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Magazine of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians



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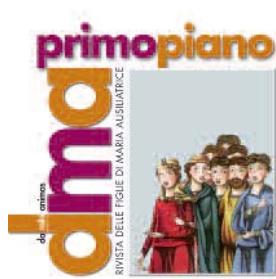
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Those who love...

The choice of living the spirituality of communion, a priority from GCXXII, finds continuity in the theme of love to which we are all called to be a sign and expression, and which flows from the personal and community journeys of these years. “Love grows through loving” said Benedict XVI. It is necessary, therefore, to express it in everyday, ordinary gestures, which are the *signs* truly understood by people.

A convincing sign is that of living together in the style of an “open cenacle”, in a welcoming house, a space where humanity grows, and a place where a continual conversion to love is activated.

This issue of the magazine has as its aim to reaffirm that *love is the greatest of all*. From the dossier to the various articles there is spelled out the reality of love, dealing with a few components, almost as though to complete in our present time that *Hymn of Charity* in which the Apostle Paul offered the fundamental word in the letter to the Christians of Corinth.

Those who love cultivate hope that resists delusions, difficulties, and failure. They do so with a resilient capacity that not only trains them to resist what is adverse, but shows a trusting attitude in facing life and history.

Those who love seek unity and do not tolerate division. It is often the little ones who remind us, like Fatima, an 11 year old child who writes:

“In the city where I live there are people from all over...I want to have a world where each person can live according to personal principles, respecting others, a world in which poverty disappears.”

Those who love choose solidarity. Even as an Institute we insist much today on the choice for economic solidarity, where at the center we do not find a preoccupation with what is useful or profitable, but rather the person, abundant life for all, life according to the Gospel.

Those who love live mission as service. In this issue of DMA we speak especially of a relationship of those who have the mandate of authority, called in the first place to promote the dignity of the person in esteem, trust, and charity.

Those who love know how to listen. Listening is a precious ability. It allows one to stand in the shoes of others, it places us in an attitude of acceptance without prejudice, and it prefers availability. Listening is a dimension of the heart.

Those who love carry out good communication, even through old and new technologies that could become means of “new relationships and promote a culture of respect, dialogue, and friendship.”

(Message for *World Day of Social Communications*, 2009).

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Open Cenacle
Love is the greatest of all



Open Cenacle

Love is the greatest of all

Julia Arciniegas

Maria Antonia Chinello

The Program for the Six Year Period 2009-2014 has already been entrusted to the whole Institute. It will mark journeys on personal, local, and provincial educating community levels during the next few years.

“Together with Mary, Mother of the new-born Church that accompanied the apostles in the expectation of the Spirit and in the evangelizing mission, we renew the awareness of the need and value of the educating community.” This is how the Fourth Journey of the conversion to love is introduced. It continues: “Let us recognize that the educating community is a sign that makes visible the love of God that we are called to believe is all-foreseeing and most efficacious when we witness to it together, precisely as “community”, home and school of communion” (*Six-Year Plan*, 21).

Pentecost and the gift of charity

The transformation experienced by the community of the apostles who were gathered in the Cenacle with Mary has only one explanation. Jesus had fulfilled the promise to remain with His own forever. He effused His spirit into the heart of those who, though while not completely believing, had listened to His word and shared bread with Him. Pentecost has brought to reality the miracle of breaking down any and every resistance and made it so that each of those fearful and discouraged persons would receive strength from on high. It was the force that was that of charity, the fire of love that the Holy Spirit had poured into their heart as the first gift of the Risen Christ. This new presence of the Lord in their own life also gave them the courage to love others in the sign of the most complete gratuity.

Charity is the bond of communion. The fruit of the Spirit, in fact, is fraternal love, joy, peace, patience, benevolence, goodness fidelity, meekness, self control (Cf *Gal* 5, 18-22.25).

Love for others is realized primarily through the educating community. “Love one another as I have loved you...From this you will be recognized as my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13, 34).

The effusion of the Spirit, accompanied by wind and fire, filled the whole house and the apostles began to speak in other languages, proclaiming the good news of the resurrection of Christ. This dealt with a true and proper baptism of fire in the community (Cf *Matt* 3, 11), a type of new creation (Cf *Acts* 18).

This fire had the mission of transforming those who must spread through all the nations the same language, that of the love of God for every person, made visible in the face, in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

The image of fire, frequently used by St. John of the Cross to describe the processes of the life of the Spirit helps us to understand that it is always the same love that acts and illumines.

The love of Christ is that “inner fire” that gives strength and passion, supports in weakness, and increases energy, gives vivacity and imagination to the expression of our love. The educating community that allows itself to be transfigured by this fire becomes a sign of the love of God, through sharing, collaboration and co-responsibility in the shared mission.

Be converted and believe in the Gospel

The Chapter recalled us to conversion and believing unconditionally in the Gospel so that we may be persons and communities that are transfigured. The two words are complementary. They express a great orientation: to abandon the mistaken direction of one’s life and to direct one’s existence toward God.

The two expressions are found at the beginning of Jesus’ preaching. At the beginning



of his Gospel Mark thus tells us of the beginning of Jesus' ministry: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near; be converted and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1, 14-15). God is not far away. He has drawn near and his presence is now experienced and perceived in our life. If God is present, inevitably it is necessary that there be a change of route, a conversion. It is time to abandon the idols that have crowded our life, our pride, and ourselves.

Believing in the Gospel means believing in the news, in the proclamation of the love of God that is close to us in Jesus, re-organizing all of life in an attitude of trust and abandonment to Him. Our life is filled to overflowing with things to do, commitments to be carried out, deadlines to which we must respond, responsibilities to be taken into account. There are always material and spiritual commitments, organizations, appointments, events...It is necessary, however, that in all we do there should be within us an infinite love.

When Jesus sent His disciples to preach, He asked them not to bring anything along the way except sandals and a walking stick. Beyond these, nothing else (*Matthew* 10, 10). All that

impedes our proclaiming and living love becomes an impediment because it carries away time and energy. All that is penetrated by love will never die because the love of the Father lasts forever.

