

The primacy of 'being' over 'doing'

"What do you think?", "What would you do if you were me?" People often ask for our help, or we realise they need it, and we are convinced that to help a friend, a brother, a person, we need to "do" something.

In the book "Meditations", a collection of Chiara Lubich's very first spiritual writings, we find a few lines where she invites us to change our perspective and aim at the life of God in us. Thus, our love for all others would be His love and not ours.

There are those who do things 'for love'. There are those who do things trying to 'be Love'. Someone who does things 'for love' may do them well, but thinking for example that they are doing a great service for their neighbour, who is sick for instance, they may annoy them with their chatter, their advice and their help. Such charity is burdensome and not to the point.

Poor thing! They may gain merit, but the other person gains a burden.

That is why we must 'be Love'.

Our destiny is like that of the stars: if they revolve, they are; if they do not, they are not. We are, in the sense that not our own life but the life of God lives in us, if we do not stop loving for one moment.

Love places us in God and God is Love.

But Love, which is God, is light and with the light we see whether our way of approaching and serving our neighbour is according to the heart of God, as our neighbour would wish to be, as they would dream of it being if they had beside them not us, but Jesus.

Chiara Lubich

Text adapted from Meditations, New City London, Dublin, 1989, p. 45



Dear Readers

A "focolarino year" is about to end with the month of September, a year dedicated in particular to spiritual insights on the Church and the Holy Spirit. It is therefore no wonder that this edition of Mariapolis is full of the vitality typical of the Spirit of Jesus.

It is the life that has been concentrated, among other things, in the European Mariapolis project (pages 2-6) which took place in Fiera di Primiero, where 70 years ago the Mariapolis began. And after 60 years this experience has brought up to date the famous "the peoples' pact" launched by Chiara in 1959, which is the commitment to love other peoples' country as one's own.

At a time when sovereignty seems to prevail more and more, this initiative is amazingly newsworthy. It invites people to work so that it is not just individuals who love one another but also nations. It is about knowing and valuing all the positive things about other countries and cultures. It is a unity among peoples that maintains diversity, even increasing it, diversity because each people should be concerned to contribute to the growth and fulfilment of other peoples.

Is it a dream? Surely! But in all nations there are already people who live to achieve it.

*Joachim Schwind
Focolare Communication Office*



A Mariapolis for Europe/1 - 'Rediscovering God's plan for humanity'

The first European Mariapolis, sponsored by the Focolare Movement at Tonadico, in the Dolomites, has begun and runs through August 8.

Within the historical and political context of a Europe divided and in conflict, this event aims to show that the dream of brotherhood among peoples is not some faraway utopia. The original intuition that Focolare's founder, Chiara Lubich, had last century during the 1940s and 1950s has carried through to various fields of knowledge, and to the heart of relationships between individuals and peoples. We discussed it with Fabio Ciardi, who is responsible for the movement's interdisciplinary study centre, the Abbà School.

What is the link between Chiara Lubich's mystical experiences in 1949 and 1950 during and after the first Mariapolises, and the birth of the Abbà School?

"The Abbà School began in order to go deeper into what had happened during those years. Chiara had the opportunity to write her experience little by little as it happened, aware that within it was a teaching – values so profound and rich that they could nourish not just the movement but the Church as well. Later she felt the need to take up those pages yet again, so she began to call on people with a certain amount of culture to go more deeply into her experience and help the doctrine that was already within it flow."

Among the fields represented in the Abbà School are history and political science. Can the group's reflections in these areas help us understand the reasons that the European Union was founded?

"The experience that Chiara had in 1949 gave her a vision from on high of God's designs for humanity and history. So you can find values there that are at the foundations of Europe. The Abbà School hopes to bring them to light and show how current they are. Today the Mariapolis helps us discover those designs and understand what God's plan for our history is and who we are."

In the early days Chiara had an intuition that Europe was called to be united at its core. Igino Giordani, one of the movement's co-founders, hoped for a "United States of Europe" that would present itself as a federal entity of peoples in the global context. Today, however, we are far off from that vision, and nationalism and populism run through Europe. How can we find that passion again and make it contagious?

"It seems to me that the initial experience of 1949 has all the elements to expand our hearts; to grow that sense of fraternity, hospitality and sharing; and to promote a way forward together. At the beginning Chiara's reflections were focused on Italy, and she spoke of Saint Catherine and Saint Francis as its patron saints. Yet soon her horizons expanded when people from other European countries and continents joined the movement. She saw the charism of unity resonate for all of them, and each found their deepest values there. She saw all of humanity moving towards unity. I think this could be a fundamental ideal that can be realised today as well. We need to reflect culturally in a way that combines God's great plan for humanity with the current political, economic, and historical situation."

What message does the experience at the European Mariapolis send to the citizens of Europe?

"The idea that European unity is not uniformity or an obligation, but it is a richness that comes from having great diversity – not only from the historical European peoples but the new ones who arrive as well. Europe is something we build; it has been in continual construction since its origins. It needs to know how to combine these two elements: promote fraternity, sharing, communion and unity; and at the same time, value the great cultural diversity and the particular history of each people. I think that the Mariapolis could be the new melting pot in which we learn to respect and love each other, and live together." So the Mariapolis is a

“lab” of unity for Europe. Someone might object that this is outlook is simply utopian...

“Utopias are located in imaginary places where you dream up a reality that does not in fact exist. A Mariapolis, instead, is a different place that is not utopian

but real. I think we need to put forward experiences like this one once again – meaningful, despite small, which show how the world could be if we truly lived the laws of fraternity, love and unity.” ■

Claudia Di Lorenzi

A Mariapolis for Europe/2 – Living communion

An interview with Lucia Abignente, co-author with Giovanni Delama of 'A Golden City', the story of the first Mariapoli, to be published by Città Nuova in September.

The first Mariapolis happened 70 years ago in the Dolomites in the Trentino province of northern Italy. It was the summer of 1949 and Chiara Lubich had a few years earlier made her definitive choice to live the Gospel, a choice already shared with a group of companions. Together they went to the mountains, to Tonadico di Primiero, to rest. It became a key moment in the history of the Focolare Movement. During this time, through a mystical experience Chiara gained a new understanding of God's plan on the emerging presence in the Church: the Work of Mary. Since that time, similar gatherings, which came to be called Mariapolis (“City of Mary”), take place every year in summer time, in countries all around the world.

In the story of Mariapoli, the years from 1949 to 1959 have particular significance. Can you explain in what way?

Those years mark the origins of Mariapolis, years in which the power of the charism of unity, given by God to Chiara for the Church, was producing new fruits. A very strong sense of communion was generated among the participants who were of all ages, social backgrounds and even from different countries. (The 1959 Mariapolis was visited by 12,000 people from 27 countries!) It emerged as a profound experience of God, a way of sanctity lived together as a family. It has been described as a “people of God”, to use a term the Second Vatican Council would later promote.

Why is it called “Mariapolis”?

