*»

Even before becoming a Benedictine of the Most Holy Sacrament in the Monastery of Mas Grenier (Montauban - France), where she became the prioress for a good 40 years, Marie-Claire had the gift of meeting Chiara in the first Mariapolis of Lourdes (1961) and to remain linked to her by a profound spiritual friendship. Her faithfulness to Jesus Forsaken and her passion for unity made Mother Marie-Claire a luminous guide for her sisters and the friends that came to visit her.



For many years she was the federal councillor of her Order, and she introduced the Movement to many people, especially to many youth who passed by the monastery. Upon Chiara's death (2008) she made an album with articles about her, the testimonies of important personalities, talks and messages of Bishops and representatives of other Religions, to make Chiara known to the many realities of the Benedictine charism.

Knowing that she was gravely ill, she began to prepare herself with great serenity for her encounter with the Lord, according to the motto «keep silent and adore» which has characterized her whole life. On December 19, 2017 at the age of 81, she took flight to Heaven from where she will certainly continue to intercede for the consecrated persons, for the Church and for the whole world.

*sr. Andrée Anger*

# Germaine Grimard St-Hilaire

*Di sorpresa in sorpresa*

Volunteer of Montréal (Canada), on the 6th of december, 2017 Germaine reached the heavenly Mariapolis at the age of 83. In 1980, while her son Marc – focolarino now at the Center of the Movement - was in Italy for the Genfest, she found an invitation to the mariapolis in New York in his room and she felt the push to go and participate. During those days a profound transformation took place in her and upon her return she wanted to make the pact of unity with marc so as to have Jesus in the midst also in the family. A new light made her characteristics shine. She was a strong woman, honest, sincere, but the Ideal made her even happier and spontaneous.

When her children became adults, she continued her study of nursing which she used later with great passion in the obstetrics department and then in a center for the elderly and sick Religious women. In view of «going out», she and her husband Claude worked to create relationships in their condominium with the people who were living alone.

In the home for the elderly where she went to live, Germaine continued to greet everyone with a smile even that lady who was always by herself. She found all the ways to sit beside her inspite of her apparent rejection. One day this lady finally responds to her greeting and asked how she was. To a Volunteer who asked her how she was preparing for her encounter with God, Germaine shared her experience and concluded: «How do I prepare myself? By loving. I am ready, and I am not afraid to die. I know that death is just a passage and I know where I am going».



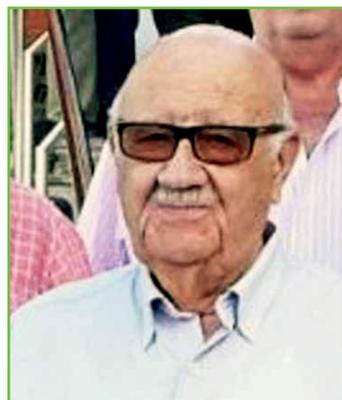
«In these last years – Marc confirmed – I saw her grow more profound. She made a strong choice of Jesus Forsaken and everytime He came, she would renew her “yes”. She would joyfully wait for the password, the Collegamento, the theme of the year which she would deepen month after month. In spite of her advancing age, the Ideal continued to bring her from one surprise to another ».

*Maya El Takchi Nas*

# José Mendoza Beteta

*Jesus in the midst his light and strength*

Volunteer of Jaén (Spain), José worked for many years in the Telephone Company as a qualified technician, earning the trust and respect of his superiors and colleagues. Married to Angelita, and not having children of their own, they dedicated themselves with passion and love in caring for orphaned children and those in need, often becoming their tutors: it was not an easy experience, even if it was quite gratifying. The encounter with the Ideal refined his love and motivated them even more in their work. the children they cared for, whom they loved as if they were their own children, considered them as their real parents.



Together with other Volunteers of his city, José worked with them in building a home for the elderly, attentive to creating a family atmosphere among its residents and bringing much joy. The experiences he shared were

simple but very concrete, all characterized by acts of love, such as having lunch with an elderly man who was passing through a difficult moment, talking to a person with Alzheimer's, buying a box of eyeglasses with different grades to distribute to those in the home, etc.

