

YEAR XXXII N 04 APRIL 2015

# MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the focolare movement



**Anniversary  
of Chiara Lubich**

**The charisma of unity  
in action**

**Centro dell'Opera**  
The first 100 days  
Interview with the  
central delegates

**Realities**  
Commitment, drive,  
concreteness starting  
from the children

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# Refuelling

In the year of the Eucharist we would like to propose this writing of Chiara Lubich which is directed at the new generations



Chiara al congresso gen del luglio 1969

The programme that we have proposed for ourselves is vast: the entire world, the world of the youth of today who will be the leaders of humanity tomorrow. We want to give them our Ideal and to join together as many people as we can in a chain of universal love that will wrap the entire globe in a net that becomes tighter and tighter, until the greatest number of young people are caught up in its web.

We want the most perfect unity to reign among them and black, or white, or yellow or red will become only one heart and one soul.

It is a divine task. Human strength can neither plan it nor realize it. [...]

Now I ask myself: where do you find the strength, support, provisions in order to continue our battle in depth and in expansion?

Even those who are fighting a battle need to stop once in awhile and to re-fuel.

It is easy to answer.

Is it a human battle? Strengthen yourself with human food.

Is it a divine battle? Look for food from heaven, the food of the angels that will sustain and transform you, from someone small and weak as you are, into a true witness of Christ.

[...] Many, many Gen, looked for it almost inadvertently, pushed by an interior hunger and, alone, without asking anyone, they started to go to the Eucharist even daily, undergoing sacrifices, walking long distances before going to school, maintaining the fast required one hour before, after having been purified once in awhile by the Sacrament of confession.

Who told them to do this? I think, we think: it was God! That God who teaches us in the depths of our heart and opens the eyes of our soul and mind to consider the true great values of this world.

To nourish oneself with God: this is an absolute must for a gen. How can you bring God if you don't have Him?

What's the use of telling you to love Him or to try to love him if then, He in person, is there in church waiting for you everyday, in every moment, and you don't go to have an audience with Him to make your plans with Him, your pacts; to nourish yourself with Him so as to slowly transform yourself into Him?

Gen is synonymous with a young person hungry for Christ. Let's love Him, Jesus; yes, let's love Him in such a way that this hunger contaminates the youth of today up to the point that we will see the tabernacles in our cities, our countries be emptied everyday.

Then we can be sure that with this nourishment, victory will be ours.

*Chiara*

From an editorial in the Gen magazine, april-may 1968. Published also in *Colloqui con i gen* (Conversations with the gen), years 1966/69, Città Nuova, Rome 1998, pp. 69-70 and in *CHIARA LUBICH Gesù Eucaristia* (Jesus in the Eucharist) edited by Fabio Ciardi, Città Nuova, Rome 2014, pp. 85-86

14 march 2015

## Interview with Palmira

**On the occasion of the 14th of March, 2015, anniversary of the departure of Chiara for Heaven, Vatican Radio asked one of her first companions, Palmira Frizzera, a few questions. The interview which was long and comprehensive, was aired only in part. You can read the entire versions on Mariapolis online. Here are some unpublished segments of the interview**

**Palmira:** «Quest'anno in occasione dell'anniversario della partenza di Chiara per il Cielo ho sentito molto parlare di fratellanza universale e di unità. E ad un certo momento mi sono commossa pensando a quando io sono entrata in focolare, in Piazza Cappuccini, quasi settant'anni fa. Il concetto di fraternità, reso oggi così universale, è proprio quello che ho trovato quando sono entrata nel primo focolare. Ho trovato fraternità e unità. Per cui non ho sentito un grande distacco dalla mia famiglia naturale, bellissima, molto unita, ma ho sentito che passavo da una realtà di famiglia a un'altra. La cosa che mi ha impressionato vivendo con Chiara è stato che lei non aveva atteggiamenti di responsabile del focolare o, come si dice adesso, di capo focolare. Lei era in fraternità con noi, era una sorella e noi eravamo sorelle con lei».

**Chiara è stata dichiarata serva di Dio ed è iniziato il processo di beatificazione e canonizzazione. A lei che effetto fa?**

**Palmira:** «Sento che Chiara è di tutti, non è solo della Chiesa cattolica. Chiara è anche delle altre Chiese, di tanti delle altre religioni per via dei dialoghi che si sono aperti ancora dai primissimi tempi anche con persone che non hanno nessun credo religioso. In questa

fase, se ho ben capito, la Chiesa ha bisogno di avere la testimonianza delle virtù eroiche nella vita di Chiara. Sotto questo aspetto la beatificazione mi piace tantissimo, perché penso che non si faccia fatica a testimoniare e a riconoscere le virtù di Chiara, eroiche non so, la Chiesa lo dirà. Per esempio c'è sempre stato un grande patire fin dai primi tempi per quest'Opera e soprattutto per questo carisma, perché non era capito, non era conosciuto. Chiara, noi e l'Opera siamo stati sotto studio da parte della Chiesa per oltre dieci anni. Era difficile uscire approvati, era più probabile che fosse sciolto il Movimento. Una volta Chiara ci ha confidato che se si mettesse sul piatto di una bilancia tutta la luce e l'amore che Dio le ha dato e sull'altro piatto tutto il patire, i due piatti peserebbero uguali. Ed è proprio così. Però Chiara era molto riservata riguardo a questo. Era proprio l'amore col quale personalmente amava Dio e in questo io sento di testimoniare proprio le virtù eroiche di Chiara. Non c'era una cosa che lei capisse che non ce la comunicava. Ma non così era del suo patire».

*intervista a cura di Gabriella Ceraso*

The full text and UNPUBLISHED interview can be heard on **Mariapolis online** [www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli](http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli)



14 march, 2015

# Dedicated to Chiara

**Remembering Chiara Lubich in the week of the seventh anniversary of her departure for Heaven, was the occasion to deepen, in a special way, the relationship between the charisma of unity and politics. But not only this. Here is a glimpse of some of the major events.**

Events that were political in nature and ceremonies in prestigious institutional headquarters, Eucharistic celebrations and meetings to go in depth on the theme of fraternity, art exhibits and cultural events. This was how the 14th of March was celebrated in the different communities.

## At the institutional headquarters

In **Seoul (South Korea)** in the Parliament, numerous senators and people involved in public administration met together to evaluate the journey towards a politics of fraternity that was started the last ten years. In **Madrid (Spain)** it was the headquarters of the European parliament that hosted a seminar on «One world, many peoples embracing diversity», while in **Strasbourg (France)**, the headquarters of the European institutes, hosted three days of events on the theme fraternity as a political category.

Also in **Rome** the event «Chiara Lubich: unity and politics» was held in the Parliament, in the Hall of the Palace of the parliamentary Groups of the Chamber of Congress. In the morning the protagonists were the youth: 400 were present from various parts of the world, belonging to different religions and some without any religious convictions. In their interventions they shared about their commitment to peace and fraternity in the different Countries, also in dramatic situations from the social, economical and political points of view. There was a profound dialogue with Pasquale Ferrara, secretary general of the European Universities Institute and with Luigino Bruni, prof. of Political Economics at the LUMSA of Roma. Presenting the United World Project, they then launched a comprehensive appeal to the Italian Parliament, the European Parliament, the Unesco and to the United Nations to ask for «a greater commitment of the institutions for



Roma, Camera dei Deputati, 12 marzo 2015

## With the Patriarch Bartholomew

In the very beautiful hall of the Orthodox Church of Aya Strati Taksiarhi, on the banks of the Bosphorus, a double event dedicated to Chiara Lubich was held that included the presence of the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople



Istanbul, 14 marzo 2015

Bartholomew I. The anniversary of the departure of Chiara, in fact, coincided with the presentation of the Greek translation of two of her texts: the book *Meditations* whose preface is signed by the Patriarch, and the volume *Knowing how to*

lose. Present at the event were also three metropolitans: Ireneos, metropolitan of the city, Apostolos and Elpidoforos; two archimandrites and two deacons together with the new Archbishop of the Armenian Catholics, Levon Zekiyán and the apostolic vicar of Istanbul, Mons. Louis Pelâtre. The Patriarch opened the meeting with a prayer for Chiara inton-

ing the hymn to the Holy Spirit. Then, in his speech, he talked about her, affirming that «her life was spent looking for ways of encounter and of dialogue with everyone, distinguished by the profound respect for every culture wherein she knew how to guide the journey towards encounter, reciprocal acquaintance and reciprocal collaboration». «Chiara – he continued – had always been also a daughter of her Church, sharing and living in herself the life of her Church. And in this convinced participation, she felt the drama of the division, the drama of the impossibility of participating in the same Chalice». In conclusion, referring to the text in Greek of Chiara, he observed: «Let us welcome this translation as a gift between brothers, a gift that will surely make the Greek public, the Greek Orthodox faithful, appreciate this marvelous message of love and unity».



peace among peoples». «Thank you to the 400 youth of the Focolare coming from 42 countries present today at Montecitorio. Their commitment fills in the gap between the citizens and the institutions» the president of Congress, the Hon. Laura Boldrini, who was present at the meeting wrote in Twitter. In her speech she invited the young people to put themselves «at the disposition of the public with generosity, so as to influence decisions and choices and thus to bring a dutiful service to the Country without yielding to compromise with regards to the opposition and the logic of the enemy, because in the values of Chiara Lubich there is a vision of society and this is politics, this means not to exclude oneself».