Make all-foreseeing love visible

Love grows through love, wrote the Holy Father in his first encyclical *Deus caritas est* (n. 18). The Cenacle is not a fixed abode; it is a launching pad.

Mary, present in the place with the disciples helped them to open wide the doors, to live the exodus experience and to set themselves on a journey. "The first to be evangelized became the first evangelizer. Bringing Jesus to others, she offered her service, brought joy, and helped them to experience love. The solicitude of the journey toward Ain Karim and her solicitous understanding at the wedding of Cana revealed Mary's decisive and creative enterprising style in offering concrete loving gestures in solidarity" (*Acts* 33).

The visibility of love requires continual seeking, an incessant coming and going so that the

signs speak and the words become true and pregnant with life.

The community is a crossroads where life is intertwined, where we clasp hands to find strength. As a Kenyan saying tells us: "If you want to go in haste, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together."

A few years ago, the CII (*Conferenza Interispettoriale Italiana*) reflected on the educating community as the icon of multiple vocations. The Trinity formed a background to the work. From a million fragments there was composed the face of God who loves, gives, and saves, taking all upon Him.

A pastoral letter written by Bishop Giancarlo Bregantini when he was bishop of Locri focuses on the significance of the word "community" and on the profound significance that it carries in itself. The educating community is a "we" that is born from the profound experience of being "gathered together" by the same mission.

The community is the fruit of profound relationships, of intense "communications" that are interwoven within it outside of its being and existing. *We feel that we are a community as we are recognized in the community.* "Becoming community" and "communication" have an identical derivation. In Greek *koinòs* means "common" and from here we get *koinonía*, communion. In Latin, common means *cum-munus* (*gift lived and shared*) and *cum moenia* (defense).

The experience of community is contemporarily a gift, bread broken and shared, that makes us missionaries among people and at the same time needs to be defended in its precise identity, establishing its borders, its rules.

These two aspects, gift and defense, are both necessary to being community, but they require a dynamic equilibrium to be interpreted and lived. In a community in which the elements of defense would be excessively marked, it would be incapable of opening the doors to service to one's neighbors and those far away, nor would it be in condition to take in the stimuli, solicitude, and contributions of others. But also a community that was totally unbalanced on openness would run the risk of losing itself in its surroundings and identity.

This is the daily struggle that communities experience: to live the difficult balance

between gift and defense of identity. Only communities animated by great love for young people and their salvation know how to be open to and think of themselves around the mission. And only love for the mission lived as a community helps to re-define the borders, to give space to growth together.

The community is the place to grow in love and to live love

Personal and community growth implies agreeing to a plan of love that God has for each individual person and the mission that He Himself entrusts to all together. From this perspective A. Grün sees the community as the place in which one can realize exchange to activate a process of conversion toward the fullness of love. In it every member accepts the richness of gifts and talents of which the members of the community are bearers, but they also face conflicts and tensions on a daily basis, and the eventual criticism of others.

All of this could become a creative potential to deepen ever more the personal awareness and management of one's own life.

To learn to love we need the mediation of another person to love us and accept us. Giving and receiving gratuitously is the dynamism of true love, a love that is free, capable of existing and lasting without being conditioned by the response or merit to which it is offered to the person. It means giving gratuitously according to God's style. It is receiving gratuitously, giving trust to the giver, with an open heart ready to accept.

Mary, teacher of reciprocal accompaniment, teaches us these attitudes. Inhabited by the Spirit, she takes care of her Son's friends, waiting with them for the hour announced by Jesus, and she became Mother of the first missionary community (Cf *Acts*, 33-35).

Love that generates

The community is in unison when it is built on gift and reciprocity. It is the art of communion that recognizes in the guide an authority that becomes service and in the brothers and sisters members with whom we work together. In the letter of Paul to Philemon it is possible to rediscover the dialectic of the service of

authority and obedience: to serve in freedom to accompany and, together, to convert self to love.

In this letter, little more than a note written by the hand of the Apostle, we find concentrated the reflection what the four Houses dependent on the Superior General have made and gave as gift to *la Madre* for the Feast of Gratitude, celebrated in Damascus.

The recall on the theme of the Chapter is immediately clear: conversion to love, adhering to a radicality of the requirements of the Gospel. Being entrusted totally to Christ made Paul capable of loving. It was such a deep love that it allowed him to “negotiate the freedom” of a slave in the name of the paschal Christ. He trusted in the transformation of Onesimus who now had become a bridge between the master and the slave. It was a difficult and delicate role of *accompaniment* because Philemon was bound to the apostle by a profound friendship. Paul was ready to pay in person, to take on the debts of the slave because true love costs. His Teacher was Jesus; he learned from Him the paschal measure of love.

Which indicators mark the journey of conversion to love?

- The *attentive relationship to the person*. Each Sister and every young person are the gift that God entrusts to us. It is a gift that asks for care, respect, and responsibility.
- The *building of community is entrusted to each person* in every effort of dialogue, contribution in the order of the weaving of bonds, attempts at openness toward diversity, acts of trust in the capacity of the other person, but above all in the strong and personal love for Christ.
- *Knowing how to give thanks to God* for the charity and faith that each Sister has in the Lord Jesus and for the good that is done from the capacity of marveling at what God does in each person.
- *Giving credit to others* as God gives credit to us. Giving trust to the Sister and young people even when it is necessary to overcome negative impressions and prejudice.

- *Forgiveness as an act of evangelical love and knowing how to pray for others*, actively taking upon ourselves their need to find collaborators in the educational and pastoral action and to lead to Christ a greater number of brothers and sisters.
- *Authoritativeness* in the exercise of authority does not grow by the use of imposition, but with maturing in the *capacity of being able to generate* that gives new life to others .

Today, in the twists and turns of history, young men and women need gestures more than words, of our silence that speaks, of our smile that does not judge, but rather expresses the love of the Father who is mother, brother, sister. It is the love of a Presence that we allow to inhabit our being, assuming for itself the good and the evil that is before us, so that we may live it together and together seek hope. It is only giving and receiving love that gives value to the beatitudes of life.

Not only words to speak of love

Speak to me of God (Sergio Tommasi)

Passing through the fields I asked the almond tree:

"Brother almond tree, speak to me of God!" ...and the almond tree was covered with blossoms.