In fact, this name first appeared in 1955, and it emerged from the life of these gatherings over the years, which developed as a kind of small city, a people who identified themselves as being guided by Mary. The Gospel-inspired love lived among them generated the presence of the divine, in the sense of Jesus' teaching, “Where two or more are united in my name, I am in their midst” (Mt 18:20). And this enlightening experience inspired the title of our book on the Mariapolis phenomenon.

How would you define the key elements of these gatherings which are still taking place today?

I would summarize them in one word: “communion”, or rather “communions”. Meaning, communion in the Eucharist, renewed each day; communion with the Word of the Gospel; communion with our sisters and brothers. This is what characterized the Mariapolis experience of 1949, and this is what we find in the Mariapoli which continue to this day. From this communion, people draw strength to continue to live this experience in their daily lives, to cooperate in the design of God on Creation and on the social environment around them.

What is the most important thing you learnt from those who participated in the very first Mariapoli?

Meeting those “witnesses”, I saw how their Mariapolis experience is not a memory for them but a vivid and vital reality to this very day. From the written testimonies I've gleaned the authenticity of a life lived as a “body”, in the quest for unity. ➡



Those early Mariapoli have sparked off some notable long-term effects ...

First of all the “Città Nuova” magazine (“New City” or “Living City”) came to life during these first Mariapoli as a way of keeping all the participants in touch with this life once they got back home. Then there are the permanent “Mariapoli” small towns which have been established in different countries - Chiara first spoke about these in 1956. The Focolare’s experience of dialogue among members of different Christian Churches was already part of the Fiera di Primiero Mariapolis in 1957. The presence of charismatic figures within the Catholic Church indicated pathways of communion which were later developed in the Second Vatican Council and by successive Church leadership. It’s also possible to identify the precursors of the Movement’s impact on social and political fields.

In the permanent Mariapolis towns, people of different ages, countries, cultures and Christian traditions live together, putting the Gospel into practice. Diversity lived in a context of unity. Do you draw any message from these Mariapolis towns for today’s Europe fragmented by nationalist and populist pressures?

Pope Francis made a very important point when he visited the Mariapolis town of Loppiano, Italy, last year. He spoke of the “mysticism of ‘us’” which propels us to walk together through our part of history. This is something which was very alive in the first Mariapoli. For example, in 1959, despite being so close to the end of the second world war, participants from Italy, Germany and many other countries overcame their own personal barriers, to consecrate their peoples to Mary. They wanted to do this together, as a demonstration of love for one another, forming the “one people of God”. ■

Claudia Di Lorenzi

A commitment to unity among peoples



At the end of the European Mariapolis, Maria Voce reiterated the value and relevance of the commitment to unity among peoples made 60 years ago. The Focolare President’s full text.

*“If one day all people, not as individuals but as peoples; if one day all peoples learned how to set themselves aside, to set aside the idea they have of their homeland and their kingdoms, and offer them like incense to the Lord ... and if they were to do this for the sake of mutual love among states, which God asks for in the same way that he asks for mutual love among brothers and sisters, that day will be the beginning of a new era. On that day, just as there is the living presence of Jesus between two people who love each other in Christ, so too Jesus will be alive and present among peoples ...”**

In these words, on the 30th of August 1959, Chiara Lubich, the founder of Focolare Movement, outlined

her dream for unity among all peoples. It became clear that this was the task that God entrusted to the new Movement, for the sake of humanity.

In the aftermath of a war laden with hatred and pain, thousands of men and women from 27 countries and representing all continents made a solemn pact. It was the 22nd of August, the day on which the Catholic Church celebrates the Virgin Mary as Queen; and the Mariapolis in the Primiero Valley was coming to an end.

Sixty years later, on the 10th of August, at the end of the European Mariapolis at Tonadico, everyone there celebrated this anniversary and re-launched the value and relevance of the commitment to unity among peoples. Below is the full text by Maria Voce, Focolare President.

“Sixty years ago, in this locality, parliamentarians from different countries united in prayer to consecrate to

Mary their own people and all peoples on earth. Each of them bore in their hearts the hopes and aspirations of their countries, to which they had to respond with responsible and fitting political choices. They faced significant challenges, at a time when ideological conflict was dividing the world into opposing blocs that threatened world peace. After the war, cities needed to be rebuilt, communities re-established, economies developed, lawfulness guaranteed and services maintained. All these were urgent problems calling for political competence and care for society. Yet those politicians did not gather round a table, nor did they organise an international summit; instead they prayed for unity among peoples.

It was an unusual choice, indeed, but it guaranteed the future. The world of politics calls for skill and responsibility, honesty and consistency, the ability to work with passion and courage. But the value that most enhances political action is farsightedness, the ability to see beyond, to see further, so as to plan the future frameworks of society and foster their growth.

Yes, at times of crisis and rebuilding, interpreting change can be important; being able to envisage the future can make all the difference. And the further ahead one is able to see, the more influential and transforming is one's action in the present.

Those politicians who, sixty years ago, asked God for the gift of unity and decided to commit to its fulfilment, knew how to look very far ahead. From their involvement with Chiara Lubich's charism they had learned an important lesson: the destiny of the universe is unity. This was not only clear to them in an intellectual manner, because unity was the lifestyle and the norm of the Mariapolis: they had actually experienced it in the smaller or greater actions and choices of daily life. Unity lived in the Movement as it developed shed a special light on relationships in society that all people were called to edify, in whatever circumstances they found themselves.

Unity is seen, always and in any age, as a new and revolutionary way of conceiving life and the world. It is not simply an ideal like any other, because it arises from the prayer that Jesus himself addressed to the Father, when he raised his eyes to heaven and prayed that all may be one. It is from this prayer that human history draws meaning. It is not by chance that one of the first politicians who followed Chiara Lubich was Igino Giordani, a member of the Italian parliament. He welcomed the ideal of unity interpreting it with this most effective



expression: “history is a fifth gospel”, because history shows the constant and progressive fulfilment of Jesus prayer and therefore of God's plan for creation.

Everything is marching towards unity. This means that social changes that can positively transform the present are ones that accompany citizens, associations and states towards a world that is more cohesive, where there is greater solidarity. All that contributes to cooperation, peace and greater closeness among communities and groups is in line with authentic progress and enables development. In other words, if you want to do your people some good, you need to busy yourself with the good of other peoples. That is why, strengthened by a prophetic and ever relevant message, Chiara Lubich never ceased to spread the message of unity, speaking to politicians and all those actively engaged in society with the exhortation to “love your neighbour's party as your own”, to “love your neighbour's country as your own”.

The challenges we face today are no less urgent than those of 60 years ago. Quite the opposite. The need to work for unity among peoples is clearer today than ever. The global processes we are witnessing show the interdependence of states, nations and communities on our planet. It is ever clearer that all peoples on earth share one destiny and that the big issues of our day concern matters that are vital for all people: care for the environment, older and newer types of poverty, the invisible conflicts and the wars that make the news, migration on a global scale (which is more often than not the outcome of poverty, war and climate change), the redistribution of wealth, access to natural resources and the recognition of human rights. These issues cut across civil, cultural and political differences. Hence, they engage countries in an ongoing cycle of dialogue ➡

aiming to develop processes of political integration and convergence in decision making.