In the afternoon the sharing was done by the adults: the sessions started with the greeting of Hon. Marina Sereni, vice-president of the Chamber of Congress, whose intervention was followed by that of Emmaus. There were three central topics during the roundtable discussion: «A politics that is worth it», «Fraternity or solidarity?», «Between global and universal». There were 380 people present: politicians, academics, and members of civil society. Messages from the following arrived for the occasion: from the president of the Senate, Pietro Grasso, and the president of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, who, in referring to Chiara Lubich wrote among other things: «Her simple and

strong faith, united to an extraordinary ability to read modernity accepting its challenges, inspires the life of thousands of people all over the world, constantly exhorting national and international institutions to promote the values of fraternity and mutual respect in favour of dialogue in the family, in the community, among peoples».

There were numerous politicians present also at the roundtable discussion organized in **Toronto (Canada)** centred on the vision of Chiara on politics. In **Solingen (Germany)** instead, the central theme of the gathering was the culture of fraternity in three very actual fields: the refugees, peace, dialogue with other cultures. There were more than a hundred participants: people

this new political culture and who have shared how the mppu has been for them «a fountain of living water», a place where they can draw «new strength and new commitment».

In depth presentations on politics also took place in other events in various cities of **Italy, in Hungary, Czech Republic, Portugal, Sweden, Usa, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia, Tanzania, Kenya.**

## Inside the crises

An answer to the ongoing political crisis in Congo were the two meetings held in the country. In **Lubumbashi (Congo)** there were 370 people, Christians and Muslims. The gen presented in



Curitiba, Brasile



Kinshasa, Congo

of various confessions and religions, of different nationalities. The mayor of the city was also present, including his vice mayor and members of the municipal council and its administration. The contribution of the mayor was his sharing on how to live fraternity in politics and in his personal life.

«The political thoughts and actions of Chiara Lubich» was theme around which revolved another major event dedicated to Chiara: the gathering in **Curitiba (Brazil)**. Present were the federal and state senators, mayors, assessors, public officials from different political parties, youth and academics from the various cities in the Country. The vision of politics that is born from the charism of unity appeared like a light in the tunnel of the economical, political and ethical crises that Brazil is experiencing. There were many interventions of politicians from different political parties who have been living

an artistic way, the love of Chiara for the poor, her meeting with Iginio Giordani, her «dream». The Mass was animated by around fifty seminarians. In Goma there were 400 people who participated in the meeting, with a big group of politicians from the province of North-Kivo and representatives of civil society. After the meeting the RTNC broadcast it in four local languages. We were invited by national TV to participate in a transmission on the subject of women wherein they spoke of Chiara.

Courageous initiatives were not lacking also in some hotspots in the planet, in frontier zones where conflicts are ongoing. In **Nigeria**, for example, there were various events: in Yola, where there are many refugees, the Bishop celebrated the Mass for Chiara praying for peace; in Abuja and Lagos there were events held prepared by the youth for the youth; in Onitsha a meeting with more than 300 people, adults, youth and children;

in Jos, where they were not able to have any big events due to an explosion that happened just a few days earlier, our people went to visit a Penal Institute for Minors.

The theme of peace was the central point of the meeting organized in **Bujumbura (Burundi)** with more than a thousand participants. There were many experiences shared during the programme regarding situations of war, in the family, in the hospital, in prison, at the university that highlighted the possibility of living in harmony with others and to build peace even where it is not easy. The Archbishop of Bujumbura, Mons. Evariste Ngoyagove, was present in the morning.

one of **Cuba**: in Havana with more than 200 people and in **Santiago de Cuba** with 150: the local communities prepared the meeting to present the Focolare Movement and to offer their experiences on the effect of the Ideal in many fields of one's personal and social life.

## Moments of prayer

At the Eucharistic celebrations in various parts of the world there were numerous civil and religious personalities present. Among the many interventions of Bishops and Cardinals in the different celebrations we would like to cite that of Card. Angelo Scola of Milano who said among other things: «Our commitment of today is to gather with renewed awareness the dream that has animated the life and the thoughts of Chiara, building spaces of fraternity wherever we find ourselves and giving precedence to the needs of the neighbor beside us and the one living faraway in Countries where there is war and violence. In this way, we would like to be authentic witnesses of the charisma that God has given Chiara, being at the service of the Church and of humanity».

*prepared by Anna Lisa Innocenti*

## In various environments

But politics was not the only topic on the occasion of March 14, 2015 commemorating Chiara. Art and culture were also at the center of numerous and original events. In **Durban (Republic of South Africa)** the third edition of the «Chiara Lubich Memorial Lecture» was held with the participation of Ela Gandhi, grandchild of Mahatma Gandhi, while at **Maracaibo (Venezuela)** the Catholic University «Cecilio Acosta» (UNICA) organized a competition for the IV Chiara Lubich Art Biennial. Open to professional artists, students and art lovers who are residents of Venezuela, the event gave them the possibility of displaying their work in the Piazza della Repubblica.

In various Countries the preparation and realization of the events linked to March 14 was an occasion to make a strong experience of being Opera. This was exemplified by two events, the

In Mariapoli online  
[www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli](http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli)  
 other news of the events



Nigeria



Vietnam

# Center of the Opera

## The first 100 days

Interview with Friederike Koller and Angel Bartol, central delegates

*On December 2 of last year the new Center of the Opera took office. You were coming from the whole world and maybe you didn't know each other much. The great internationality that characterizes you was it a problem or a resource? How did you start?*

«It is a great resource that expresses the diversity and universality of the Opera. With many of them we already knew each other but nevertheless there was an immediate "complicity" that began and a very beautiful unity, fraternal and profound with everyone.

We started with a great trust in Jesus in the midst, with great openness and transparency among us, aware that in order to have the fullness of unity we had to give everything, and particularly our thoughts, precisely to allow ourselves to be enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit. I think that we can say that we are living this, which has become more and more our daily reality, not only when we meet with the Center of the Opera but also in our particular work as counselors, also in the General Council. And we always end up experiencing a great joy».

*In these first months you have «worked» a lot, among you, with the General Council, in contact with the different Zones in the world. What are the topics that you tackled first and what are the things that you are working on in this period?*

«Certainly the topics that were highlighted in the Assembly. It is the mandate



that was given to us, to understand and to put into action those key words: go out, together, adequately prepared. Then, to bring ahead all the work for the "new set-up" of the Opera that has given rise to many new questions, but also a lot of trust in the fact that if we have Jesus in the midst, we will find the suitable answers for this moment, keeping in mind that a far-reaching vision and a new understanding of the presence of the Opera in the world, of the places where to put the focolares, with the awareness that the Opera is there where two or more live with Jesus among them, is needed.

In these months we are meeting with the branches and the projects and activities linked to the Center of the Opera. During these meetings the topics that emerge need to be studied in depth, like for example when we met with the first four dialogues, wherein we understood that "dialogue is our lifestyle", it is not something optional or a tactic, it is precisely our way of building unity that then leads to many concrete actions, many projects and incarnated

realities that are fruit of this. And so we are really working so that the year 2015-2016 can be lived in the pursuit of this transversal aspect and that it is reflected in the various meetings that will be held at the Center in a special way, but also in the Zones».

***Let us in into one of your Tuesday meetings. How is it done? How do you arrive at making certain decisions? Is there a working method for this Center of the Opera that is taking shape and can it be «replicated»?***

«In general, we start with an exchange, with a moment of personal communion or maybe what one has lived in the past week, meetings or trips.

There is always an agenda that allows us to prepare ourselves for the topics that will be discussed. Then we start a communion and a dialogue on these topics that always surprises us, because of the transparency of thought, the sincerity in the explanation, the ability to grasp also situations that are not easy or controversial and, many times, the ideas or solutions that emerge are precisely the fruit of this Jesus in the midst. Then, according to the topics, we try to concretize everything, maybe entrusting to one or more of the Counselors the work that is to follow or the coordination with the other members of the General Council. On the other hand we realize that we are just beginning and slowly we attain our “cruising speed”. Nevertheless we can say that we are working as one body, which is then expressed in the work of each Counselor, but above all we try to be one soul and one body. The method, we can say, is that of starting from

unity and trying then to incarnate what has emerged or what we have understood or what is planned».

***In this period you are meeting with the different Centers of the Movement. What impression did you have of the Opera in its diverse realities? What are the more urgent challenges? And the potentialities still unexpressed?***

«A strong impression we had – up to this moment – from every meeting with the various Centers, is this: there is much life, a lot of commitment in bringing ahead the various realities, and thus there is a great wealth of experiences. It is a big gift for us to be able to grasp more deeply how the seeds that Chiara had planted during her lifetime have now become little plants which are already bearing much fruits, because of the big and continuous commitment of many who are taking care of this life. We are amazed and feel a great gratitude in our soul. In many meetings what emerged is that now the collaboration and the synergy among the various realities of the Opera can and must grow. With the maturity that the Opera has reached today in the various realities, a greater unity, not only from the spiritual aspect, but also in the concrete initiatives will give a greater incisiveness to the contribution of the Movement answering to the disunity and the wounds of society.