Leaving the garden I asked the sparrow:

"Brother sparrow, speak to me of God!" ...and the sparrow chirped happily

Entering the forest, I asked the trees:

"Brother trees, speak to me of God!" ...and the trees moved in the wind.

Leaping in the fields I asked a little flower:

"Brother flower, speak to me of God!" ...and the flower gave me its perfume.

Running along the seashore I asked the blue sea:

"Brother sea, speak to me of God!" ...and the sea pushed a wave over my feet.

Looking at the heavens I asked the clouds:

"Sister clouds, speak to me of God!" ...and the clouds indicated to me the sun.

Who is God? Do you know Him?

Pawel is 8 years old and has lived with his father since his mother left him. This is the age when one is looking for answers to the "whys" of childhood. What is life all about? Does God exist and who is He? What is the soul? A conversation with his father about these whispered, uncertain topics and expressions left him unsatisfied. So he turned to Aunt Irena:

Pawel – Dad told me that we live to make life better for those who will come after us. He also said that we don't always succeed...

Aunt Irena – Yes, Your Dad is right...it does not always happen. Living is the joy of being able to do something for others...Being able to help them, to exist...Look at how doing something small for someone makes you feel useful and all becomes clear. There are big things and little things. Today you enjoyed the ravioli and I was happy. Life is a gift!

Pawel – Tell me, Auntie. Dad is your brother, right?

Aunt Irena – Of course, You know that. What you are really asking me is why we are so different, right?

Pawel – (nods)

Aunt Irena – We were educated in a Catholic family. Your father was younger than you when he discovered that many things could be calculated, measured...and then he began to think that way about everything. From that time on that was his idea. Sometimes he was not completely convinced, but he did not want to admit it. Certainly, his way of looking at life seems more reasonable ...but this does not mean that God does not exist, even for your father. Do you understand?

Pawel – Not very well.

Aunt Irena – God exists. It is very simple if one believes.

Pawel – And do you believe that God exists?

Aunt Irena – Yes.

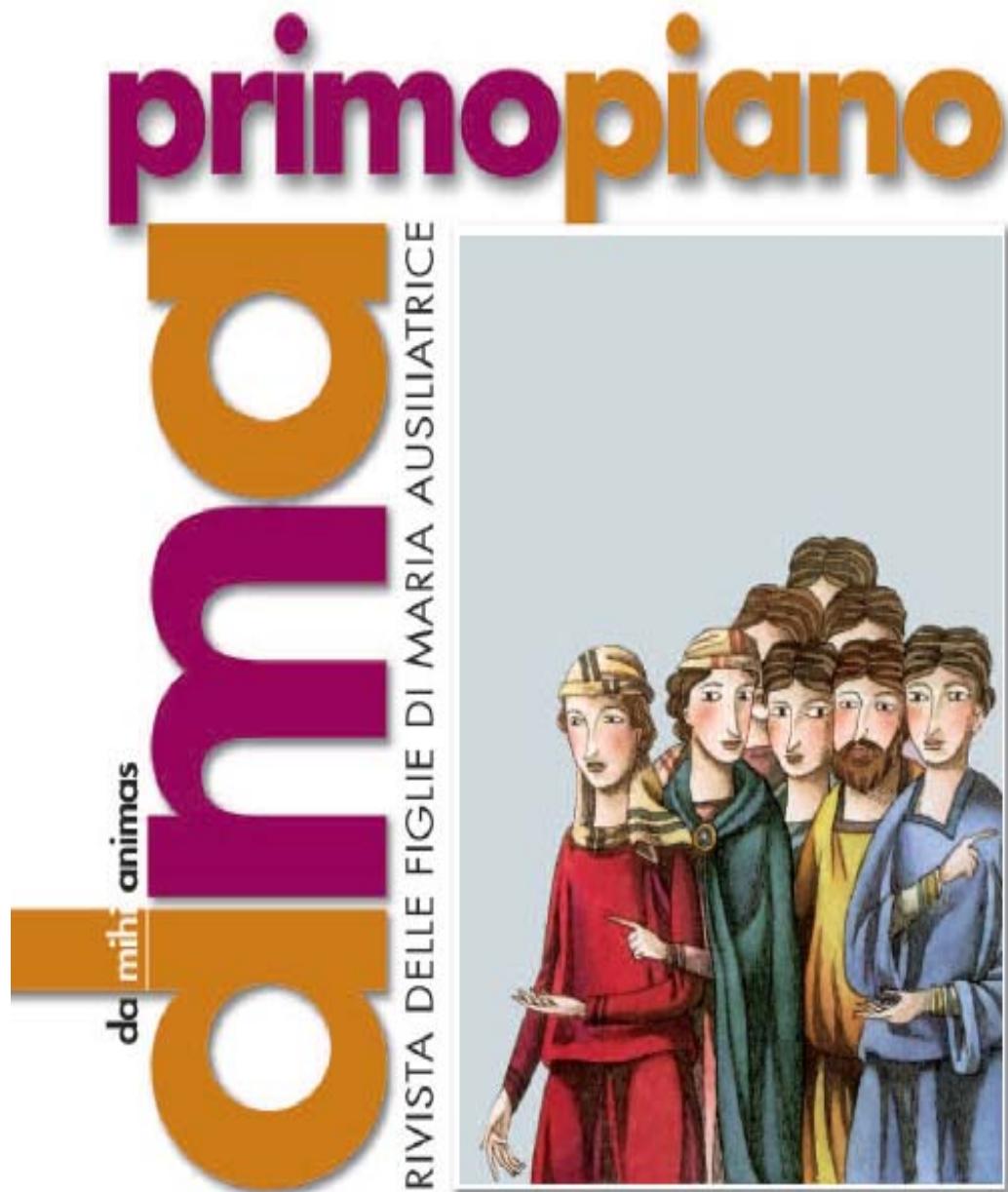
Pawel – Who is He? Do you know?

Aunt Irena – (embracing him): Tell me what you feel now?

Pawel – I love you.

Aunt Irena – Exactly ! He is in this!