He awaited with joy his nucleo meetings because – he said – «Jesus in the midst is my light and my strength». On November 2, 2017, at 86 years old, a heart attack during his sleep brought him to Heaven

*Toni Torres*



## Dolores (Lola) Zoghbi Cabrera

*She illuminated and transformed her city*

Lola, Volunteer of the Canary Islands, left for Heaven at 96 years old last January 11, 2017. She was a strong woman, with a lot of initiative: her fighting spirit merged well with her creativity, intelligence and wisdom which were her support in raising five children by herself, and in her untiring work for the Movement.

She dedicated herself to the development of New Humanity, of which she was the person in-charge in the Zone for many years, involving herself in the different social problems in the territory.

With other members of the Movement they founded the «Asociación Socio-Cultural Luminosa» (Luminosa Socio-Cultural Association), whose statutes are registered in the Government of the Canary Islands and are consulted up to today when there are ethical controversies with regards to labour and immigration. She published articles in local newspapers and would speak out in the radio and on TV to denounce situations of

social injustices which she come across and obtains the collaboration of the institutions. She conducts educational programmes and programmes against dependencies, promoting the interaction among generations, taking care of ecology and the environment.

In her 80s, the women Volunteers gave her a computer so that she could live the reality of the Movement today. And thus through the internet she was able to finally meet a person in Argentina who was sending her the Word of life every month. During her long life, with humour, ingenuity and transparency, Lola was able to illuminate and transform her city.

*Ana Guerrero*

## sr. Stefania Biava

*The «many fruits» of the Gospel*

Religious of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, she was originally from Bergamo, and at 41 years old, Sr. Stefania met the Ideal of unity in the parish community of Vallo Torinese. «It was a great light - she shared - a leap of quality in my life. The spirituality of Chiara Lubich made the connection with that of my founder». She tried to live it joyfully in her community, in the school where she taught, in the parish, among the people, from North to South of Italy, in the neighbourhoods of Rome and Naples. Wherever she went she had a special love for the weakest and with her evangelical zeal of sharing others' sufferings she was able to build relationships even with people who were far from God, in tune with the motto that Chiara had chosen for her: «Living the Gospel will bear much fruit».

At 78 years old she was asked to leave the mission. «Providence - she wrote in a letter



- prepared me for another beautiful experience, no longer made up of "leaps" with the youth, but "leaps" in faith and in the love for my sick and elderly sisters. In this reality there are many beautiful things, but also many sufferings: it is an experience of acceptance, patience, to practice seeing Jesus in them. This is, after all, our life. It is perfect charity which means that even if they make mistakes they

are not judged. This is also a gift of the love of God for me ».

On December 9, at the age of 90 anni, sr. Stefania left for Heaven, on tiptoes, after a life totally given to God in simplicity and gratitude. A true child of the Gospel who with her heart rooted in Jesus Forsaken, experienced with Chiara that «already and not yet» of Paradise.

*sr. Marina Motta*



## Tomas Pascual Rodriguez

*Visibility for the Movement*

Born in a family with good religious principles, Tomas became a doctor in chemistry, and he specialized in Enology (the study of wines), sharing his precious competence in different Spanish universities. He married Laura and at 46 years old, in the Laboral University of Sevilla, someone spoke to him of the Ideal. Together with his wife they adhered with enthusiasm to this new life and both of them became Volunteers. Chiara chose the Word of life for them: «God manifests himself to those who love Him» (cf. Jn 14,21).

Tomas, always more convinced of the lifestyle of the Focolare, did all he could to share it with his nine children, friends and acquaintances. He is active in the mariapolises and in the life of the Movement; he offered his competence as one of the professors for the UPM. For many years he was responsible for a nucleus and was involved in the secretariat of New Humanity, without ignoring the many meetings with friends of other Churches. He was diligent in spreading the Word of life and took advantage of all the occasions to share the ideal and give visibility to the Movement.

When he turned 90, he began to feel that his hour was coming and as he prepared himself, surrounded by his family, he entrusted himself to the Holy Spirit asking for his assistance up to the end, constantly repeating: «Let's keep Jesus in the midst». He left for Heaven on September 18, 2017.

*Toni Torres*

## Thérèse Zoghbi

*She radiated with «baraké (grace, blessing)»*

What impressed us about Thérèse – Volunteer of Lebanon – was her authenticity, her union with God, her prayer life which often found her spending long



hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament, her speed in serving and visiting the sick, watching over friends who were in the hospital.