Yes, the future of humankind appeals, in a loud voice, for unity. The Focolare Movement responds to this appeal by fostering dialogue among different political parties (for example through the Movement for Politics and Policies for Unity), by encouraging the communion of goods and the culture of giving (through the Economy of Sharing), by studying the doctrine of unity (for example at the Sophia University Institute); by promoting unity in places of professional and social engagement and by way of many specific projects and initiatives (through New Humanity).

Today too, like 60 years ago, we can pray to God for unity among all peoples on earth.

My deepest wish is that this prayer should be accompanied by a renewed commitment, taken on both personally and as communities, to live for a united world. We will spread the seeds of change that are needed to transform the present and write new pages in the history of the human family as it progresses towards unity.” ■

Maria Voce

(*) <http://www.centrochiaralubich.org/it/documenti/scritti/4-scritto-it/183-maria-regina-del-mondo.html>



Images: © Press office European Mariapolis



Peace, legality, human rights: the Focolare youth's commitment for 2020

#intimeforpeace is the hashtag that expresses the Focolare youth's commitment for the coming year. Programmes for campuses, workshops and courses in different parts of the world, starting from Loppiano (Italy), are already focusing on it.

During the past year, until May 2019, the Focolare youth concentrated on promoting and contributing towards a more humane economy, one of communion that pledges attention to people in need. During the last couple of months they have also started to focus on various fields of justice, because Economy and Justice are the first two steps in Pathways for a United World: a global strategy proposed by Youth for a United World (Y4UW) as a commitment to address the challenges our world has to face. In this project there are six different pathways, one for each year, and as one of the organizers explained: "Each year we focus on a different challenge without neglecting our previous commitments. Our commitment ranges from economy to politics, from justice to art, from dialogue between cultures to sport, and we promote actions, collaborations and projects based on fraternity and geared towards a local impact that aims at a global change".

The motto "In time for peace" marks the commitment for the coming year, which ends at Korea during the first week of May 2020. During the coming months, the Gen and Y4UW will be offered opportunities where they can train, study in depth and exchange ideas on themes that deal with justice, peace, legality and rights.

The Summer School, held in Loppiano from 7 to 22 July, proved to be a very significant opportunity. The 40 young participants came from various countries, that included Korea, Hong Kong, Malta, Scotland, Italy, Brazil, Cuba, Myanmar, Poland and Colombia.

Maria Giovanna Rigatelli, a lawyer involved in "Communion and Law", who participated as an expert, high-

lighted the importance of similar experiences, opportunities for young people to immerse themselves both in the cultural heritage and in the historical wounds of the different peoples they come into contact with. "The world's situation reveals lack of knowledge about the values of human rights. The school made us become more aware of the importance of personal commitment to contribute, for example, in dramatic situations like that of the two Koreas or Hong Kong. Through our commitment, we can be a light that shines in many parts of the world".

Y, a young girl from Korea said: "Our nation is divided into two and there are many wounds that do not justify this division. To have peace we must learn to dialogue. During this school I thought: if we continue to love, to love, to love, maybe at the end we will be able to reunite the two Koreas".

D. explained: "Before I came here, so many things were happening in Hong Kong, and I started to think that, maybe, at times the use of violence is necessary and that peace might not be the only remedy to solve the problems. I felt very frustrated. But after the experience I have lived here and all that I have heard about peace, I now feel so happy. During this year, as young people, we will go deeper and live in the "pathway" dedicated to human rights, justice and peace. So I question myself: how can I say that it is good to use violence, when so many people are wounded and killed? Here, I have learned how to love others and how to focus on love among us. I know it's difficult to walk in the path of peace, but I think we should try to achieve it without using violence. When I return home, I want to make use of what I've learned and experienced in Loppiano so that I can love people in Hong Kong, even the ones I hate". ■

Letizia Spano

The Up2Me Project: school of reciprocity

Emotions, sexuality and relationships are at the heart of this course for teens and families. This year it will extend to smaller children as well. We discuss it with Barbara and Paolo Rovea.

Let's be honest: building relationships that can really be called "true" has never been easy, especially not these days, when most of our relationships are filtered through technology beginning at the earliest ages. Children and teens learn much from their smartphone screens, while today's parents are more or less left floundering and, with various levels of awareness, continually searching for the key to understand and educate their children about their emotions and sexuality. It is an immense challenge when faced alone, although it does become possible through the synergy of family, youth facilitators and professionals.

The Up2Me Project (with the tagline "It depends on me") began by reorganising the educational pact entirely. It started by offering teens, tweens and their families a personal, shared space that was also qualified to recognise and deal with emotions. This was in order to bring about positive relationships at home, school and in groups, and ultimately to offer tools to build purpose over a lifetime. Begun within the Focolare's education environment, the project grew and is spreading to a number of countries. We talk to Barbara and Paolo Rovea, a physiotherapist and doctor couple in Italy who are on Up2Me's expert panel and members of the New Families International Centre.

Up2Me began in 2016 with two pilot courses in Italy and a few trials in various countries. Where did the idea come from?

The project aims at holistic training, including emotions and sexuality. This is in order to shape the basic choices in life – which our children need to deal with and for which they are often not adequately prepared for with the right tools. Many parents even do not feel sufficiently prepared for the role of educator, and the information teens get at school or through the media in many cases does not shape them to place value on people, nor educate them to take responsibility for their choices and behaviours.

At the core of the project is the idea to contribute to create a "person-relationship". What's that about?

To relate to others is the essence of being human, an ontological foundation to promote complete develop-

ment, which sees children and teens, according to their age, play a lead role in making their decisions, aware and able to experience positive relationships, all for the harmonious development of their physical, emotional, intellectual, social, environmental, historical and spiritual sides.



In order to become an Up2Me tutor and start teaching a course, you need to attend an international school. When are the next ones scheduled?

For 2019 there are three new courses planned. One will be launched in the Philippines and is especially for Asia and Australia. Another in Argentina will be for participants from the Americas. Finally, one in Prague is aimed at Europe. There will also be a specific course in Prague for facilitators of the Up2Me course for young children.

Up2Me has three courses for tweens and teens (ages 9-11, 12-14, 15-17) and one for children. What methodology is being used?

Employing inductive reasoning, under the guide of a tutor, this method helps young people develop their capacity to gain a conscience autonomously. Through video, role playing and group activities, teens and tweens discover fundamental principles so they can shape their personal consciences. Up2Me also offers their parents, if they wish, a parallel course with educational topics that correlate to those taken on by the teens. Alongside a married couple, they exchange experiences of life and find that education is actually "mission possible". Finally, in the course for younger children, their parents are actively involved alongside facilitators and experts. Together with their children, through games, they open up to specific subjects. All of this is to build up people who are able to recognise emotions within themselves and others and learn how to manage them, as well as take on subjects such our bodies, living and even dying. ■

Stefania Tanesini

Protection of minors: updated version of guidelines

The Focolare Movement has released the new version of its “Guidelines on the promotion of the well-being and protection of minors and vulnerable persons”. The updated text, which has just come into force, can be downloaded from our website.