(from *One Conversation* of Kryzstof Kiewslowki)



Biblical, Educational and
Formative Studies

women in the word

The stranger in the crumbs

Elena Bosetti

How much will a mother do for her sick daughter? What is she not ready to put up with?

The Canaanite woman does not quit when faced with Jesus' silence. She runs after him reaches him and throwing herself at His feet implores Him: "Lord, help me!" (Matt 15,25).

The Gospels of Mark and Matthew allow us to glimpse at a certain development in Jesus' mission, linked not simply to historical or political characteristics, but rather to the progressive clarification of the will of the Father.

First of all, Jesus manifests the awareness of being sent *"to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 10,6; 15,24). He has compassion on the crowd *"tired and prostrate like sheep without a shepherd"* (Matthew 9, 36), nourishes them with words and the bread of life, prepares a gratuitous and festive table on the green grass, a luminous sign of His being *"sent so that they may have life, life in abundance"* (John, 10,10).

Jesus first of all nourishes Israel, but He does not stop on the Jewish shore. He crosses the Lake of Galilee and also multiplies bread on the other side, the pagan side. It is interesting to note how it is actually a woman, a pagan, who provokes this universal openness of His mission...a *"Canaanite"* according to Matthew, a *"Greek woman, a Syrophenician"*, explains Mark (7,26).

Bread for all

The woman probably thought that a man like Jesus who did not fear going to pagan territory would be ready to help all. Instead she heard him respond: *"It is not good to take the bread of children and to throw it to the dogs."*

She could have been offended.

Jesus uses a proverbial phrase that the woman knows well, but certainly would not have expected to hear from His mouth. In metaphorical language He was saying that the Jews were the *"children"* and that the gentiles, to whom she belonged, were the *"little dogs."* The diminutive softened the harshness, but did not change the substance. The Jews considered dogs to be impure and despised animals (Cf 1 Sam 24,15Pr 26,11). But this woman does not become offended, does not turn back. Instead, she objects with a counter-metaphor: *"Even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table..."*

For Community sharing

The 4th journey of the conversion to love proposed by the *Six-Year Plan 2009-2014* commits to "accompanying the processes relative to the FMA identity, to the educating community open to new challenges to inter-culture in the Institute." In particular, it asks us to "live and promote the FMA identity, helping to give new significance to the community in fidelity to the Gospel and charisma, to respond to the urgency of an evangelizing education even in the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church." In a community meeting there could be a reflection on which conditions are necessary so that the community may live the balance between gift and defense on its identity.

- How can we assure times and opportunities to reflect, look within community experiences and develop them in the light of the Gospel?
- How can we listen and converse in way that will generate co-responsibility?
- How can we be attentive to the educational question so as not to renounce and to educate to and for hope?
- How can we assure a more intense unity so that there may be planning, continuity, appreciation of the contribution of all ?
- How can those who serve in authority positions clearly define the tasks of each one to entrust responsibility, take care of life, re-organize resources?
- How can we risk together taking on the newness of the mission in the uncertainty of present times?



With a good dose of gentleness and stubbornness, the Syrophoenician responds using the perspective from her culture and from the different relationship with the animals in question, the little dogs.

She, different from the Jews, did not consider the animals to be impure and therefore they **May it be done as you desire**

Jesus was impressed by this burning logic. The woman argued her discourse well, and it was she who won in this verbal contest. Jesus accepted her word (*logos*) and recognized it to be powerful: *"Because of this word, go, the demon has left your daughter"*(Mark 7,29). It was a powerful word because it was full of that vital energy that is faith, as appears in Matthew: *Woman, your faith is great; Let it be done for you as you wish*" (Matthew 15,28).

The disarming insistence of this stranger obtained not only the "crumbs" invoked (the salvation of her daughter), but much more: the multiplication of bread even for the pagans. Jesus moved decisively in this direction: He healed, and brought salvation even beyond the borders of Israel.

could tranquilly enter into the house and stay under the table...Who was right ?

That is not the point. But how can we not say that there is bread for all at the table of God? How can we deny the crumbs of the superabundant divine mercy ? The narration goes on with the healing of a deaf-mute in the territory of Decapolis, on the eastern shore of the Lake of Tiberias, inhabited by non-Jews, (CF Mark 7, 31-37). Jesus took the deaf-mute aside, put His hands into his ears, touched his tongue with His own saliva and then raising His eyes to heaven, He groaned and said " *Ephphatha...i.e., "Be Opened!"*.

The symbolic illusion is evident. Even the pagans, deaf and dumb in meeting the Word of God, receive the possibility of becoming "children" in a relationship of dialogue that includes the capacity of listening to the word. There is bread in abundance even for them there. The Syrophoenician woman saw it well: God's table is great, and there is bread for all, children and little dogs.

Service of Authority

Martha Seide

"In the past, the exercise of authority was facilitated by a cultural climate that ordered religious to a blind obedience. Today because many things have changed, Superiors are not asked to have so much authority as authoritativeness that comes from placing self at the service of the fraternity and of the mission. It is an opportune purification that is being led by the poverty of the present time" (Pier Giordano Cabra).

With this synthesized affirmation, Fr. Cabra, one of the best experts on consecrated life, introduces us to the dawn of the third millennium in a lively discussion on the problem of authority-obedience. The service of authority has never been an easy task in the history of the Church and consecrated life.

However, during the last decade with the cultural changes that we have seen not only in society but also in Institutes and communities, there has been the recognition on many sides that this theme requires particular reflection.

In considering the exercise of authority we frequently see the polarization of two noted excesses in a masterly teaching by the well-known Latin American Jesuit José María Guerrero in the magazine *Clar* (March-May 1999). Consecrated life, observes Fr. Guerrero in synthesis, does not need autocratic and domineering persons who feel that they have been invested with a messianic vocation to guide brothers and sisters in a despotic manner.

Neither do they need "persons who are "fearful", who fear their brothers and sisters and have as their only preoccupation to give in to them rather than to serve them. They justify their "letting them to do what they want" saying that they "are old enough" to know what they must do . There are those who do not animate the community nor do they project it toward the future, not seeking together with them, they do not confront them with a community project drawn up by all, nor are they close to each member to listen to them, understand them, help them to discern his/her mission, and to correct them fraternally when necessary."