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Even as we see a great consensus in the different Centers in welcoming the guidelines that the General Assembly has established for the next six years, we find ourselves now, all together in the period wherein the greatest challenge is that of incarnation. We are immersed in the reality of a Work of God that infinitely surpasses us but to which we are nevertheless called to collaborate. To grasp – by listening to the voice of Jesus within us and among us – what could be useful in the present moment so as not to be an obstacle for God to bring ahead the Opera, is maybe the most difficult aspect. But we can also say that we feel the assistance and the push of a special grace, maybe linked to the mystery of communion that we are deepening in this year of the Eucharist».

***What are you doing so that the relationship between the Center and the Zones is always more something vital and alive and influences our living together for «Ut Omnes»?***

«The relationship between the Center and the Zones is a relationship of communion and of reciprocity and thus it will always be vital. We are on a journey of dialogue to help us until this relationship becomes more full and more at the service of “Ut Omnes”. The development of the means of communication offers us much assistance, and we take advantage of this to enhance a communion also on the global level; at the same time it is evident that we

cannot replace personal relationships which is the basis of all life, and also both the trips of the Counselors of the Big Zones and the meetings in the Mariapolis Center at Castelgandolfo present many precious occasions to build and deepen this communion, starting from a personal level. In the context of the changes that the New Set-up is bringing we are also reviewing for example, the structure of the meetings between the Center and the Delegates of the Zone in a way that they will respond to the needs of the Opera today and that they are, as much as possible, useful to promote this communion and be at the service of unity».

***Do you think that the final Document of the Assembly is increasing and renewing the life of the Opera in the different latitudes of the world?***

«The elaboration of the final Document, just as was the entire Assembly, has been marked by a vast and profound experience of participation and co-responsibility and the zones received not just a document containing what is essential for the journey of the Opera in the coming six years, but also the expression of a precious and luminous experience. Whoever participated in one way or another is this experience has become a messenger, a “living letter” of this reality that is now spreading.

In the various meetings at the Mariapolis Center of Castelgandolfo which we participated in, it gave us much joy to see that the final Document started a great process of dialogue in many Zones and in the various realities of the Opera. The big “construction site” for the Opera that the Assembly formed last year, has multiplied in many points of the earth, and this Documento has given to everyone a common denominator which we are now all trying to live, to understand together the priorities of each territory and to put into practice so as to address the most urgent needs to which we are called to as “heirs” of the charism of Chiara ».

*prepared by Aurora Nicosia*

# Abbà School

## A school of life and of thought

**The Abbà School 25 years after its birth. Evaluation and prospects during the meeting with the Center of the Opera last March 13**

The room was jampacked: with the 24 members of the Abbà School, some were physically present and others participated through a link-up. In front of Emmaus, Jesús and the members of the Center of the Opera, questions and answers, reflections and exhortations followed one after the other. On the other hand, after 25 years of experience, many intellectual initiatives and numerous realizations, it was precisely the right moment to make an evaluation and look at the prospects. During these years, in fact, new realities that spread the culture of unity were born in the Focolare Movement, and also others were consolidated so that on the whole, it seemed necessary to refocus the specificity of the Abbà School. Its task is written in the statutes: «to identify and elaborate with Jesus in the midst the doctrine contained in the charism of unity» (cf. General Statutes, art. 67) and, along this line, Emmaus reiterated that it «must be the guarantor that the light of Paradise '49 is grasped within the Soul», which means in that original (and extraordinary) experience of unity that Chiara, Foco and the first focolarine made during that summer in Tonadico, in July 1949. At this clarification of Emmaus Jesús con-

tinued: «The Abbà School must give the light of Paradise. Its specificity is the first mediation of such a light, which will then be transmitted for ulterior elaboration to the other realities of the Opera». The usefulness of this re-focusing on the specific task of the Abba School can be understood starting from the way it presents itself today, with a renewed and youthful composition (12 new members among the 24, belonging to 14 disciplines, plus 7 fields of theology – see box). It is a composition made up of members belonging to the various vocations and realities of the Opera: focolarine and focolarini, some married, priests, religious, men and women Volunteers, a Bishop. The range of the disciplines represented is also wide: from Biblical Theology to the neuro-sciences, from Sociology to Ecclesiology, from Economy to Ecumenism, etc. The cultures and the nationalities present are also many. On the whole the result is not simply a group of intellectuals who work on a text: the nature is fixed by experience which, in a pragmatic way, Chiara indicated with the Pact of unity that she made with Foco, adopted today as the premise, method and foundation of the Abbà School.

Rocca di Papa, 21 march 2015.  
The Abbà School at work





La Scuola Abbà agli inizi degli anni '90. Da sinistra: il vescovo Hemmerle, d. Foresi, Chiara, Peppuccio Zanghi, Piero Coda, p. Novo, Gerard Rossé, Marisa Cerini e Enzo Fondi

## A bit of history

In its 25 years of life the Abbà School has made a lot of progress. Let's look at some statistics. In the beginning it was composed of 7 members: Chiara, Fr. Foresi, Peppuccio Zanghi, Marisa Cerini, Fr. Novo, Piero Coda, Mons. Hemmerle. Therefore it was a group that was particularly well-versed in theological and philosophical matters. Gradually, other members were added who possessed other scientific competences, up to the point of reaching 30 members, representing more than 20 disciplines. Many of them were able to participate in the Abbà School with Chiara who led it, and thus they were able to refine their own intellectual involvement and they received a unique formation on Paradise '49. Some of them have already ended their mandate, but their life experience in the School together with Chiara and their competence continues to be, even if in a different way, a patrimony for the Opera.

A tangible sign of the work that has been done are its publications; we will limit our reference to these last few years. The volume that inaugurated the series «*Studies of the Abbà School*», for the Città Nuova Publishing House, is the fruit of a multi-disciplinary study made on the Pact of unity<sup>1</sup>. The book includes the three stories of the Pact contained in Paradise '49. For the 5° anniversary of the departure of Chiara for Heaven, the Convention «*Chiara*

*Lubich. Charism, history, culture*», was held in the La Sapienza University (Rome), with a con large participation of personalities and scholars, among whom were some «extern» members of the Abbà School. In such circumstances the text of Chiara «Look at all

the flowers» was presented in depth. The interventions were published in volumes 3 and 4 of the Series «*Studies of the Abbà School*»<sup>2</sup>.

For the 70° of the Opera, on December 7, 2013, the Abbà School gave to Emmaus the text of Paradise '49 the way it was written by Chiara with her notes, accompanied by a comprehensive Introduction to Paradise '49 prepared by the Abbà School which, in around thirty pages, explains the genesis, history and composition of the text and then offers some perspectives that we think can facilitate the reading of the text that will be published.

Beyond these particular realizations, the life and work of the Abbà School are expressed in the numerous publications and activities of its members, both individually and together with the respective groups of «externs», without forgetting the many repercussions in the ambit of the different cultural agencies of the Opera, the Inundations and the Dialogues.

1 AA.VV., *Il Patto del '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich*, Rome 2012. A second volume is being prepared by the group of the externs for linguistics and literature: AA.VV., *Come frecciate di luce. Itinerari linguistici e letterari nel racconto del '49 di Chiara Lubich*, Rome 2013.

2 AA.VV., *Carisma storia cultura. Una lettura interdisciplinare del pensiero di Chiara Lubich*, Rome 2014; AA.VV., *Guardare tutti i fiori. Da una pagina del '49 di Chiara Lubich*, Rome 2014.

## To transmit the patrimony

The reflection continues on the publication of the text of Paradise. The requests in this sense come from all over and it has become urgent to plan adequate ways to transmit this patrimony and the light of '49. On the other hand in the «Guidelines and program of action» of the General Assembly, the Abbà School is explicitly mentioned twice: in the chapter on «Adequately prepared» and in the chapter «Together». The need to elaborate a common cultural project and to create a permanent cultural laboratory so as to exert an influence also in the outside world was underlined. Specifically, during the meeting with the Center of the Opera, they were asked in what way could they activate the synergies for the Abbà School. Emmaus underlined the role of the Counselors of the Indigo and of the Aspects in general: «I feel, especially in this year, that the “colors” have the function of precisely being the blood that links and runs throughout the entire body of the Opera and which makes its parts function. This is why the role of the Indigo seems important to me in linking the various cultural pieces of the Opera, because there is just one culture of the Opera, it is not broken into pieces». Finally, to the new team Emmaus entrusted this to them: «*There is no need to rush in realizing big projects, instead you must urgently build among you this strong reality that will allow you to discover what God really wants from the text of Paradise 49*».