In 1985, with some of her friends they found a deprived neighbourhood of refugees in the outskirts of Beirut. From that moment on she did not

abandon these families, the children, brothers, reliving during those times of war, the experience of the first focolarine. Thérèse consecrated her life to God at the service of these people, who were then cared for through the IRAP institute for deaf children and youth.

Being a pharmacist, she took up the responsibility of the medical and social center; she was often seen walking through the neighbourhood, much awaited and loved by everyone, especially by the children. The doctors too loved and respected her, spending

time with her to «soak up the *baraké*» (grace, blessing), that something supernatural that emanated from her person.

In her final days, her eyes would close due to fatigue while she prayed reciting the psalms, but she continued to recite them by memory, especially the *Magnificat*, opening her eyes and with a big smile whenever someone came to visit her. Thérèse left this world on September 28, 2017 at the age of 83, accompanied by the whole Movement.

*Rita Harzoung*

## Chiara Grillo Bettero

*A rather special «popetta  
(little popa)»*

On the night of December 17, 2017, due to a cerebral haemorrhage Chiara left unexpectedly for Heaven at 37 years old, in her house in Rovigo (Italy).

Chiara had three children: Mariasole, 10 years old (gen3), Lorenzo, seven (gen4) and Margherita, four years old, and with her husband Davide, were among the committed members of the New Families.

In 1983 her family (mother, Lia, is a Volunteer and her father Virginio, is a married focolarino) moved to the Roman Mariapolis. At seven years old Chiara was among the first group of children directly followed by the gen4 Center. One day Chiara Lubich went to visit their Center, she listened to their experiences and, pointing to little Chiara, said: «This is a rather special “popetta” (a term in the Trentine dialect which means child - *ndr*)». Dori Zamboni, one of the first companions of Chiara, also saw a special sensitivity in her and sometimes would bring her along when she went away for a week-end to rest.



As she grew up, Chiara decided to pursue a career in social work, a service that she carried out with great passion, drawing from the Gospel as her continuous source of conversion and commitment, which made her capable of uniting different viewpoints.

She also participated actively in the parish: she was a catechist, animator of groups of families, assisted in the formation courses for engaged couples, and in the preschool activities. With her sunny disposition she brought joy to all those she met.

During her funeral mass, concelebrated by seven priests, the parish priest spoke of Chiara as a «woman of faith, on a journey to sanctity, in love with Jesus Christ and a bride all decked out for her Spouse» and he underlined the many Beatitudes that were reflected in her life. The many testimonies were touching, among which were those of the mayor of the town where she worked and those of her colleagues, who decided to start a project named after her in favour of minors in fragile family situations.

*Donata e Marco Tessarin*

## Gianna Barabaschi

*Standing straight, like the Desolate*

Gianna was a Volunteer of the zonetta of Bologna, a bank employee, and married to Salvatore, secretary of the town council. In 2009, in a car accident wherein she was the driver, her mother dies and Gianna, found guilty, had to undergo criminal proceedings. The suffering was immense but the support of the whole family and of the Movement, which she had just met a few years before, helped her to overcome this great trial rooting her profoundly in the Ideal. Mary became her strength.

In 2016 Salvatore got sick and the doctors could not find out the cause which eventually led to his unexpected death. Gianna lived this dramatic situation anchored in God, standing tall, like the Desolate, certain of Paradise.



And here, she began her personal ascent, accepting the inevitable physical breakdown and moments of despair. In her many hospitalizations she built special relationships with her roommates and the cleaning staff. An elderly lady in the next bed, wanting to be like her, recited the rosary with her everyday, asked for confession and received the Eucharist and the anointing of the sick: after a few days she left for Heaven.

Even in the home for the elderly where Gianna went, she did not stop loving, conquering everyone with her smile «that conveyed something great». When she was told that most probably she would not live to see the morning, she was worried more for those who came to visit her and had nowhere to sit rather than for herself. A short while later, peacefully and with a short sigh, she left for the heavenly Mariapolis. She was 76 years old.

It was the 7th of December, 2017.

*Daniela Nicolini Palmieri*

## Luigina Micocci Pasquini

*Attentive and hardworking, humble and sweet*

Luigina, from central Italy, was still young when she chose to become a Volunteer, putting God in the first place and giving herself generously to others. She was attentive and hardworking, humble and sweet, her house always open to everyone. She was also very active in the parish and with her meekness and readiness to be of service, she attracted many people to God. With love she assisted her husband Mario, also a Volunteer, during his long illness, without



ever complaining, and while comforting their two children and the grandchildren.