We deal therefore with avoiding every form of authoritarianism, the abuse of power or of delegating in the exercise of the service of authority.

Jesus, the obedient servant

In continuity with the indications of the documents that have accompanied the journey of consecrated life during recent years, the Instruction *The service of Authority and obedience 'Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram'*, of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of apostolic life, in thinking of the binomial obedience-authority, proposes to re-affirm the particular relationship with the Lord Jesus, the obedient servant. Furthermore, it has the intention of helping authority in its triple service: to the individual person called to live his/her own consecration, to build fraternal communities, to participate in the shared mission. Down deep, it is a recall to return

to the very root of the term “*autoritas*” from the verb *augere* that signifies to help to mature, to grow. It is seeking to submit one self to every life to help it to grow in fullness.

The reference to Jesus the obedient servant is a recall to give a new foundation to obedience on the one hand and to re-evangelize authority on the other. It deals with constantly placing in evidence the evangelical anchoring in such a way that every authority, personal or of another, serves to give power, to free, to appreciate, to motivate and to guide, never to impoverish, condition or humiliate.

These attitudes are brought out in a teaching way in the document when it presents the priority of religious authority in the evangelical logic. Authority is called to be, above all, *spiritual authority*, suited, therefore, to serve the community in which the Holy Spirit suggests from time to time, distributing to each according to gifts and charism. It requires a constant presence, capable of animating and of proposing, of recalling the reasons for consecrated life, of helping people to correspond with an ever-renewed fidelity. For this reason it becomes *a prayerful authority that is a guarantee in prayer*.

To accompany and promote

Furthermore, *authority promotes the dignity of the human person*, recalling that every person is subject to rights in addition to obligations, but especially through exercising esteem, respect and charity toward them. *Authority is called to accompany, infuse trust and courage in adversity and difficulty*, after the example of Paul and Barnabas who exhorted their disciples with the teaching to “face many tribulations so as to enter into the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14, 22). From this perspective the service of authority begins with it the *capacity of being the guardian*

and guarantor of the specific charism of the individual religious Institute and, at the same time, *of promoting the sense of ecclesial communion*. Finally, authority is called to accompany and *promote ongoing formation* in such a way as to favor the growth of the person at every stage of life.

If authority-obedience is at the service of the community and the community is at the service of the Kingdom, in the face of the many daily challenges those who are called to exercise the service of authority have the serious task of adequately coordinating energies in view of the mission. Even here the Instruction lists a few tasks held to be important in the service of authority: above all, there is that of encouraging and assuming one’s own responsibilities and to give respect; facing diversity in a spirit of communion; maintaining equilibrium among the various dimensions of mission, community, activity prayer, etc., cultivating mercy of heart and the sense of justice; promoting collaboration with the laity.

In conclusion we may affirm with José Maria Guerrero that “authority does not transform a person into a guardian of observance, but rather into an educator of charity through the unconditional and dynamic fidelity to God’s project in each of us and on all, seeking it with simplicity of heart and inner freedom and carrying it out with passion.

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Witnesses to Unity

Bruna Grassini

The appeal for unity of Christians that the Ecumenical Council of Vatican II has proposed with an impassioned commitment resounds with every great vigor in the hearts of believers. The progress of ecumenical dialogue that has its foundation in the Word of God represents a sign of great hope for today's Church. The growth of unity among Christians is of mutual enrichment for all. It is necessary to look joyfully at the progress obtained to date, recognizing in it a sign of the action of the Spirit to praise and thank the Lord. (Ut unum sint-The Church in Europe)

Church unity is not only a hope. It already exists. However, unity has not yet reached visible fullness.

John Paul II said: "Ecumenism is the journey toward the unity desired by Jesus."

It is the commitment to faithfully live and welcome the action of the Spirit that the Lord has given to His Church and through which he wants to embrace all mankind: "It is a gift that comes from on high, One flock and one Shepherd..."

In a discourse to the Roman Curia, Paul VI presented the Catholic Church that holds our separated brethren by the hand. It is a gesture that expresses and realizes the fraternity of the members of one human family, of a universe gathered together under God's glance.

This is the way we become apostles, a means of unity with mankind and with God

At the close of Vatican Council II, the Holy Father and the Patriarch Athenagoras I exchanged a kiss of peace and broke the seal of excommunication of the past. Together they became pilgrims in the name of the "One Lord", in a courageous dialogue of understanding and hope.

They then discovered a Church which they believed to have disappeared. The horizon was clear for a new relationship among believers, united in a true journey of reconciliation.

The ecumenical way

Communion is the heart of the mystery of the Church. Pope John XXIII said: "Much more unites us than divides us." And Benedict XVI, during the prayer for the unity of Christians at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, , emphasized: "The ecumenical way is the way of the Church. We still have a long road before us! Yet, let us not lose hope, rather, with more hope let us take up the journey together."

Christ precedes and accompanies us. This is what Benedict XVI said in speaking to the Polish Ecumenical Council. Much still remains to be done to heal deep, painful divisions. If our hearts and minds are open to the spirit of communion, God can still work miracles in the Church, recuperating bonds of unity.

When the joint Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on the doctrine of "Justification" was signed, many said confidently: "It seems that the Holy Spirit was flying over this Assembly and the burden of differences was lifted." "It was a happiness never before experienced. To be prophecy and leaven in the womb of humanity."



Seeds of hope

We cannot live the fullness of the Gospel unless we do so “together.”

St. Basil used to tell his monks: “If you live alone, who will wash your feet? How will you be able to take the last place? Community life is, therefore, like a stadium in which we exercise like athletes, a gym that helps us to progress.”

The world tends toward unity. The journey toward full communion, even visible, of Christians, is a priority. We know how arduous and yet at the same time how urgent it is. Only the conversion of hearts, only a special intervention of the Holy Spirit can work the miracle.

Our times, said John Paul II, require a new evangelization. The proclamation of the Gospel cannot be efficacious if it is not accompanied by a robust spirituality of communion. In the Document “Christian Life”

we read: When fraternal communion is founded on the Gospel, it is the privileged place of the encounter with God.”

During his visit to Italy the ecumenical Archbishop Antonios Naguib, Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria of the Coptic Rite launched the Ecumenism of Life.