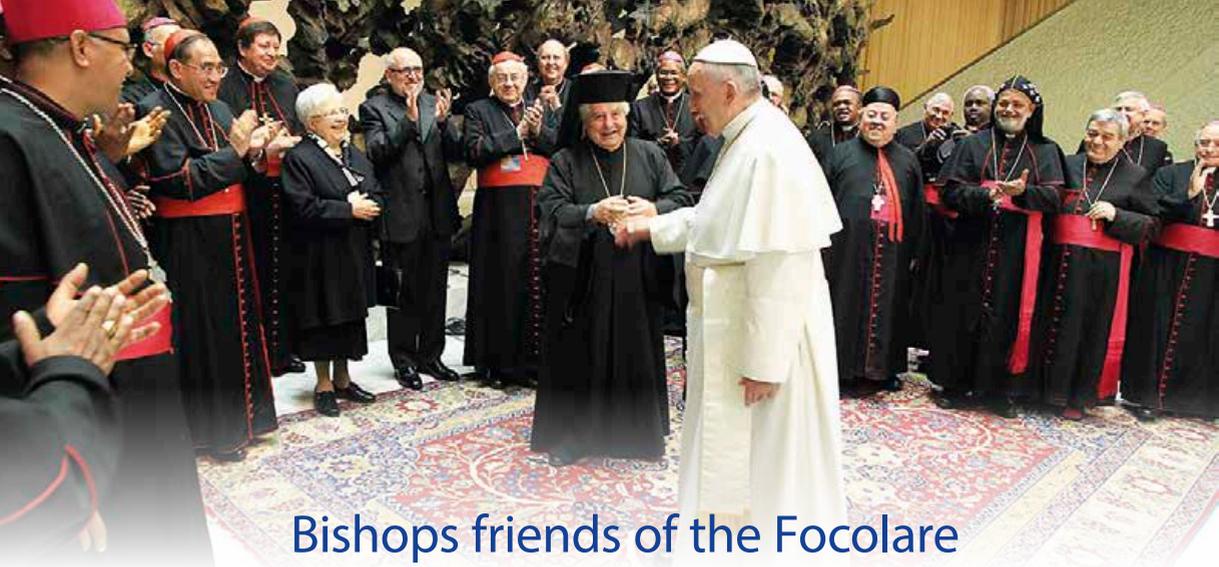
*prepared by the editorial board*

## New composition of the Abbà School

ART	Thérèse Henderson
BIOLOGY	Catherine Belzung
ILAW	Adriana Cosseddu
ECONOMICS	Anouk Grevin
SOCIAL ETHICS	Alberto Lo Presti
PHILOSOPHY	Claudio Guerrieri
LINGUISTICS/ PHILOLOGY/ LITERATURE	Anna Maria Rossi
MATHEMATICS	Judy Povilus
POLITOLOGY	Pasquale Ferrara
PSYCHOLOGY	Fr. Alessandro Partini
COMMUNICATION SCIENCES	Palko Toth
EDUCATION	Teresa Boi
SOCIOLOGY	Gennaro Iorio
HISTORY	Lucia Abignente
THEOLOGY	Declan O'Byrne
ANGLICAN THEOLOGY	Callan Slipper
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	Giovanna Porrino
THEOLOGY (ECCLESIOLOGY)	Hubertus Blaumeiser
(ECCLESIOLOGY, MARIOLOGY)	Brendan Leahy
EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY	Stefan Tobler
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY	Mirvet Kelly
SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY	Fr. Fabio Ciardi
COUNSELORS OF THE INDIGO	Renata Simon Francisco Canzani



13 march 2015. The Abbà School meets with the Center of the Opera



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## Bishops friends of the Focolare

# «Bread broken» for the life of many

**The encouragement of Pope Francis, the power of the Pact, the testimonies from the bloodied lands of Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. Together in the 38° meeting of Catholic Bishops.**

On March 4 at St. Peter's Square packed with people for the Wednesday audience, images (without sound) flashed across the giant screens showing what was happening simultaneously inside the Paul VI Hall. On the stage, seated in a circle were 61 Bishops conversing with the Pope, among them were also Emmaus whom the Pope warmly greeted first upon his arrival. He himself defined the characteristic of this meeting: *«Your friendship with this Movement and interest in the "spirituality of communion" has brought you together in Rome. In particular, over these days your reflection has been focused on the theme "Eucharist, Mystery of Communion". Indeed, the charism of unity proper to the Work of Mary is strongly anchored in the Eucharist, which confers upon it its Christian and ecclesial character. Without the Eucharist, unity would lose the magnetism of divine attraction and would be reduced to a sentiment and to a dynamic that is only human, psychological and sociological. Instead, the Eucharist guarantees that Christ is the centre, and that it is his Spirit, the Holy Spirit that moves our steps and our initiatives of encounter and communion».*

The Bishops came from 35 Countries and five continents. Among them many were bringing the burden of suffering from their

lands: Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, African and Asian countries. And others are spiritually close because they were not able to leave those lands like Bishop Martinelli of Tripoli. Pope Francis expressed his gratitude to them and continued: *«the Bishop does not gather the people around his person, or his ideas, but around Christ and conformed to Him «becomes a living Gospel, he becomes Bread broken for the life of many with his preaching and his witness... driven by his love to give his life for his brothers and sisters».*

The venue that welcomed them for the Pact of Reciprocal love is quite meaningful: the crypt with the tomb of the apostle Peter.

In the communion that characterized the entire meeting, among the 15 Bishops who were participating for the first time, there



were those who asked what should they do so that the declaration of loving the diocese of the other as their own does not just remain as a beautiful proclamation but becomes a reality. As if in a competition, the concrete experiences of many Bishops were shared one after another, such as inventing new ways, making use of the means of communication... The testimony of a Syrian Bishop whose diocese is located in the territories devastated by Isis was important, he shared about the grace

of carrying the cross knowing that he was not alone, but supported by a «body» of brothers who live with him and for him.

The encouragement of Pope Francis: «*encourage you to carry forward your commitment in favour of the ecumenical path and interreligious dialogue*» confirmed the gift that living the Charism of unity represents for a Church that is «going out» – the kind of Church that Francis desires.

Giancarlo Faletti, Helmut Sievers

## The Opera lives together with the Bishops

**On March 13 the new secretariat of the Bishops friends of the Focolare Movement met with the Center of the Opera.**

At the meeting Giancarlo Faletti, the new secretary was also present. They focused on the prospects regarding many Bishops who were working in the «frontiers»: in situations of war, threatened by Muslim fundamentalists or faced with poverty and social injustice rather than in societies that have lost all religious references, or in contact with great Religions. The commitment of keeping alive the relationship among Bishops and the other realities of the Movement was also highlighted.

Among the Bishops who are more committed in the life of the spirituality of unity, there has been an increase on reciprocal visits, telephone calls and contacts through the use of the various means of communication. This fact has resulted in contributions of experiences and reflections that could be offered to their episcopal conferences.

They would like to give more incentive and to strengthen the communication using the more widely used languages with the Bishops of various Churches or with those responsible for Churches – even if they are not ordained Bishops – who have a guiding role in their ecclesial community.



From the left: Dalibor Slavicek, René (Nuldi) Meier, Pina Peduzzi, Helmut (Chiarama) Sievers, Giancarlo Faletti, Christian Müggler, Jordi Marjanedas

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The nomination as Cardinal of Francis Kriengsak Kovithavanij, moderator of the Meeting of the Bishop friends, was an indication of how much the Pope values these meetings among Bishops.

The consideration of Jesús Morán was important: we must grasp this *kairos*, this «moment of God» in which the Pope proposes a renewed exercise of the episcopal ministry, linked to the reform of the Church, that supports and values our commitment. Maria Voce completed this saying that in the last meeting of Bishops they were encouraged by the Pope in their journey of communion and dialogue. A challenge that the whole Opera would like to live together with them.

### Future Meetings of Bishops

- 25 -30 novembre 2015 Meeting of Bishops of various Churches in Istanbul
- 22 – 26 febbraio 2016 Meeting of Catholic Bishops in Castel Gandolfo
- 24 – 28 ottobre 2016 Meeting of Bishops of various Churches in Ottomaring
- 06 – 10 marzo 2017 Meeting of Catholic Bishops in Castel Gandolfo



## New generations

# Projects and life: a common desk

### Meeting of the Center of the Opera with the different expressions of the youth sector of the Movement

«If we don't take care of the environment where the young people live so that they can feel comfortable and at ease, we are favouring war, even if we don't want it». This comment of Emmaus is quite strong and refers to the involvement of many youth in terrorist groups or in organizations that lead to disarray. We are at the Center of the Opera with the Centers of the gen2, gen3, gen4, Young ones for unity, Youth for a united world: a large slice of all the youth realities of the Movement. We spent an entire day together because the life is abundant and the areas are many. The reference Emmaus made makes us understand how much the topics discussed cannot be removed from the reality that the new generations, of all ages, experience first-hand everyday. Existential bewilderment, loss of the meaning of life, difficulty in interpersonal relations, lack of reference points, educational and moral challenges... Throughout these years the Opera has strongly committed itself in many concrete topics trying to find answers and setting up projects that are the fruit of much synergy and team work.

The **gen4**, «natural» witnesses of evangelical radicalness both for children as well as adults, require a greater sensibilization of the entire Opera in their regard. In this phase wherein focolare centers are being moved, Zones are merging, we have seen how fruitful it is to involve the local communities which has ensured the continuity in the care of the gen4. In this regard Emmaus emphasized how positive it is that many in the Opera are taking care of the gen4, underlining also the importance of the link with the focolare.

Knowledge of the document on the Protection of minors has brought a new awareness, but there is still much to be done so that this document is spread and received on a wider scale. The gen4 themselves also experience a multicultural society and more Muslim children are participating in their meetings. From this arises the need to deepen the communion with the Centers for dialogues so as to address this reality by providing adequate formation. With the collaboration of the experts in the Opera and of the New Families we are working

together to prepare guidelines for a course for assistants that includes schools, meetings and possibility for interaction through a forum in the gen4 website.

From the city to the world – this could be the definition of the journey of the **gen3 and the Young ones for unity**. In fact, after years in which the project «Let's Color the city» has produced a particular attention to the theme and many initiatives, the «Global Person» construction site, realized last summer in Argentina (with different simultaneous events in various Countries), has widened the vision towards that Global Person which Pope Francis himself talked about at the audience with the participants of the Assembly last September. An important achievement was the formation program that was produced in these years for the adolescents and their animators. The latest initiative that was born, with the New Families, is the project Up2me, an educational course on emotions, sexuality and the harmonious development of a person in his or her growing years.