The Focolare Movement has updated its “Guidelines on the promotion of the well-being and protection of minors and vulnerable persons” in the wake of Pope Francis’ “Motu Proprio” on the protection of minors, published on May 7, 2019. A number of new policies have been introduced in the text, which also incorporates principles declared by the International Law and provides the policy guidelines for the Permanent Central Commission for the Promotion of the well-being and protection of minors (Co.Be.Tu.), the Supervisory Body and local members entrusted with this responsibility.

When we asked Dr. Orazio Moscatello, a member of Co.Be.Tu to speak about these new policies, he said: “The new guidelines reaffirm the general principles that regulate all activities where children and adolescents are concerned, the legal duty of members responsible for the Focolare Movement to take all the measures necessary to prevent abuses in the Movement and the moral duty of all members of the Movement to report any form of abuse and ill-treatment they may come across. The new guidelines do not only address sexual abuse, but they consider all forms of abuse and ill-treatment, stalking and bullying. The text speaks about transparent procedures to ensure fairness and impartiality to all those involved in the matter. It establishes that all internal investigations are not to last longer than 90 days, a period of time considered sufficient to listen to the victim and to the accused person, and to gather the information necessary to attest the abuse. Assigning a time limit for the investigation is a way of doing justice to the victims”.

What are the plans with regards to prevention?

“Training is a priority. The new guidelines, just as the previous ones, establish the requirement of a basic course to train adults entrusted with the care of children in subject-matter related to childhood, from the psychological, pedagogical and legal point of view. The new guidelines specify that these courses are to be repeated every two years, and that the suitability of the adult, where activities with children are concerned, is to be checked at the end of the course. Moreover, one needs to strengthen skills that assist with indications on the environment, relationship with families and formalities in emergency situations”.



Dr. Orazio Moscatello, a member of Co.Be.Tu.

The duty to report to the judicial authorities is provided for only in certain countries. The Focolare Movement is present throughout the world; what is its position on this subject?

“In its new approved document, the Focolare Movement stresses the legal duty of those responsible to take all the precautions possible to prevent any form of abuse against minors and vulnerable persons. Obviously, among these precautions one finds the control and cautiousness needed to ensure that Focolare Communities present in every part of the world are fully aware of the contents in these Guidelines and of their application.

Then, as already mentioned, all adult members of the Movement have a moral duty to report cases of abuse to the internal bodies in charge. This applies to all countries, and we believe in a ‘zero tolerance’ policy. When it comes to reporting the abuse to the judicial authorities, the Movement follows the indications of the Episcopal Conferences and national regulations, after an internal procedure has been effectively concluded and on the basis of an ascertained plausibility of the facts reported. Then, as required by legal or moral duty, those responsible will submit a report to the competent judicial authorities, giving a detailed account of what has been ascertained, ensuring their closest cooperation and passing on all the information they possess. Independently of any duty to report, the Focolare Movement encourages the victims to forward their report directly to the judicial authorities, while it accompanies them and assures them of its support.



With regards to this aspect, it is important to note that the Episcopal Conferences in various countries are orienting themselves towards recognizing the bishops' moral duty to report the abuses ascertained in their dioceses. The Focolare Movement guidelines say that one may refrain from reporting to the judicial authorities only if parents are against it because they want to protect their child. In this case, however, we feel duty bound to accompany the parents through legal and psychological assistance. It is evident that the complaint will be reported to the judicial authorities in any case, where the law of the country requires all persons to do so. When the internal procedure reveals situations of abuse within the family, it will still be necessary to bring the matter before the competent authorities, and thus ensure greater protection of the child. Every member of the Focolare Movement will always retain his/her own autonomous right to file a complaint or report to the competent judicial authorities”.

What is the procedure in the case of an internal assessment of the abuse?

“As provided for by the Canon Law, where members of the clergy are concerned, the Movement informs the bishop of the diocese where the abuse occurred, so that the competence to ascertain the facts will be left to the ecclesiastical authorities. In such cases, the Movement

does not initiate its own internal procedure, but follows the decisions taken by the ecclesiastical authorities. Internal measures will be taken: those convicted may be made to resign, be removed from their duties or given lighter sanctions depending on the seriousness of the fact. Where lay persons are concerned, the plausibility of the accusation is verified through an internal procedure and if facts are ascertained, sanctions are imposed. Our new guidelines also speak about children who abuse other children, not only through bullying but also sexually. In this case, besides verifying the facts, we need to help the child start a process of awareness about the seriousness of the acts performed, a process that allows the child to be able to participate afresh in the activities. The family is asked to collaborate in this process. Serious cases are reported to the juvenile judicial authorities. In all three cases, once an alert is received, precautionary measures need to be taken. And while one verifies to see whether the facts are true or not, it is very appropriate not to let the accused be involved in any activity with minors”.

What kind of support is provided to victims?

“When the Movement becomes aware of any sign of abuse, it offers all the support needed to the victims; it offers both psychological and legal assistance through its experts. ■

Claudia Di Lorenzi

The gospel lived

“Freely you have received, freely give”.

The logic of Jesus and the Gospel is always to receive so as to give. Never accumulate for oneself. It is also an invitation to all of us to recognise what we have received: energy, talents, abilities, material goods and to use them for the good of others.

The registration fee

I am in charge of a hostel for students in a village in the Punjab. On the day for registering for the final exams two brothers came to tell me that they did not have the money to register. Unfortunately I did not have the means to help them. But I was not at peace thinking about these boys. Two days later having made a few savings, without their knowledge, I sent the respective applications for registration to the office of the superintendent. On that very same day I was offered a big farming job using my tractor.

M.A. – Pakistan



The extra change

I don't often check the change at the cash desk because I am always in a hurry. However one night I was already on my way home when I did a check. There was not much change left over but I thought the cashier might have problems if, at the end of the day, the figures did not tally. So I went back to return what was not mine.

Annalisa – Switzerland



The "Time for Creation"

September 1st World Day of Prayer for the care of Creation, will kick start a month full of initiatives for the protection of the environment and much more. Interview with Cecilia Dall'Oglio from the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

What do environmental issues and Ecumenism have in common? A lot, indeed an awful lot. It is enough to recall that in 1989 it was the patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, Dimitrios who gave the decisive impetus to the various Christian Churches to jointly declare September 1st World Day of Prayer for the protection of Creation.

This year the anniversary is part of a year full of global actions for the climate, thanks also to the fast-moving action of millions of young people who, with Greta Thunberg, have gotten organised, raising awareness and knocking on Parliament doors.

"Not only individuals but also our communities should ask themselves about the environmental sustainability of their activities," says Luca Fiorani, physicist and international coordinator of EcoOne, a cultural movement inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare in dealing with environment issues. "And in order to begin to change mentality and adopt an ecological lifestyle, it is first necessary to be informed. I'm doing some of my own advertising I've just published a small book of less than 80 pages: "The (crazy) dream of Francis. A small (scientific) manual on integral ecology". I take the reader by the hand through the key concepts of the encyclical Laudato Si', the recent results of international negotiations on climate change and the most up-to-date scientific data on the state of the health of our planet".