This is the ecumenism of everyday contacts. Let us seek to create union in relationships, in prayer, in encounters with our brethren without discrimination.

It is necessary to create a certain closeness and friendship with one another, to appreciate what we have in common, to reflect sincerely on what divides us and not to leave ambiguities. This is the dialogue asked for and desired by the Council, by Pope John Paul II and by Benedict XVI. Ecumenical dialogue begins here.

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Arianna's Line

First Listen...

Giuseppina Teruggi

There are competencies that have been particularly encouraged and appreciated during various historic periods. Our globalized culture gives particular credit and ability that accentuates self-affirmation and the capacity to express oneself in a brilliant way with a quick reply. Those competencies held to be *passive in tone* are little appreciated today and one is critical of words such as listening, patience, humility that have as a common denominator the de-centering of self to focus on another's value, be it God, a person or a project for which to spend one's life. In an era that gives preference to visibility and dwells on efficiency as educators of young people we are called to reflect on alternative journeys of personal and social realization that could definitely give meaning and fruitfulness to life and bring happiness and hope.

The poetic text of Umberto Saba entitled *Meditation* is very expressive in this regard: *Deep blue blends all the stars into sky blue. I sit at my window and look at them. I look and listen; because here is all my strength: looking and listening.*

Point of view

After a time of staying in one of our houses, many people are fascinated by the atmosphere that is experienced. Welcome, attention to the person, agreeable glances, the willingness to listen are aspects that create well-being and leave a positive impression on those who come. At times, it is enough that only one or a few Sisters can give this tone to the whole house. Young people and the laity frequently keep

the perfume of what they have lived in a Salesian environment, thanks to persons who knew how *to look* and *to listen*, with a good eye, with an attentive heart. They then hold in their hearts the desire to renew the fascination of the experience they lived. And perhaps, even to remain.

However, as we well know, it is not always like this. A Sister once asked aloud "Why can't we succeed in building family in our community? What is lacking so that we can make our houses livable, to make life together easier, to improve relationships among ourselves?"

I doubt that exhaustive responses to these questions exist. There are many points of view and each could focus on one or many elements, relative to the actual life of her community. Even though, perhaps, there may remain the urgency to pass from ideas to life. Otherwise, nothing will change. Here we want to reflect on a competence that constitutes a basic condition to favor communion, to grow in the capacity of relationships, to reinforce joy and trust in our communities. It is a point of view.

I hold it to be important that there be *listening*, an apparently *passive* attitude that is in reality, "constructive" and that implies a force of dynamism and asceticism, on a personal and community level. It has been said that "true listening is a talent that is little developed. If we could encounter five valid listeners in the span of our lifetime we could deem ourselves satisfied." In our personal balance, perhaps we could also hold ourselves to be more fortunate. The fact remains that we learn by listening because we desire it. It is not a spontaneous fruit, but rather constitutes a complex ability that is learned through struggle. This is so because it

touches the sphere of one's being in the depth, in the capacity for deciding that life is a gift for personal happiness and that of others, of those who live with us. All is not only a process of self-realization.

For a happy communication

Listening is based on desiring positive relationships, on acceptance, on empathy. We frequently speak of *active listening*. It is an open listening, based on an attitude of unprejudiced acceptance, of availability not only toward the person to whom we are listening, but also toward ourselves. In fact, it is important to listen to one's own sensitivity, one's inner reactions, to be aware of the limitations of a personal point of view and knowledge. It is indeed a struggle to understand another person.

Listening has been defined as "a collection of perceived acts through which we spontaneously or involuntarily enter into contact with a communicative source."

Listening, however, is not so much hearing; it is not only a process of understanding with the mind. It is primarily a dimension of the heart. Listening with the heart predisposes one to a good, unprejudiced glance. Habitually, listening presupposes a few processes. First of all, the *reception* of the message, be it verbal or non verbal. To receive it is necessary that there be a commitment to understand what is being communicated and to center one's self on it. This implies openness, capacity to catch even the sensory way expressed by the person: visual, auditory, body language. Reception is followed by *elaboration* and decoding of the message. We need, therefore, to take into account the objective content that is being transmitted, to catch what the person is saying, to understand what it says of self, what it asks for, even implicitly. Finally, for authentic listening it is necessary to *give a response*, to furnish

elements that show that the communication has arrived, be it in a positive or negative manner. This is a delicate moment in the dynamic of listening. There could be a response of understanding, encouragement, support or agreement; or responses of evaluation, interpretation, warding off of the person. All of this without pronouncing a word.

It would be wise to analyze one's own way of listening and being critical. There is a way of listening "selectively", when one allows self to be carried away by distractions, by the imagination or the challenge of one's intuition that precociously captures what is important disregarding the lesser important. This is a type of passive listening that does not communicate, but lives as an opportunity to be able to speak in turn.

At other times one uses a "logical listening" that finds self in listening the application of an efficacious control of the rational significance of what is being said. Attention is concentrated almost completely on the content expressed.

And there is an "empathetic listening", the most efficacious when one seeks to put self in the *other person's place*, trying to assume his/her point of view. Empathetic listening implies excluding judgment, but also a "facile counseling" and the tension of "trying to solve" the problem. Simply making one understand that the problem is deeply shared.

One of the most valid ways of listening leads one to reduce lack of understanding and helps the person to express him/herself without fear; it frequently stimulates in the person a seeking for the best expressive possibility, even in the content. It further allows for better relationships with others because of increased self-esteem; trust in self and

reciprocal respect, and it favors a better collection of information.

And if we would put listening in the first place?

The capacity for listening is so important that at times, though lacking other competencies, it assumes a value of liberation, of relief that arrives even at healing painful and incurable wounds. Listening has a therapeutic strength.

In the evolutionary process, the abilities acquired are, in chronological progression, first *listening*, then *speaking* then *reading* and finally, *writing*. However, according to statistics, in the span of a lifetime, the use of listening is on the average 45%, that of speaking 30%, of reading 16% and writing 9%. In fact, the teaching of these same abilities sees a *much* for writing, *sufficient* for reading, *little* for speaking, and *almost nothing* in relation to listening.