There are a lot of synergies in action. With New Humanity, Edu and Amu, starting from the international meeting on education they have gone ahead in setting up a desk on education to oversee the projects in common («Living peace», «Scholas occurrentes»); with the Amu the project «Schoolmates» continues; with the counselors of the Green in the Opera and the gen4 Centers they have worked on the doc-

ument for the Protection of minors; with the Città Nuova Publishing House the magazine Teens was born.

The **Youth for a united world** leave visible traces throughout the planet. In Budapest after the Genfest of 2012 they created the «fraternity corner» in a park in the center of the city: on the benches that represent the five continents they carved the «golden rule». Always on that occasion, the «United world project» (UWP) was launched. In 2013, during the United World Week, an olive tree was planted; in 2014 it was the year of the fraternity construction site «Sharing with Africa» that was realized in Nairobi. This year the United World Week will have its main event in Mumbai, in India. The UWP allowed the collaboration with other movements and organizations while a group of students from Sophia are finalizing some studies on fraternity to highlight the different expressions of fraternity according to the various cultures.

The **gen2**, whose statistics show a certain stability in these last few years that had been lacking for some time, have started a profound reflection on certain open-ended questions of their generation. They feel called by the more delicate actual topics such as homosexuality, the economic crisis, the legalization of drugs; they feel the need of a greater incisiveness in society and in the institutions and the need for a greater human preparation.



They are proposing a stronger network among the generations, to focus on the dialogues and on the younger ones. To respond to the request for a more in-depth formation, formative periods have already been scheduled offered by Sophia with themes linked to the Inundations. The first will be held in Loppiano, this coming July, entitled «Summer school» and will be open to the gen boys and girls and to the Youth for a united world. In August there will be a gen2 school for whites and assistants in collaboration with Sophia.

Emmaus underlined the importance of the gen involving other young people in their ac-

tions. In this way aside from addressing a real need – of the poor for example – they also make the other youth happy, because they have in their hands the «key of giving», the answer to finding the meaning of life for many of them.

The General Assembly expressed a request: to set-up a «New generations» desk made up of the members of the gen4, gen3, Young ones for unity, gen2, Youth for a united world, parish and diocesan Moviments, gens, gen-re Centers. The meeting we mentioned above ratifies the official birth, after a gestation period that has already gone through some stages.

*prepared by the editorial board*

## gen2 Rainbow Units and Secretariats of YFUW To go in-depth and to go out

**At Castel Gandolfo youth from 39 countries. Mornings to go in-depth, afternoons of concrete work looking at the present and the future.**

Days of a united world, full of creativity, commitment, fantasy and concreteness. We can summarize in this way the experience lived from March 12 to 15 in Castel Gandolfo on the occasion of the meeting of the Rainbow units of the gen2 and the animators of the Youth for a united world. Thirty nine countries were represented: from Japan to Argentina, from the Middle east to Africa, from eastern to western

Europe, from Italy to Latin America, from Asia to Oceania. An intense congress that began with the participation in the event dedicated to Chiara Lubich at the Italian Parliament, followed by days of work at the Mariapolis Center. A meeting that was full of life, which did not end at the conclusion of the gathering: we felt that we are «one body» that continues to grow together in the journey to «Ut Omnes».

The congress began with this question: «What can we do to go in-depth and to go out?». It may seem like two dimensions that are quite far from each other, but we remembered an image that Chiara Lubich gave in a page of «Paradise»: «The more a tree goes deeper, the more its crown grows [...] We





At the event dedicated to Chiara Lubich held at the headquarters of the Italian Parliament, on March 12, with the president of Congress Laura Boldrini (in the center)

have an interior life and an exterior life. [...] The interior life is nourished by the exterior life. In as much as I enter the soul of my brother, I enter God who is within me, the more I enter God within me, the more I enter into the brother. God – I – the brother: this is totally a world in itself, totally a kingdom”. So during the morning we went in-depth in the theme of the year on Jesus in the Eucharist with meditations introduced by Jesús Moran and Renata Simon whom we would like to thank. Then, in the program, the «Paradise» that Chiara today continues to give us could not be missing: listening to it we felt that we were not just watching a video, it was as if she herself was present in the hall a that she brought us to Paradise with her. We felt all the more responsible for our vocation: we feel that she gives us, without any hesitation, this very great capital that God gave her.

During the afternoon we did concrete work. One day was dedicated to the United World Project (UWP). We began by listening to a meditation on Jesus Forsaken and the words of Emmaus which threw the great challenge to the young people to do something for the realities of today, with a lot of trust and much awareness. It was impressive to see the sprint of the young people present: we immediately went to work, each one giving his or her opinion, point of view, talents. Substance and action were interwoven. Another day was spent instead dis-

ussing about the Genfest: divided into groups according to language we analyzed where, when and how we wanted the next genfest to be and, above all, what themes did we want to work with for the event. It was very interesting to see the answers, the ideas and the proposals that were so different from each other, full of creativity and linked to actual worldwide realities. The most beautiful things was to see the readiness of each one to lose their own ideas. Without a doubt: the next Genfest is powerfully starting to take shape!

One of the afternoons that was quite demanding was when we divided ourselves into the Rainbow Units and the animators of the Youth for a united world. In the hall with the latter we were around sixty. We tried to go in-depth in studying the identity of the YFUW and on the role of the animators. Space was given



for an open dialogue and we met according to language so as to be able to express ourselves better also talking about the difficulties and the development of the groups of youth in our zones. It was an important moment because, even if some were only able to share obstacles or joys, others were able to suggest some solutions. Then we started to think about the United World Week 2016 and we decided to continue this dialogue with all the zones after the congress. A beautiful feeling remained in us of having our hearts open to the whole world and in attentively listening to the Holy Spirit, in order to understand what our aim is for this event next year.

1 Chiara Lubich, Santità di popolo, Roma, Città Nuova, 2001, pp. 82-83

Instead, in the hall where the Rainbow Units met, they worked and dialogued in groups on two themes: «communion of goods» and «going against the current». In the first group they came to know about the situation of the gen Centers and some ideas on an international level were born; among other things they discussed about the different situations that the youth sectors are living today. The idea was to start to talk about these topics in order to understand that with Jesus in the midst we can and we must go ahead, make decisions, help one another and grow, ready to give everything and to be nothing, so as to be able to understand and listen to one another.

Different political realities, different personal or social wounds, different points of view, different religions (we had the joy of having among us a gen2 boy from Algeria who is a Muslim), different languages, different riches: everything made us really experience a united world. It was precisely the diversity that gave us the certainty that this life, this ideal of unity of Chiara, is something great which is worth living for! We left with a great and lasting joy. We know that we all have a dream and a certainty: each one, with his or her creativity and in his or her context, but together with all the others, is trying to change the reality of suffering that he or she meets and to love the neighbour with Jesus on the Eucharist, who gives us the strength to become like Him.

*Anita Martinez all the gen boys and girls of the gen2 Centers*



## gen2 Congresses in the Zones

### In Budapest from the whole Eastern Europe

**An occasion to get to know and love  
our Countries, to deepen and to  
rediscover the beauty of the gen life**

We were around 180 gen2 and we spoke eight languages: it was an original congress and decisively very enriching. It united us and made us stronger. Budapest was the splendid background for a meeting that gathered together the gen2 boys and girls and some pre-gen2 from all over Eastern Europe. We came from different nations and, often, we live faraway from each other and far from the focolare, but we understood that it is precisely there that we must commit ourselves to love more, until the Ideal of unity spreads.

In the weeks that preceded the meeting we had put in common the ideas on how to build the days together. The program and its realization was born, step by step, from the presence of Jesus among us. It was a strong experience of unity. At the congress another gift was the presence of Gabriella Zoncapè and Marius Müller of the international gen2 center. The first day was spent distinctly, it was like a retreat wherein we were able to





get to know more about the reality of the gen2 girls and boys of the individual parts of Eastern Europe. Then two days spent together. We entered into the theme of anthropology, starting from life experiences. Some adults shared with us their experience of the gen life including how their personal and professional stories developed

after their experience as gen. Thinking of the presence of the pre-gen2 boys and girls, we concluded with a meditation on the aspects and for each one of them we shared an experience trying to express all the different geographical areas that we were representing. One evening was dedicated to the presentation of our Countries and our cultures so as to get to know reciprocally the our nations of origin.