Luca Fiorani also explains that EcoOne has been collaborating with the Global Catholic Climate Movement for about ten years. Cecilia Dall'Oglio is respon-

sible for the organization's programs and we asked her some questions.

What motivates you personally, to be committed to the environment? The desire not to abandon my brothers and sisters in the world who suffer for the same reasons as our Mother Earth suffers. The desire to give my contribution so that others can have the direct experience, which I was able to have, of meeting with witnesses of hope, of a living Church committed to social justice.

In the Laudato Si' Pope Francis reminds us that "there are not two different crises, environmental and social, but a single socio-environmental crisis to be faced with "an integral approach to combat poverty, to restore dignity to the excluded and at the same time to care for nature" (LS 139). For more than twenty years I have been working with the FOCSIV to coordinate campaigns for social justice together with the offices of the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) and lay Catholic groups and I would like to recall in a special way our beloved Marco Aquini of the Focolare Movement. This announcement, this active resistance, must be truly effective and free the poor who cry out and for this reason I am happy now to take up the current challenge in the service of the Global Catholic Climate Movement of which the Focolare Movement is an active member.

What is the "something more" that faith can bring to the environmental movement? Faith is fundamental in bringing an integral ecological approach to environmental issues. Ecological conversion and the adoption of new lifestyles are proposed for the fullness of joy, that "happy sobriety" of which the Instrumentum laboris of the Special Synod of the Amazon also speaks, the fullness of life, true freedom. All Christians are called to be custodians of God's creation because "Living the vocation of being custodians of God's work is an essential part of" ➔

a virtuous existence, it is not something optional or even a secondary aspect of the Christian experience” (LS 217). The Global Catholic Climate Movement was established in 2015 to support Catholic communities around the world in responding to Pope Francis’ urgent appeal in the *Laudato Si*: to promote an ecological conversion at a spiritual level that leads to renewed lifestyles and the participation, also of Catholics, in getting people involved in actions for climate justice.

What is “Time of Creation” and what can each of us do to adhere to it? The Time of Creation is a “favourable time”, a Kairos, during which we pray and act for the care of our common home. It occurs every year from September 1st, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis, and is celebrated by thousands of Christians around the world. This year’s theme, “The Network of Life: Bi-

odiversity as a Gift from God.” is closely linked to the Synod of Bishops for the Pan Amazonia Region to be held next October. Thousands of Christians all over the world celebrate the time of creation by organizing events. The celebration guide and other tools in various languages are available on the Time of Creation website.

Thanks to the theme chosen for the celebrations, the events will permit our brothers and sisters in the Amazon to feel our closeness to them and to all those who suffer from the “extractive mentality” that is destroying not only the Amazon but all of Creation. They are therefore a clear sign of ecclesial communion and support in the Church’s journey towards the Synod. ■

Stefania Tanesini

The Gospel lived

Chiara wrote in 2006 «Throughout the Gospel Jesus invites to give. To give to the poor, to whoever asks, to whoever needs a loan. To give food to the hungry, a coat to the one who asks for a cloak, to give freely..”

The challenge

One day a colleague offers me a sheet of paper explaining that it is a phrase from the Gospel with a commentary to help live it. I read: “Love your enemies”. I reflected and the next day I am ready to take up the challenge. I found my mother in the kitchen. We haven’t spoken for two months. I sit down and have a coffee with her. “Did you sleep well?” I ask her. In the afternoon my brother comes to my room and asks me if he can borrow a jumper. “Open the cupboard and choose the one you want” I reply. These are small deeds but I already feel different.

A.F. – Italy

Life awakened by God

I am Turkish, a Muslim. When I told my husband Sahib that I thought I was pregnant for the fourth time he began to list all the sacrifices we would have to make. I was completely confused and I asked the gynaecologist if I was still in time to have an abortion. He told me it was just a matter of putting my name down on the waiting list. However, within me I felt that no one in the world has the right to end a life that God has begun. The months that followed were very difficult but I had made up my mind to fight on. Many friends, Christian and Muslim, supported me. Reading the Koran, I could feel the warmth of God who gave me strength. Little by little, Sahib found peace. We have never been as happy as we are with this child. With him, God has come to live under our roof.

F.O. – Germany



Maria Voce to the General Secretaries of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Europe

The Focolare president, Maria Voce, briefly talks about her participation in the annual meeting of the General Secretaries of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) being held in Birmingham (United Kingdom) from 1st to 4th July.

The focus of the meeting is the relationship between the institution and charismatic realities in the Church in Europe today.

“In these few days I took part in the meeting of the General Secretaries of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Europe, with Jesús Moran. I was invited because they had chosen as their theme the presence of both charism and institution in the Churches of Europe and their co-essentiality, their combination. They chose to base their four-day meeting on these two main themes; one entrusted to a bishop for the institutional aspect and one entrusted to me for the charismatic aspect.

I must say that they welcomed me with great affection and great esteem, and when I spoke they listened with exceptional attention and I felt there was a deep understanding of what I was saying.

Afterwards they continued discussing this subject for an hour, as a group, and then they wanted to meet with us again to look more in depth, and with great attention, at some aspects of the topic. I found they all have very high esteem for the Movement and a new regard for all the movements and their contribution to the European Churches. They will now continue



working on this same subject, but they really thanked us because they felt that our presence truly represented this charismatic reality.

Moreover, when we talked about the integration of the Marian profile and the Petrine profile in the Church, they were particularly grateful that it was presented by someone from a movement such as the Focolare Movement, by its president and especially by a woman. They were very grateful for this presence and, in fact, I was the only woman among forty priests, including six bishops, who represented the various Bishops' Conferences of Europe.

At the beginning there was a warm welcome by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the Archbishop of Birmingham. They too showed a very great appreciation and a great love for the movement and for me personally. So I really thank all those who have accompanied me”. ■

A cura della Redazione

Catholics and Protestants united for reconciliation in Northern Ireland

At the European Mariapolis the story of a possible friendship that sows seeds of peace

Open up and “choose an inclusive lifestyle”. Open up to reconcile with each other and discover the pearl that is inside each person. Open up like Jesus, who met everyone, and let the Holy Spirit act “who rejoices in diversity but pursues unity”. This is the way pursued by Rev Ken Newell, Presbyterian minister in Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland.

A land that still suffers today from the wounds left by the conflict that for 30 years, since the end of the 1960s,

has seen unionists and separatists opposing each other: the first, Protestants, who support belonging to the United Kingdom; the second, Catholics, who support the reunification of Northern and Southern Ireland. A political conflict that has poisoned the social fabric, turning cities into battlefields and leading to “religious segregation”: Protestants and Catholics live in different neighbourhoods, communities do not meet, there is mistrust and prejudice.