Our listening habits.

In some form or another our listening habits have been influenced by the models we learned in our childhood and developed by our integration in the first experiences of socialization. There remains, therefore, the personal, daily commitment to learn and increase the attitude of listening.

With a certain exercise it is possible to reach competence in listening and as a consequence improving interpersonal communication. It would be useful at times to turn to simple awareness, using empathetic ways. For example, in situations in which a person falls prey to a high emotional state (irritation, anxiety, agitation), for a fact that does not depend from me, I try to listen on an active, empathetic level. And I try to listen in an empathetic way even when the problem that has caused the emotional state

involves me personally, because the other person considers me to be the cause of his/her perturbed emotional state.

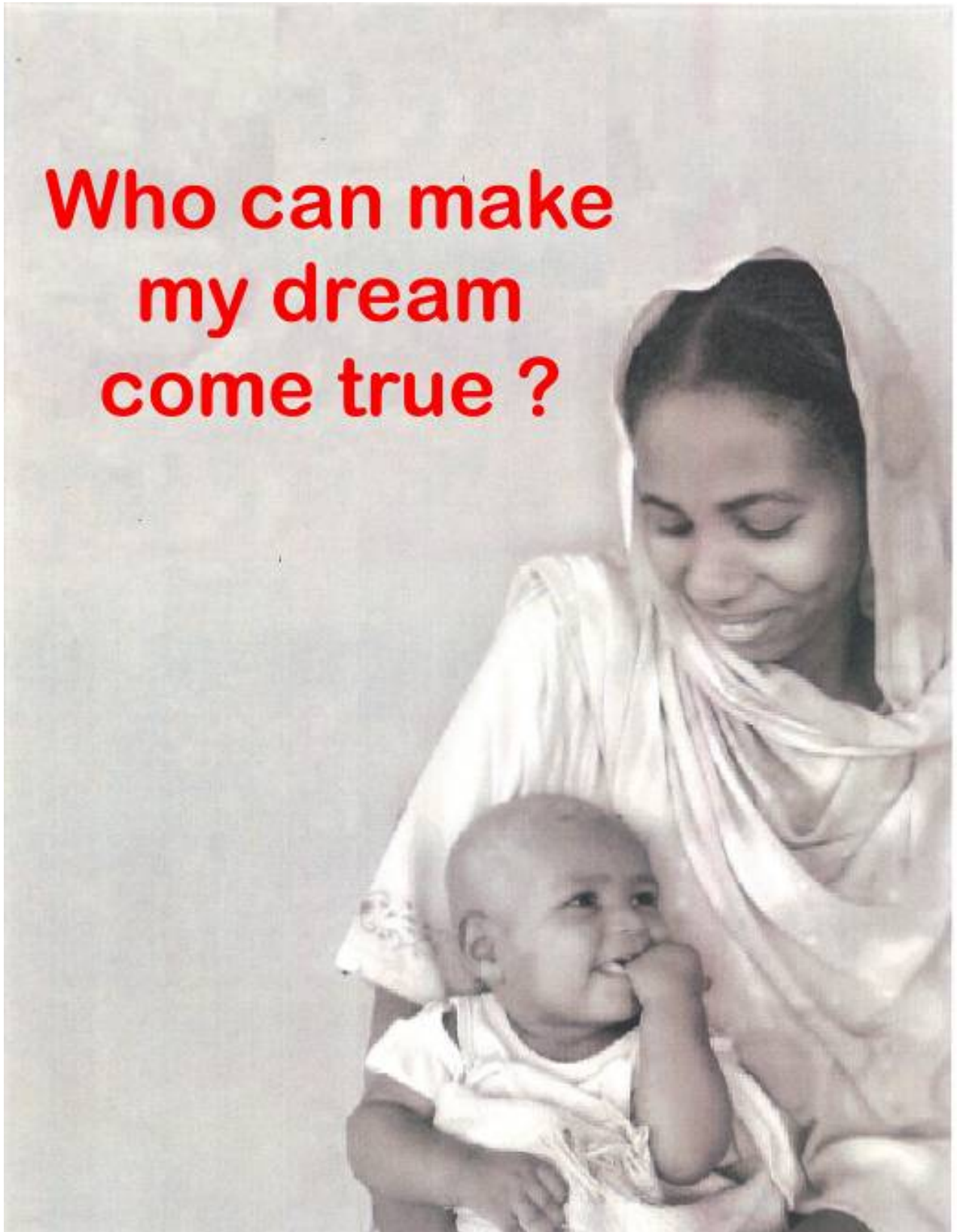
I recall a person, whom I hold to be a “good listener”, by whom I felt truly listened to, and I remember her way of giving of herself and I enjoy the pleasant sensation that this remembrance gives me. Or I recall some situations in which a good listener would have resolved a problem in a much more positive way...

Listening has profound biblical roots. In the Bible, God is defined in relational and conversational terms: He who speaks. The believer, who sees in God the greatest Love, is called above all to listen.

In this light, Enzo Bianchi notes: “...he who listens, who defines identity on the basis of the paradigm of listening is also one who loves. At the root, it is true that love comes from listening *amor ex auditu*. Listening to God, with all the dimensions that this requires, becomes acceptance, or better, discovering in, self an intimate presence even more to us when it is our very self.”

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**Who can make
my dream
come true ?**



The Covered Head

I arrived in Europe just a short time ago.
I came with my mother and father.
For many years he was alone with my uncles and cousins.
Papa's work is irregular, but he says things are getting better.
Mama stays at home and goes out only to walk me to school
I am Muslim and I read the Koran with Mama
and we recite its prayers. She and I always have our heads covered.
At the beginning my schoolmates laughed at us, but now things are a little better
In the city where I live there are persons who come from all
parts of the world and therefore we have to accept everyone with their religions and
customs, and their prayers.
I would like to have a world where people can live with their principles
respecting others and I would like a world where the poor would disappear.

Fatima 11 years old

I NEED SO MANY THINGS...