*The gen2 boys and the gen2 girls of Eastern Europe*

## Portugal: a new yes

**Appointment in the Little Town Arco-íris for a congress built together starting from the preparations**

«I for you» was the title of our congress that gathered together more than a hundred gen2 boys and girls of Portugal. «For me this congress was historical - a gen girl wrote. The preparation was done together as never before, living the life of the colours from the beginning with everyone, on the national level. The days

of the congress, then, was a formation with Jesus in the midst, we bore witness that the gen movement is one body». During this congress we realized the greatness and the complexity of being gen: it is very demanding, it is a choice of a way of life. With this awareness we confirmed our «yes». «I will bring with me the proposal to be Jesus for whoever I will meet – a gen boy wrote. If my colleagues will see a different person it is because I am not alone, but from today onwards I will bring all of you with me, I bring Jesus within me, and so the people will be able to see God». During the congress we meditated on the importance of the Eucharist: the communion of soul in small groups allowed us to bear witness to what Jesus in the Eucharist has done in our lives. Fr. Silvester was with us for one day and he spoke to us about the start of the process of beatification and canonization of Chiara Lubich, underlining the novelty of collective sanctity. We felt ourselves totally involved and committed! Charism and culture were the other themes that we tackled; we had a dialogue with experts and listened to experiences on the Inundations and Dialogues. A special moment was seeing

together the first lesson of Chiara to the gen2 on Paradise. To remain in the «bosom of the Father» was our unanimous desire! «Listening to Chiara talking about Paradise wherein she mentions waterfalls and pine trees... – one of us

said – and that everything is love and everything shares, because it is the expression of the Love of God, I understood in a new way who God is. This helps me, because once in awhile my faith may waver, but if in those moments I think about these days wherein I experienced God, it becomes impossible to say that He does not exist».

*the gen2 boys and girls of Portugal*



## «We care for Italy»

**In Loppiano more than a thousand gen from the whole Country for the first congress of the new Italian Zone**

1004 Gen! A wave of vivacity which from March 7 to 10 shook the Little City of Loppiano for our first historical congress of the gen2 boys and girls of the Zone of Italy.

We desired and lived this, our «historical» moment together, wishing to start the adventure linked to the new Italian Zone as the occasion to rediscover how to take care of our own Country: «We care for Italy», was the title of the event. To do this we started from the roots, rediscovering a new and more conscious radicalness and everydayness of our gen life, a choice that was sealed among us by the Pact and rediscovery illuminated by the theme on the Eucharist.

WE arrived at the Valle d'Aosta, situated in the fathest tip of Sicily and among us were also 5 gen from Albania. Many wrote under the heading «Zona» in their meal tickets: «Italy». Yes, because in Loppiano we felt that we were just one Zone! The presence of Andrea Goller and Rosalba Polli, the new delegates of the Opera for Italy, was the seal together with us of this new reality. Also present with them were Gabriella Zoncapè and Marius Müller, the gen2 of the gen Centers and the gen Schools of Loppiano who with their presence helped us

not to lose sight of our widest aim, «Ut Omnes».

The programme and the entire organization of the congress were the fruit of our team work: in fact, in the preceding months, a commission of 8 gen2 from all over Italy, with the help of 2 focolarini, shared on the web the concrete work of whole «ex-Zone», to which an aspect or a part of the programme had been entrusted. This made each one feel immediately that they were protagonists by contributing in different ways to building the congress. There are so many experiences and so many «jumps» that the gen of the commission could share!

We had the chance to go over the steps already taken with our gaze fixed on the future, ready to launch ourselves and to contaminate many youth with our same passion, by being close to everyone so as to give them the Ideal, certain that our courage will show – just as Emmaus in her message wished for us - «the beauty and the advantages of being builders of unity». Constructing our congress together made us more mature and aware of who we are, not only in the Movement, but also for Italy. It was said that if we want to love our Country and to tranform the wounds into openings ... there will always be the light and we must make an effort to value it, and if there is no light then we must generate it, with the simplicity of love. We committ ourselves to continue to shout out also in our own realities that: WE CARE FOR ITALY.

*Caterina Bracci, Daniela Baudino, Giuseppe Arcuri*



# Gen4

## An afternoon with the first focolarini

**Around fifty gen4 of Rome happily «invaded» the living room of the focolare of Fr. Foresi. An hour and a half of dialogue in an atmosphere of celebration and profound listening**



A varied group arrived in the afternoon in the garden of the Center of the Opera: they were around fifty gen4 from the Zone of Rome accompanied by their assistants, parents and some

they brought: from a homemade cake to tomatosauce, from an aftershave kit with bathsoap to a drawing of Paradise with Chiara. When the gen4 asked about that they felt in their heart



The gen4 girls with Fr. Foresi, Fede, Marco and Bruno

when the process of the beatification and canonization of Chiara was started, Chiaretto answered «(I felt) a great happiness, because Chiara has always been a saint and now this is being confirmed by the Church. But we always knew this already!». Then the dialogue continued: «What do you have in your heart for the new generations, we are the buds, but then we will grow up. What advice can you give

gen5. They are bearing many gifts and are so happy for the meeting that awaits them: Fr. Pasquale (Chiaretto) Foresi and the focolarini of his focolare were waiting for them in their house. Before going there they stopped to visit Chiara: in the chapel, Milene Benjamin, the new person responsible at the international gen4 Center, explained to them the meaning of the sanctity of Chiara. This was followed by a moment of «one on one with Chiara» accompanied by songs. Then, in one line they cross the garden, arriving at the focolare of Chiaretto, where Marco Tecilla welcomed them with open arms greeting them one by one. In the living room of the focolare Chiaretto, Giorgio (Fede) Marchetti and Bruno Venturini, together with Marco, answer for an hour and a half to their questions sharing some little anecdotes, experiences and jokes. At the moment of giving the gifts some take Chiaretto and then Marco by the hand to show them what

us?» «Continue to be light – Marco said – to bring the light of the Charism. This is what Chiara did, and we must continue like her and to go ahead». And still more: «What do they eat in Paradise, what do you do in Paradise?». Fede and Marco shared what Chiara «saw» in Paradise when she understood about nature and the relationships among all things. The atmosphere was that of profound listening, attentive, heartfelt, in spite of the fact that there were some gen5 who were just two years old and some gen4 who had just



Carissime gen 4 e gen 5 di Roma e Grottaferrata,

grazie della letterina nella quale mi raccontate la bella giornata che avete trascorso al Centro dell'Opera, ne sono molto contenta!

Vi ringrazio anche dei soldi che mi avete portato per i bambini della Siria e della Sierra Leone. Li farò arrivare assieme al biglietto che avete indirizzato a loro con le vostre firme.

Gesù, che ritiene fatto a Sé ogni nostro atto d'amore, vi ringrazierà riempiendovi il cuore di gioia.

Portate i miei saluti a tutte le gen 4 e le gen 5 che conoscete, io vi sono sempre vicina e chiedo a Chiara di mettermi accanto tante bambine che, come voi, vogliono imparare ad amare Gesù.

Un abbraccio a ciascuna con affetto,

Bruna

Kaden, 10/15

come from being gen5. Then we went together to the chapel to sing some songs composed for Chiara, while the first focalini encouraged us: «Sing some more, we were born singing, we would sing always!». During snack time, they continued to ask questions. «Have you ever sometimes quarelled with Chiara?», «Were you ever jealous?». «No, no, never – Bruno answered – what do you do when there is only love? You love! It's not hard, spend all your life doing this!».

At the end of the afternoon Marco accompanied them to the door and greeting them he said: «You were a big gift for us. We'll wait for you again!».

Emi Della Monica



## Families in Russia

# With God among us everything is possible

**From St. Petersburg to Krasnojarsk, in southern Siberia, two schools for families gathered together more than a hundred participants. Also present were Paolo and Barbara Rovea from the New Families Center**

«Thanks to this meeting I felt that the relationship in our family has become stronger. It gave us a new breath of life to start again and to strengthen ourselves». This is what a young husband said after the school for families held at St. Petersburg (20-23 February), the first of two schools held in Russia. The schools were born in answer to the needs of the local community, and were prepared up to the smallest details by the families of the two cities.

The programme, which was quite intense, was characterized by many moments of dialogue: questions and answers in the hall, private talks, life experiences. Paolo and Barbara Rovea of the New Families Center were also present: their experiences on every aspect of family life were very much appreciated. At St. Petersburg there were around sixty participants with ten families coming from an Orthodox parish and accompanied by their parish priest, who expressed a great appreciation for the Movement. He said, for example, that he discovered the importance of mutual support among the families and the consecrated persons which he saw being lived in the Opera. «For me these meetings are very important – he added. Here we are Catholics and Orthodox and I feel a very strong unity among us. As Orthodox in general we have a different relationship with Catholics from what we experience here.... After these days I feel that there is

Christ in our midst. This experience is a great help». The majority of the couples present already had a spiritual formation that allowed them to deepen the various aspects of our spirituality. «I experienced the beauty of every family and this shows the beauty of God. The life with the other families is important for me. We learned how to be grateful to God for what we already have». «I was amazed at this design of God that breaks down all barriers, the boundaries and also beliefs. I thank you, you have given us happiness».

The second school was held in Krasnojarsk from February 27 to March 1<sup>o</sup>, with around fifty participants, also present were two families from Novosibirsk (900 Km. away) and two extern married focolarine Celiabinsk (2300 Km. away). Among the participants were numerous Catholics, some Orthodox, one without any religious convictions. The presence of the priest Volunteer was a gift. For the seventeen children and teens present a suitable programme was also prepared for them. Most of the couples were carrying painful family experiences on their shoulders; some grew up with just one parent, many found their faith as adults. «In this last period I felt like Jesus on the cross – one of

the participants said – and you focolarini came like Mary who, at the foot of the cross, consoled Jesus. The school has changed something within me, I feel it very strongly». «Thank you for everything! – an Orthodox lady declared at the conclusion. Before coming here my husband and I felt like Peter, walking on water, he was sinking because he didn't have enough faith. In this meeting I understood that I must have faith in God and with Him I will be able to overcome everything. The difficulties that I had didn't seem so heavy anymore». «I grew up without my father – confided a man, who was also an Orthodox – and it was very important for me to see what a father does». Many, in both schools, thanked Paolo and Barbara: «It was very positive to see a family who lives for God» a couple said. «We didn't know if we should come – a lady confided – because it seemed to us that in our family we already had everything, but here I realized that there is another kind of fullness». «It is the first time for me to participate in this kind of meeting – one of them said at the conclusion. Thank you for having invited me. It is impressive to hear about Jesus Forsaken. Now we want really to continue to meet with the families».