It was not easy for Reverend Ken to try to build bridges. He had to begin with himself. “I grew up in Belfast ⇨

in a Protestant and Unionist community” - he tells the European Mariapolis – “in my early years I was shaped by the culture of my community (...); many things were healthy, good and serene; other aspects influenced me with negative attitudes towards the Catholic, Irish and Nationalist community, which took me years to overcome”.

A path that helped him gradually to open up and discover the beauty of diversity. While in Holland the meeting with a priest convinced him to attend a Mass. Or again in Indonesia, where, as a teacher in a seminary in Timor, he was able to immerse himself in a different country, with its own language, food and culture. “I began to realize that, just as there are different colours in the rainbow, so too God created the human race with incredible diversity; valuing the cultures of Timor taught me to value the good within my own culture. In contact with the priest Noel Carrel, the discovery of a possible friendship: “we realized that we were in Timor to serve the one Christ, that we had the same Heavenly Father and we were brothers. I asked myself if it would be possible to have such a friend in Northern Ireland. Hence a clear awareness: “The Holy Spirit made me open up to “diversity” at the other end of the world and prompted me to seek the best in Irish Catholic culture and spirituality.

Returning to Belfast in 1976, he was called to lead the Presbyterian Church of Fitzroy: his inclusive lifestyle was against the tide. In one of the toughest moments of the conflict, his invitation to build new relationships was taken up by the members of a Redemptorist monastery in Clonard: and so, began the Association of Clonard - Fitzroy.

The human and spiritual friendship with Father Gerry Reynolds, leader of the Community of Clonard, “com-

panion in the building of peace”, gave rise to many experiences of sharing: “We begin to go together to the funerals of policemen killed by terrorists and of innocent civilians killed by loyalist paramilitary groups; it is rare to see Protestant ministers and Catholic priests together at funerals to comfort the families of the deceased”. It then happens that they participate in each other’s celebrations and that Fr. Gerry and Rev. Ken participate together in marriages between people from different Churches.

Another unthought of step is made possible: the priest and the minister are invited to meetings with political leaders of the opposing parties, to reach a ceasefire and adopt policies of peace. Slowly, politicians from the main parties in Northern Ireland, the pro-British DUP and the pro-Irish Sinn Fein, recognise the Clonard - Fitzroy Association as a “safe space” for discussion. The desire for reconciliation grows that will lead, in 2007, to the “miracle of Belfast”: “in Stormont, the government building of Northern Ireland” - says Rev. Newell – “Rev. Ian Paisley, Prime Minister of the shared executive power, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Martin McGuinness, former commander of the IRA, descend the marble staircase, sit side by side in front of the world press and address the people of Northern Ireland; they speak of their determination to lead the country towards a better and more reconciled future”. It is the dawn of a new day.

The Clonard-Fitzroy Association, which has been operating for 38 years and has inspired thousands of similar initiatives, received the 1999 Pax Christi International Peace Prize. ■

Claudia di Lorenzi





Start again... from below

In Austria 61 Catholic Bishops who are friends of the Focolare Movement gathered together for an international meeting. The Church's "wounds" and the challenges faced by Christian communities today were at the heart of their reflections in a meeting enriched by spiritual insights and sharing fraternal life.

A kind of tsunami has struck the Church as a institution in recent years. The revelation of scandalous abuses has shaken the credibility of the Church to its very core, a Church that for some time has seemed to be in decline in many traditionally Christian countries.

And this is not the only scourge afflicting Christian communities across the world. Urbanisation, poverty, war, corruption in society and the Church itself, political and cultural pressures, all kinds of intolerances and religious fundamentalism, a lack of opportunities for development and serious risks to the environment are leaving many people hopeless and overwhelmed.

These are just some of the "wounds" that 61 Bishops from four continents who know and live the spirituality of the Focolare shared when they met from 2 to 10 August near Graz in Austria. Even though they came together primarily for a meeting to deepen their spirituality and live fraternity together for a few days, they listened together to the "cry" of their people. Otherwise, how else could they be witnesses of a crucified and risen God who took on every evil and responded to it?!

We must not stop at theories - they said - or give in to pessimism but go to the roots. On the Church front, individualism and clericalism were highlighted, a lack of formation and coherent witness, the need for solid spirituality and accompaniment, the need to grow in the capacity to listen and dialogue.

How can we respond to these challenges? Not from above, under the illusion of being able to impose solutions, but from below, following the way of Jesus who,

by becoming small, becoming nothing to be a gift, took love to its very limit and in this way generated fraternity. Looking at the situation from this perspective allows us to recognize the potential for good even where, at first glance, there only seems to be evil.

This is the path these Bishops want to tread in a decisive way, mindful that it is a matter - as the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium" recommends - of triggering processes that will only start to bear fruit over time. Nothing less is required today: being faithful to its origins, exploring new ways of being Church. With very precise paths, which include basing the proclamation and catechesis on the life of the Gospel and the communion of life; forming people in the spirituality of communion and the ecclesial and social "we"; creating "living environmental cells"; and listening to those who think differently to ourselves.



"Show yourselves as a joyful group" was the wish of Pope Francis for this meeting of Bishops who are friends of the Focolare Movement. This is how it was because, by sharing sincerely with each other, they experienced God. Then everything changes at root level. Only by being can an enlightened doing be born. ■

Hubertus Blaumeiser



Living life with a capital “L”

In international jargon they are called “expats”: they are the young expatriates who have found work and have decided to live abroad. Each one has his or her own reasons for making this move, each one has their own story. Mitty is an expat: she is Italian and does research on glucose biosensors at a Japanese university and lives in the Focolare community in Tokyo.

“Today, technology has enormous influence in all fields, including health care. I feel called to work in this area because I want to help direct technical research according to ethical and non-business choices. Sometimes we biomedical engineers invent things that reduce human beings to robots but do nothing to improve health.

There is no doubt that Mitty whose real name is Maria Antonietta Casulli has clear ideas. She studied biomedical engineering in Italy, but moved to Switzerland to complete her thesis at the prestigious Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL - Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne) and was awarded a research post to prepare for a doctorate. The prerequisites for a marvelous career were all there: a substantial salary, a beautiful house with a view of Lake Geneva, good friends. What more could she have wanted?

“And yet - says Mitty - something was not working: it was 2013; we were in the midst of an economic crisis and I had a perfect life. But beyond the Alps, in Italy, many of my friends were running the risk of becoming depressed because they couldn’t find work. In addition, I didn’t want my life to consist only of a career and money. But the “coup d’état” was a trip to the Philippines where I found myself in the middle of one of the most powerful and devastating typhoons in the world: Typhoon Yolanda.

The contrast I experienced was enormous: this people had nothing of what my friends and I had, but they lived life with a capital “L”; their life was full, rich in relationships and great dignity. Paradoxically, this seemed to me to be the medicine for the crisis that my

continent, Europe, was going through: it was not just an economic crisis; it was much more: a void in the fundamental values of life”.