For several years she also had to deal with an illness that she had accepted from the very beginning as the will of God, diligently following everything that the doctors told her to do.

In her final years she was often in the hospital. In spite of this she was faithful in receiving the Eucharist daily, and as much as possible also to her nuclear life. On August 25, 2017 the Father called her to Himself at the age of 86.

*Anna Maria Dettori Bambini*

# Artenice (Nuccia) Campari

«I can give myself because  
God loves me»



Since she was young Nuccia, Volunteer of Parma (Italy), knew suffering: the loss of her mother, her father remarried and had a son. But because of the brightness of her sunny character, she was able to build a special relationship both with

her half-brother and with the new wife of her father. She worked with diligence and passion, building authentic relationships with everyone.

Her encounter with the Focolare marked a decisive moment in her life. Her life, which was already good, was transformed. She understood that all sufferings of the past and the present had a meaning if seen from the Crucifix. She wrote to a friend: «There is a song that flows from my heart in this moment of my life: I can start again, I can give myself because He, God loves me!».

Gradually the desire to dedicate herself to giving catechism lessons grew in Nuccia, and soon she became a living stone of her community. Many of the teens formed by her have remained affectionately close to her throughout the years. She took special care of the liturgy in her parish and even held formation courses on this for other lay people. Her commitment in the parish was a mission which brought her much closer to God. In June 11, 2017, on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, she left this world to go to the Father's house at 87 years old.

*Daniela Nicolini Palmieri*

## Our relatives

The following passed on to the next life: **fr. Ermete**, brother of **Maria Palombo**, focolarina at the Roman Mariapolis; **Antonio**, brother of **Gianni Novello**, focolarino at the Roman Mariapolis; **Sabina Carmen**, mother of **Carmen Pérez**, focolarina in Buenos Aires; **Eugenia Sobkowska**, sister of **Irena Budasz**, focolarina in the Mariapoli Fiore (Poland); **Józef Pelc**, father of **Joanna Iwko**, married focolarina of Breslavia (Poland); **Ana**, daughter of **Mirjam and Thon Horzelenberg**, married focolarini in Slovenia; **Zdravko Kokalj**, father of **Anica Povirk**, married focolarina in Slovenia; **Zofka**, mother of **Silva Tomis (Gevi)**, focolarina in Slovenia; **József**, father of **Erzsó Barna (Marides)**, focolarina in Bratislava; **Franco**, father of **Daniela (Ams)**, focolarina in Bologna, and of **Donatella Fiorani**, focolarina in Montreal (Canada); **Nino**, father of **Sara Pagliaricci Ferrante**, married focolarina in the Roman Mariapolis; **Ashiq**, father of **Arif**, focolarino in Karachi (Pakistan); **Teresa**, mother of **Dennis Mestroni**, focolarino in Udine; **Pierina**, mother of **Aurelio Sitta**, focolarino in Loppiano; **Vesela**, mother of **David Krsticevich**, focolarino in Melbourne; **Elva**, mother of **fr. Beppe Uberto**, priest focolarino in Piedmont; **Giuseppina**, mother of **Anna Bevilacqua**, focolarina in Florence; the mother of **Maria Teresa Bracco**, focolarina in Trento; **Ini**, mother of **Rita Nolasco (Ting)**, focolarina in the Mariapoli Peace (Tagaytay); **Enrico**, father of **Stella Park**, focolarina in Korea; **Manoel**, father of **Doni Valente**, focolarina in Gen Verde; **Alberto**, father of **Esperanza Aid**, focolarina in the Southern Cone, and of **Laura**, extern married focolarina in Asunción; **Francisco Josè**, father of **Dolores (Uni) Dos Santos**, focolarina in Iași (Romania); **Speria**, mother of **Cristina Frias Del Arco**, focolarina in Warsaw; **Joseph**, father of **Cecilia Maundu**, focolarina in Lubumbashi (Congo).

**Errata Corrige.** Correction of an error which appeared in *Mariapoli* n. 1-2/2018 that gave the exact dates of the «departure» of Gis Calliari (pag. 34) and of Margaret Rose Anthony Gill (Perla) (pag. 37) are respectively January 20 and not 19, 2018, and the 1° of January, 2018 and not the 1° of December, 2017, as erroneously indicated. We are sorry for the unintentional mistakes.

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