*The focolarine and focolarini of Russia*



## With the evangelical Movements Together instruments of unity

From March 2 to 5 an important meeting of persons responsible of Evangelical Movements was held near Stuttgart. They were 150. Emmaus also spent a day with them.

It has been 15 years since, in March 2000, Chiara was invited to Rothenburg in Germany for the annual «Meeting of Persons Responsible» of Evangelical Movements, with some Catholics also present. What remains unforgettable - after her talk - was the spontaneous requests for forgiveness, given and received, for the judgements and misunderstandings that happened between one Church or Movement towards another. The long final prayer of Chiara was the expression of everyone: «We want to launch ourselves towards the future. Make use of us, Jesus in our midst, as instruments of your unity». From that moment on the process of communion among the Movements of various Churches lived through

important events such as «Together for Europe» in Stuttgart and Brussels.

In March of this year another page was written. Gerhard Pross had invited Emmaus to share a theme on: «How to remain faithful to the Charism and to develop it in a new way in moments of change». The arrival of Emmaus was highly anticipated in the «Haus Schönblick» (Schwäbisch Gmünd) evangelical formation center near Stuttgart where the meeting was being held. In fact, almost all the Movements and Communities born in the last century met to face the challenge of answering to the questions of the present while remaining faithful to one's own charism.

Emmaus updating us upon her return to Italy said that the strong experience of communion experienced with Chiara has remained as the reference point and inspiration for them. She also added that their participation in what she was sharing in her talk was such that - they said - they had the impression of understanding her even before the translation came because she spoke «from her heart to their heart». In her words they could understand the difference between the foundation phase, the «charismatic period» and the phase of maturation, the «creative faithfulness period».

A special light was brought by the passage on Jesus Forsaken, that they later requested to go more in depth through an intense dialogue during the day. They discovered Him as the secret to be able to merit the presence of Jesus in the midst, which they took as a treasure to be put into practice. They considered Him as the gift that the life of the Opera is giving them today.



Rothenburg, marzo 2000



## Faithfulness and development

### Some excerpts of the interview with Maria Voce

«It is still very early to truly understand who Chiara was».

With Chiara present - in that which is called the "charismatic period" of the foundress - the aim of the Movement was well understood: unity among Christians; universal brotherhood among all men and women in the world. The whole spirituality was defined in its various points, the structure of the Movement, the methods (dialogues and inundations), the means (the printing press, audiovisual centers, musical groups, the little towns, the universities...).

After this period "full of surprises, new, dynamic, luminous..." now another period comes in - the so-called "period of maturity" - in which the new president of the Movement, [...] must simply make what Chiara has given life to, grow, develop it and multiply it everywhere. Not alone, but assisted by a body of men and women counselors elected in the Assembly.

Continuity and novelty, without any conflicts whatsoever: was what we had experienced for sixty years with Chiara.

And now they look forward together to the next appointment: there is much expectation and waiting for the event of «Together for Europe» to be held in Munich in 2016. This is a step in preparation for the five hundredth anniversary of Luther's Reform, which they look at as an opportunity for another step forward towards unity.

Now continuity and novelty present themselves in the new page that has opened with the "departure" of Chiara and with the passing away of the witnesses who together with her had started the Movement, and who ever since have shared in the guidance of this Opera, and with those who followed. But truthfully we always go ahead as a body, participating with Chiara, with the first men and women focolarini in the creation, development and spread of the Movement in the world.

If before we were all turned towards Chiara ready to catch the directions she gave in building the Movement, so that it could be at the service of unity and of fraternity of all people, now we are obliged to find these indications on all levels, international and regional, in the communion among the members of the Movement belonging to different vocations.

The humble story of the Movement will always remain for us the starting point "to enkindle the life of the Gospel all over the world". It will always remind all the future generations "how" the divine adventure of Chiara began: "we were born in the air raid shelters with only the Gospel in our hands, this therefore is our life". Rooted in this origins the Movement will remain on earth<sup>1</sup>».

*you may find the complete text in Mariapoli online [www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli](http://www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli)*

1 It will remain - Chiara affirmed - "truly like another Mary: all Gospel, nothing but the Gospel, and, because it is Gospel, it will never die". Cf C. LUBICH, To the delegates of the Opera in the zone, 28.10.1989.

Returning to Rome, on March 4 Emmaus went to see Pope Francis together with the Bishops friends of the Movement. It was an occasion to bring him the greetings and the admiration of the Evangelical persons in-charge of the Movements whom she had just met and to tell him of their common commitment to unity. «Well and good - the Pope said thanking her. The ecumenical work that you are bringing ahead is very important».

*prepared by the editorial board*

## Card. Edward Egan

*«If ever I can be of help to you just pick up the phone»*



On March 5, Card. Edward Egan, archbishop emeritus of New York, left for Heaven at 83 years old. He met the Movement in the '60s, when he was the Vice-Chancellor of the archdiocese of Chicago. Since then his relationship with the Focolare was always that of great friendship and cordiality.

In 1985 he wrote, among other things: «I can be of help to you in any way, just pick up the phone and let me know. I have very beautiful memories of how much you loved Card. Cody of Chicago (the diocese where Card. Egan came from n.d.r.) and the magnificent witness that you give of God...» (he was present in '68 when Chiara went to visit Card. Cody).

It was also thanks to him that Chiara received the doctorate *honoris causa* in Humanistic Sciences from the Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut (USA) in May 1997. During the ceremony, he said among other things: «...I would like to add a word of welcome to Chiara Lubich. ... She is a blessing for all of us and I would like to insist in my wish that she come back again...». And in the prayer of blessing: «Eternal Father... we ask you to bless today one of the greatest personalities of our time, a woman who is a gentle and powerful leader, a woman whose life is courage and sanctity. And with her we would also like to welcome all those who share her ideals: let us look at them as our model, as our guide. We know that we are always in your prayers ...».

When he was nominated as archbishop of New York in 2001, succeeding Card. O'Connor, he wrote us: «I was very happy to see so many members of the Focolare in Rome during the consistory». In June 2009 he supported our educational project «in the hopes that it could

be adopted in the schools of the archdiocese ... The Movement founded by Chiara Lubich works intensely to contribute to the unity among Catholics, Christians, persons of the great religions and of good will. The dice of love has the potentiality to create a new culture of love and of respect among youth,

which so much needed today» he wrote. He subscribed to the magazine *Living City* from the '80s, and in 2011 he came to Rome accompanied by Fr. Brendan Fitzgerald (now parish priest of Hyde Park, where the Mariapoli Luminosa is) to visit the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo during the meeting of the Bishops.

*Chiaretta Zanzucchi, Enrico Donzelli*

## Violette Karram

*A life lived in love*

Born and raised in Haifa, in the Holy Land, it was thanks to Violet that the Ideal of unity was able to put down its roots in solid ground in a place characterized by a very complex religious-political situation.

God prepared her by giving her a profoundly Christian family and husband, Boulos, also a man of great faith. They had four children. After 7 years of marriage, Boulos is stricken with cerebral hemorrhage that left him semi-paralyzed. Even in suffering, Violette is not discouraged. A strong woman of the Gospel she takes up the reins of the family and is even able to give sewing lessons to augment their income.

In 1976 the children participate in a Mariapolis. Enthusiastic, they convinced their



parents to attend the following year. In '77 the focolare center was opened in Jerusalem and their house became a meeting place for the growing Arab-Christian community in the north of Israel. Much later they became the bridge in the contacts with the Jews and Muslims. Some focolarini came from Rome to visit the Holy sites and on the way to the North they would pass by the house of Violette and Boulos – he too became a Volunteer – and it was the «focolare» who welcomed them. In this atmosphere the vocation of their daughters were born: the eldest entered the convent, Margaret entered the focolare and is at present the Counselor for Italy.

Even after the departure of Boulos for Paradise, in '88, their house remained open to welcome everyone, and who passed there were edified by the experience of the Gospel lived with radicalness and in simplicity. For many years Violette was the delagte of the women Volunteers of the Zone. With her concrete, personal, delicate love, she knew how to give advice and even to correct, respecting the choices even difficult ones, guided by the Word of life that Chiara gave her: «Become imitators of God, as his beloved children and walk in charity» (Eph 5,1-2).

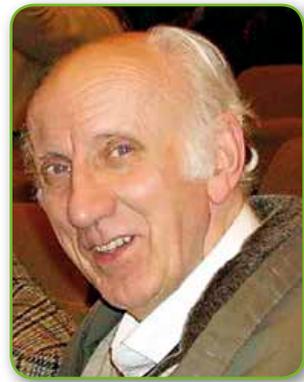
In the final three years of her life, her illness made her more and more dependent on the help of others. Since she was so used to bearing the burdens of others, this was not something easy to accept, but she abandoned herself to the new will of God with humility and... *humor*. She welcomed everyone with a smile, encouraging those who came to visit her. Her situation becomes worse and a period of great suffering begins that seemed to be never-ending. Violette continued to repeat that God loves her and to offer every suffering for the Church, for peace, for all humanity, sustained by her love for Jesus Forsaken– Chiara had given her the name: Violette of Jesus Forsaken. She called everyone by name, for each one there is a place in her heart. To the parents of a young boy who left two years ago for Heaven she said: «In a short while I will go and play with Jack!».