After that trip Mitty decided not to return to Switzerland because she felt she wanted give back to God all the life that he had given to her. And so, following a period of formation for focolarini, she moved to Japan two years ago and now lives in the Focolare community in Tokyo. Upon arriving, her first task was to study the language. This challenge plus the time taken for formation has meant she has been out of the world of work for five years. Could she go back to doing research, especially in a society like Japan?

“Just as I was asking myself these questions, a friend who was passing by told me about a Japanese Catholic professor from a university in Tokyo who does research on glucose biosensors - the very subject I had studied for my degree!

Since the chances of finding someone in Japan who had completed the same studies are almost nil, Mitty understood that God was at work in her life and she has since seen he continues to do so. The professor gave her the opportunity to complete her doctorate, but there was still a problem: “In Japan I wouldn’t have had a salary as I would have done in Switzerland. In fact, I would have had to pay for my doctorate”.

Here too, God’s answer was surprising. Almost by chance, Mitty found herself being interviewed by six managers from different Japanese companies: a difficult situation for a young foreign woman.

“I felt that God was with me and that, in the end, they were all just people to love. This changed the way I presented the project and listened to them when they spoke. For an hour I told them about my project, but for the next hour I answered their questions about my choice of life as a focolarina and why I was in Japan. I received 100% of the funding for the project and I must say that I saw the power of God making its way into this culture and these environments in a world I had never imagined.

Just two months after beginning my doctorate, my former Swiss professor came to Tokyo and we were able to organize a seminar at my new university. At dinner, watching the two professors speak together, it seemed to me that I understood what God wants from me now. Not only to do research, but to build bridges: between universities and companies, between East and West. All I have to do is continue to give myself totally to God”. ■

Stefania Tanesini

Creating spaces – for communion among charisms

Members of religious communities and movements belonging to fifty different orders, congregations and institutes gathered together in the ecumenical Focolare village of Ottmaring in Germany, 1-5 July 2019. The 100 participants were consecrated and religious men and women. Sr Tiziana Longhitano SFP and Fr Salvo D'Orto OMI, who coordinate this area of the Focolare Movement internationally, explain the significance of this event.

Fr. Salvo: We see this as a step ahead along a journey we've been travelling together for more than ten years. The ecclesial maturity, we could say, of this year's meeting benefited in the contribution from the preparatory stages of the German Conference of Superiors of Religious Orders (DOK).

Sr. Tiziana: What's become clear to us is that we're forming a kind of "ideal convocation" where ancient and new charisms can meet and enrich one another in lively creative exchange. Everyone offers their own contribution as a sign of profound participation in the life of all, and we find ourselves spiritually enriched and nourished. Just how vital this kind of exchange is to the life of the Church and humanity today, is indicated by the participation for the second year running of the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Cardinal João Braz De Aviz.

What is the role of the Focolare Movement in this event?

Fr. Salvo: The Focolare promoted this meeting throughout the diverse vocations present within the Movement. So Focolare members who belong to Religious orders attended, as did Focolarini men and women, and some of the "Volunteers of God", including members of different Churches.

Sr. Tiziana: What the Movement can offer is a "space of communion and of unity". Other structures exist, of course, where Religious men and women can meet, but what the Focolare Movement has to offer is a "charismatic place" where all charisms feel at home and immersed in a harmonious relationship which nurtures every word and expression both verbal and non-verbal.

Did the meeting give rise to any new collaborative ventures? And - in your capacity as coordinators of the Religious men and women who are part of the Focolare Movement - how do you see the future following on from this meeting?

Fr. Salvo: Thanks to the notable involvement of members of different Churches, this meeting had a decidedly ecumenical feel. This is a collaboration we see growing and expanding in future meetings to include those living the consecrated life in different Churches. In the future, the meeting may also open up to include lay people who live according to the charism of the founders of religious orders.

The President of the German Conference of Superiors of Religious Orders, Sister Katharina Kluitmann encouraged future involvement of other ecclesial movements to facilitate an even wider sense of communion within the charismatic and prophetic dimension of the Churches, particularly in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In fact, after this meeting, we feel an ever stronger trust in the potential of the Focolare Movement to create "spaces of communion" and mutual enrichment which can be offered to religious orders today. Preparations are already underway for an event along these lines next year as part of the celebrations commemorating the centenary of Chiara Lubich's birth. Our event will focus on the relationship between the Charism of Unity and other charisms, and will take place at Castelgandolfo, near Rome, Italy on 8th and 9th February 2020.

Sr. Tiziana: We hope that the February 2020 event will prove to be an important step ahead in the journey of unity between consecrated people and the laity who feel called - in their own state of life - to share in the charism of our founders, and thereby participate in the same charismatic reality as religious women and men. With this in mind, in February we'll be encouraging greater unity between the families of different charisms, facilitating communion among religious institutes and societies. This, it seems to us, is in line with the prophecy of the present and future Church and of humanity in its journey towards the "ut omnes unum sint" ["that all may be one", Jn 17:21] for which Jesus prayed to the Father. ■

Edited by Anna Lisa Innocenti



Tonino: an authentic Christian

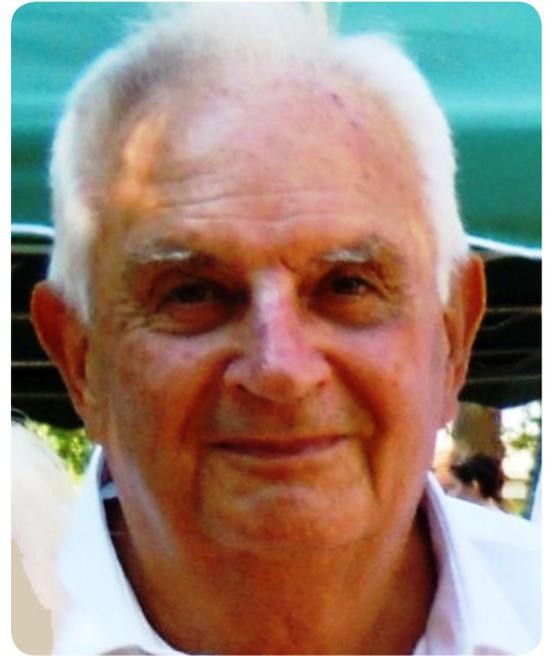
Antonio De Sanctis left us on June 21. He personified someone who, within the Focolare Movement, is known as a “volunteer of God” – someone who is committed to social and communitarian action.

Tonino, as everyone called him, left us on June 21 this year. He lived in Frascati, a beautiful town in the Castelli Romani area just outside Rome, Italy. He personified someone who, within the Focolare Movement, is known as a “volunteer of God” – someone who is committed to social and communitarian action and promotes activities that benefit others. He worked sometimes alone and sometimes as part of a team in numerous projects many of which he initiated. He was a faithful and caring husband to his wife, Mary; an attentive father; a tireless worker and a committed member of the community where he lived and was capable of creating truly fraternal relationships. Tonino regarded the community as a place where the presence of God and the Church could be made visible: he was not worried about what other people thought and often broke through social convention.

His life is best described by the words from scripture that refer to the corporal works of mercy: these words are precepts for all Christians. “Because I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me, imprisoned and you came to visit me...” This last phrase is particularly characteristic of Tonino because throughout his life he was dedicated to supporting prisoners and their families.

This began thanks to a chance comment made by a friend. Tonino used to visit a lot of young people in prison. One day, he realised that a nun who was also a volunteer visitor was upset because of the “mountains of pornographic literature” that used to arrive. He was thinking about this on his way home when, in the main square of his town, he met a priest friend from a nearby village. He shared his concerns straightaway. The priest replied, “Next Sunday, come and tell my parishioners what you have just told me so you can collect donations to send “New City” magazines to prisoners.”

This was how it began. For many years, on Sundays, at the various Masses in the Castelli Romani and southern Rome areas, Tonino’s unmistakable voice could be heard. In a shy, modest way, he used to talk about his commitment to prisoners and ask for donations to subscribe them to the Focolare magazine. He sent



dozens of copies to the various prisons he visited. In February 2012, “Città Nuova”, published “The Rainbow Behind Bars” recounting, in four instalments, Tonino and his family’s many experiences. These stories are like the “little flowers” of Gospel life to which Saint Francis” often referred.

Sometimes Tonino’s behaviour could seem daring – he did not mind running risks. For example, he did not hesitate to welcome prisoners into his home. He became a second father to many of them even after they were released. The excerpt from a letter written by one of the former prisoners expresses this very clearly: “In your house, I finally felt ‘at home’. I have never had this sense of belonging to a place and to people before. You were the means through which I felt Jesus’ mercy touch my heart and I understood the place God occupies in my life. He is my first thought in the morning and my last thought before I go to sleep. I am happy because God has entered my life like a great hurricane sweeping away everything else. Antonio, you and your whole family are a living witness to the Gospel, you are a work of God.”

Many people attended his funeral on 22 June in the cathedral of Frascati. The Mass was concelebrated by his brother-in-law, Don Enrico Pepe, and Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz. In their eulogy his three children, Miriam, Gabriele and Stefano, said: “You were a safe harbour at the end of a sunny day or after a storm: you were always there, ready to listen, to welcome us and to encourage us to return to the sea without fear.” ■

Lina Ciampi

Christine Naluyange - a World-woman

In her 66 years, Christine, a Ugandan focolarina, said with her life that there are no insurmountable barriers in the world. She has been able to love each person and every place with great openness: first as an artist with the international group Gen Verde, then in Italy, at the service of the focolarine; and finally, back in Africa, first in Tanzania and then Kenya.

At the beginning of the 1970s Chiara Lubich had an almost daily relationship with the Gen, the young people of the Focolare Movement. In a world in rapid evolution, shaken by revolutions of different ideologies and colours, the founder of the Focolare prepared the gen to conquer the world through evangelical love. A life-long project that, if embraced, required leaving everything behind and knowing how to look far into the future.

In 1972 in Masaka, Uganda, Christine Naluyange made her choice. At the age of twenty she left for Fontem (Cameroon) to take part in one of the most visionary experiments in social coexistence of the time: living in a small town, built less than 10 years earlier where people lived together African and European, healthy and sick, gifted or not, so to say to themselves and to the world that fraternity as a way of life is possible, productive and even exportable.

Telling about Christine, an African focolarina, a few days after her death on the 21st of July due to an aggressive disease, is not only a duty, but is necessary in times like these, when in the name of sovereign claims walls of all kinds are put up or, of the African continent, one only wants to see the faces of those who flee in search of a future.

In her 66 years of life, Christine never considered the many differences encountered as insurmountable walls. On the contrary, she embraced them, she made her own the richness of every person, people and culture: first as an artist, for 23 years part of the international group Gen Verde, then in Italy at the Centre of the Movement, at the service of the women focolarine; then back in Africa, first in Tanzania and then in Kenya.

Hers was a varied and full life, where she tried everything. She went on stage, served her brothers and sisters and carried out roles of responsibility; and all was done with great naturalness and normality. Her life was filled with relationships; she approached people with a mother's heart, more and more ready to listen than to speak, to take care of each one's needs. It was



not for nothing that her motto of life was a phrase from the Gospel that Chiara Lubich had chosen for her: “Go and preach the Kingdom of God” (cf. Mk 16:15).

Of the many testimonies that came as a sign of gratitude and praise to God, we report two that express well the human and spiritual richness of Christine.

Maricel Prieto, a Spaniard who spent 18 years with Christine in Gen Verde, writes: “One word, above all, comes to mind when I think of her: ‘royalty’. Christine was royal on stage, but she was also royal when she approached people, when she welcomed someone, when she loaded or unloaded the equipment from our trucks, when she worked in the garden, when she prepared lunch. And this was not just an attitude, but a constant ‘sinking’ into the present moment with a firm adherence to the will of God that made her always available, close”.

“Having lived more than half of her life out of the African continent - says Liliane Mugombozi - Chris, as we called her, had acquired in a certain sense a universal ‘culture’, even if - for those who knew her well - she was a Ugandan woman, an authentic daughter of her land. Next to her you felt an enormous openness; she was a ‘world - woman’. Her great faith in and living for unity with a broad vision was impressive, she knew how to go beyond the injustices she had suffered. How can we explain all this? I believe that Chris had made a choice in life: she chose to love and in all her efforts to be consistent, according to the evangelical style of the spirituality of unity her model was Jesus crucified and Forsaken. ■

Stefania Tanesini



The gospel lived

In prison

There was a boy in my cell who had no money to eat. He took a box from another inmate who threatened him making him pay three Naira. Then he began to ask other inmates for money. I had only five Naira which I needed to buy food. But I remembered the gospel and I understood that to love God I had to love my neighbour. So, I gave him my money. Later on, someone came to my cell and brought me food.

Sylvester – Nigeria

Supper

This evening when I got back from the university I sat down in front of the television as usual expecting that my mother, who was watching her favourite programme, should get up and prepare my supper. Then a thought: a few days ago, I heard three medical stu-

dents talking about the gospel and they emphasised the importance of doing the will of God during the day. So, I got up and went to the kitchen and prepared supper. It was my first conscious act of love.

T.C. – Italy

Members of the Movement who have concluded their earthly life:

- 17 June 2019 Grgo Kopilović – married focolarino from Serbia
- 20 June 2019 Franco Tarantino - focolarino from Italy
- 21 June 2019 Tonino De Sanctis – volunteer from Italy
- 23 June 2019 Gilla Stagno Benoni – married focolarina from Italy
- 8 July 2019 Nicola Luisi – married focolarino from Italy
- 8 July 2019 Gabriele Marsili - focolarino from Loppiano (Italy)
- 21 July 2019 Christine Naluyange – focolarina from Uganda in Kenya
- 4 August 2019 Armando Droghetti (Festa) - focolarino from Italy in the Roman Mariapolis
- 22 August 2019 Ezio Sorgo - focolarino from Argentine in Italy
- 30 August 2019 Albert Dreston - focolarino from Germany in Italy

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Dear Readers,

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