Violette left us peacefully on February 4 at 86 years old, invoking Mary. Emmaus wrote to her children: «*For sure she accompanied her to Jesus, who will give her a worthy recompense for an exemplary life lived always in love.*»

Corres Kwak

## Romano Artioli

*Towards the peripheries*



Born in 1933, Romano, Volunteer of Carpi (Modena), left for Paradise on January 22. He was an icon of someone who leaves the camp to go to the peripheries. He did this through his work, first as the secretary of a labour union and then as a manager of the Charitable society of Modena, a responsibility that he carried out up to just a few days before his death.

Romano firmly believed in the grace of the unity built in the nucleus. He wrote: «Immersed in work, the tensions and misunderstandings and the international and national situations very similar to the tower of Babel, would have discouraged me ... The reality of Jesus in the midst lived with you had made me feel lighter, and has allowed my soul to breathe». And still more: «(when) we make the pact of unity and we ask for enlightenment for our problems in our prayers, I feel and see much better how to face things».

In preparing a labour negotiations in which several jobs were in danger of being lost he wrote: «I go with faith in the words of Chiara when she affirms that we can find all the solutions also to the social problems in the Gospel. I have no other certainty, but I can bring Christ there, He who can do everything, because humanly speaking every solution has gone up in smoke». Unexpectedly, the negotiations were positively resolved.

When his health began to decline, supported by the love of Nara nad his children, he found the strength to give his life totally to God once again. Romano left us a precious testament of his great faith which he cultivated as a child when, at five in the morning he would walk along the banks of the Secchia river to go to mass with his mother: «We can and we must bring peace to our environments, and only Christ can give us the true peace».

Antonio Olivero



## Alzira Amnes

*The ability to live the other»*

Alzira met the Ideal in the Mariapolis of 1974, in Aparecida (Brazil). The

discovery of Jesus Forsaken and the consequent choice of Him was fundamental and accompanied her throughout her life. She had a profound faith and educated her three children to love God and the brother. Her characteristics were joy, fruit of a profound relationship with God, the ability to «live the other» and to put peace where there was none.

A Volunteer since '76, she was always very active, at the disposition of the Opera for whatever was needed. Like, for example when, in a difficult moment for the EoC at the Spartaco Industrial Park of the Mariapolis Ginetta, she committed herself to buying one share a month, through selling towels that she herself handpainted (she loved to paint). She was able to encourage others in various ways to also buy shares.

She lived and distributed the Word of life with commitment. One day during lunch in the house of one of her Lutheran friends, she shared her experiences to the pastors present who were very impressed. She also worked in the parish and for thirty years she taught dressmaking and sewing free of charge to the poor people, helping them to elevate their lives. When her eldest daughter, Nella showed signs of following Chiara in the way of the focolare, she gave her blessing, on the condition that... it would be for her whole life. «You cannot play with God» were her words.

in the final months of her life she suffered a lot and offered everything for the Opera and for everyone. On December 31, at 90 years old she reached Heaven. May testimonies were given at her funeral especially by people she had helped. A neighbor, even if she was with fever, wanted to be present at her funeral to share that when her husband abandoned her with five small children and she wanted to commit suicide Alzira saved her life and was always beside her to accompany her.

She was buried in a magnificent garden on the 1st of January, the feast day of the Mother of God, whom she loved very much.

Nicri De Souza

## Fr. Antonio de Sousa Bento

*The certainty of being able to start again*



D. Antonio conosce il Movimento nel '73, alla Mariapoli di Fatima (Portogallo). «Sin dal primo momento – racconta – ho cercato di mettere in pratica questo Ideale, nell'attenzione verso tutti, senza distinzioni. C'è un'idea che per me è un punto di riferimento: è più importante essere che parlare, è più importante vivere Dio che parlare di Dio, e vivere Dio significa essere amore». La sua semplicità, la sua bontà, il suo rapportarsi sempre diretto e affettuoso, insieme ad uno spiccato dono del consiglio, che sa offrire con amore e rispetto, gli guadagnano amicizie profonde e durature.

He maintained his correspondence with Chiara who in '77 gave him a Word of life: «Here, I make all things new» (Ap 21,5). She also suggested to him to add to his name «of Jesus», to underline his total entrusting and belonging to Him. A programme which, with much zeal and faithfulness, Fr. Antonio is able to fulfill up to the end. Taking about his work as chaplain of a hospital he said: «Perfection is an ideal that one can never reach», but «I am consoled by the certainty that I can start this adventure again everyday, and that the mercy of God continues to "make all things new"». In a letter of '99, Chiara thanked him for his impressions and experiences that he palced in common after a congress and, refering to mary, she wished for him that «She reward you and help you to be anther little mary, in the hospital where you are carrying out your mission with great love».

Recently, already quite limited in his movements due to his health, his constant prayer was: «You Lord, are my only good». Sunday August 24, at the age of 88, he reached Paradise.

During the funeral mass, the Bishop, Mons. Manuel Pelino said of Fr. Antonio: «God was his light and all the rest was secondary». From there he rooted himself in the Word of God, which he listened to and put into practice together with his «passion for Jesus and for the people».

Tobé Oliveira

## Fr. Bill Alcuin, OFM Cap

*The testimony of an authentic Franciscan*

Fr. Bill was born in Indiana (Usa) on October 3, 1925. He became a priest, for 35 years he dedicated himself to animating the spiritual retreats of his Order, the Franciscan Capuchin brothers. In '75 he met the Focolare Movement in Loppiano and was impressed by the radicalness with which the Little City lived the Gospel. A dream is born in him: to work so that a similar «little city of Mary» can be built in the United States.

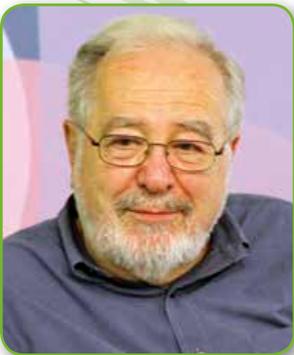
In '91 this dream comes true: his Superiors assign him to the Center for the religious men of the newly born Mariapolis Luminosa, where he remained for six years. Fr. Bill, aside from playing a very important role in the development of the Little Town, dedicated himself to building a house for the men religious. But above all



what was evident was the intensity of his love and his ability to build unity, giving to the inhabitants and visitors a marvelous witness of an authentic Franciscan. The young people found an affectionate friend in him who knew how to understand and enlighten them.

He confided to a friend that whenever he recited the Rosary he would dedicate the various mysteries to places that were dear to him or to persons who asked for his prayers, as if her were on an imaginary journey. And that the Mariapolis Luminosa was always one of the stations in his daily prayer. On March 5 he left for Heaven, from where we are certain that he will continue to watch over all of us.

Gary Brandl



## Jan V. White

*The same mercede of the apostle*

Jan left on December 30 at 86 years old. A famous international graphic designer, even if he declared himself an atheist, he collaborated with the USA edition of the magazine *Living City* offer-

ing his precious advice. Touched by the message of universal brotherhood of the magazine and of Chiara whom he came to know through its pages, he helped the editorial board in creating a new layout for the magazine and also for other editions of Città Nuova. During a Christmas dinner he said that going to the Mariapolis Luminosa was for him like «entering a place that was out of this world, that which I think you call paradise». That Paradise which we hope he has been welcomed to, because of his righteousness and for having contributed to the spread of the Kingdom of God in the world.

Chiaretta Zanzucchi, Enrico Donzelli

## Our relatives

The following have passed on to the Next life: **Valentin** (Volunteer), **father of Sonia Beatriz Robledo**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Luminosa (USA); the mother of **Leia Suarez**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Lia (Argentina); **Nieves**, **mother of Monica (Doni) Kibiri Wangari**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Piero (Kenya); **Hedwig**, **Volunteer mother of Ruth and Irmhild Scheimann**, focolarine in Münster (Germany) and Vienna (Austria); **Luis Carlos**, **father of José Luis Gordillo**, focolarino in Istanbul; **Teodora**, **mother of Susan (Sesi) Bajao**, focolarina in Pakistan; the mother of **Marta (Marvi) Yofre**, focolarina in Córdoba (Argentina); **Ilvo**, **father of Maria Ricci**, focolarina at Centro Foco; **Norbert**, **father of Magnus**, focolarino in Casa Vita, and of **Barbara Mentzel**, focolarina in Leipzig; **Maria**, **mother of Angelo Spinosa**, focolarino in south Lazio; **Jeova**, **brother of Israel Freitas**, focolarino in Recife; **Helmut**, **father of Elke**, focolarina in Vienna, and of **Angela Rothmann**, married focolarina in Leipzig.

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Ai sensi del D. lgs. N. 196/2003 per la tutela dei dati personali, comunichiamo che gli indirizzi dei nominativi a cui viene inviato Mariapoli fanno parte dell'archivio del Notiziario Mariapoli, gestito da PAFOM, esclusivamente per la finalità dell'invio di tale periodico. I dati possono essere comunicati a terzi incaricati per la spedizione.