Papa takes me to beg every evening
outside of a great restaurant or outside a church.
Sometimes people stop and ask me if I go to school
or if I need something. I need so many things...
to play, to laugh, to go to an amusement park, to be with my friends.
I always think of my brothers and sisters and Mama.
I dream of a world where everyone can stay in the country where they were born
and where children do not have to work.
Can someone make my dream come true?
I don't think so. But I say it anyway.
A fairy tale from my country says, it could happen that in the morning that the elves
could find a porcupine that is still alive,
that did not die of cold in the night.
Let us hope that a perfect world will come
because in no way is mine like that.

Ornela 10 years old



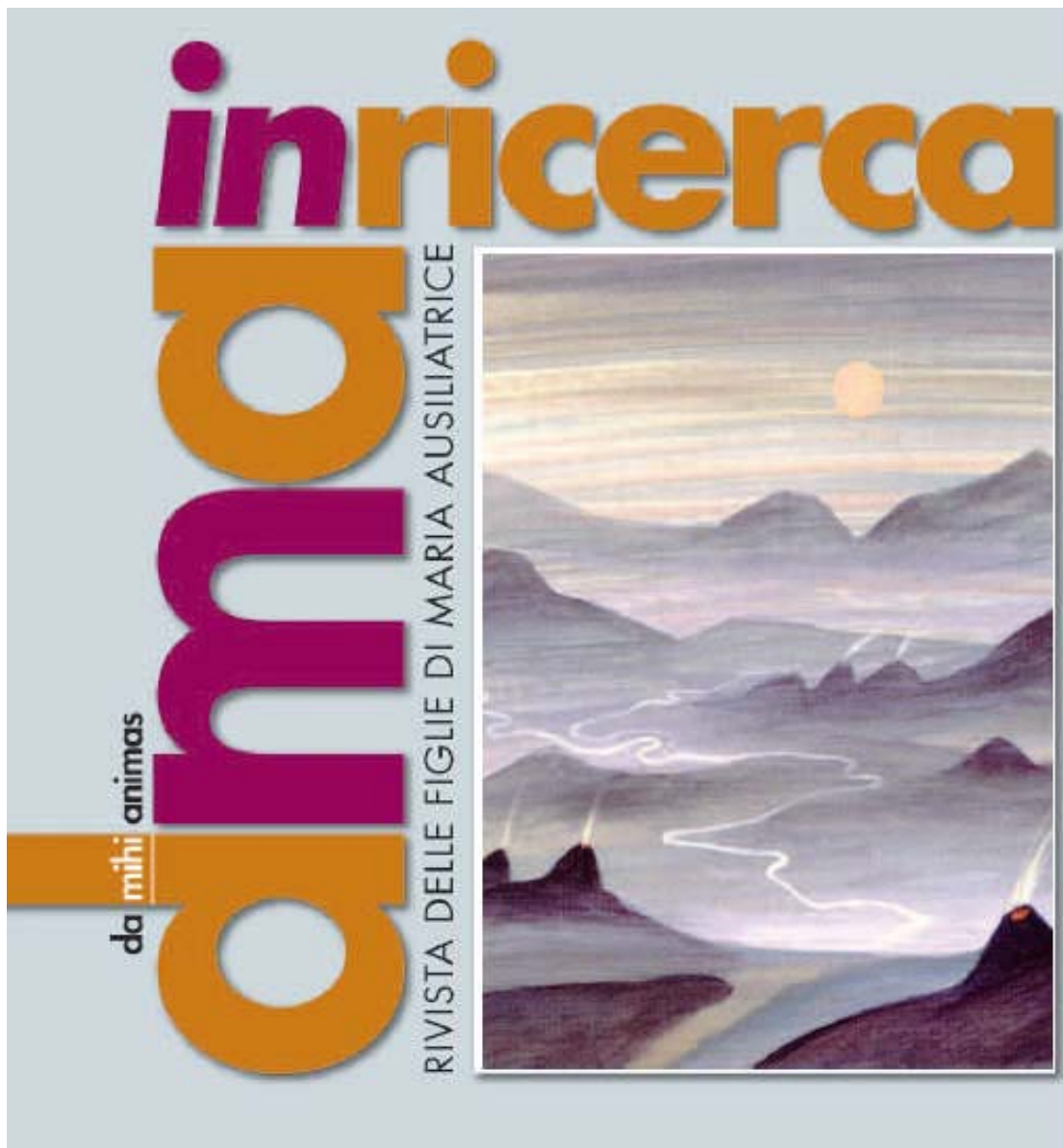
FACES OF CHILDREN... FACES OF THE FUTURE ?

Tayana is seven years old and dreams of becoming a tennis player.
Saranda is nine years old and yearns to become a journalist.
These are children like so many others who study in the little village school of Binca/Binq. It has two little buildings near an orthodox church, a few steps from the center that is formed by a couple of stores.
It would be one story among many others if it were not for the fact that Tayana is a Serb and Saranda an Albanian.
And especially if their school where they study together would not be in Kosovo, the former Serb province where the two ethnic groups have had bloody clashes since the end of the '90's.
At Binca/Binaq(Serbian and Albanian names of the little village) since 2001 there has been an active multi-ethnic school for children of the two communities, though being in divided classes to be able to follow the Serbian and Albanian programs can study together, sharing lessons like music, art, physical education and have places for recreation.
It is a rare example in this region of the Balkans where, even though violent episodes have sharply diminished during the years, the two communities tend to live isolated lives in a few cases even within the same village.
There is still a long way to go before they can really speak of Reconciliation.

INSERTO A CURA DI MAPA BORSI

Source:SIR 13 Agency (2009) February 20





Gospel Readings of Contemporary Facts

Cooperation and development

Two-handed solidarity

Mara Borsi

Hands that weave solidarity is a network made up of different community groups that spread the values of solidarity and an ethical and solidarity economy. It is promoted by the Brazilian province of St. Catherine of Siena that finds itself working in its mission in the State of Sao Paulo. Two years ago the Network edited a popular aid entitled "Popular Economy in Solidarity" with the aim of spreading the ideas that support the vision of an alternative economy.

The Network-*Hands that weave solidarity*-was born from the needs of the communities for FMA social works. These were communities that were already carrying out productive activities and needed guidelines for the commercialization of products.

The proposal to initiate a journey of economic solidarity was immediately favorably accepted by four groups and a school that in 2005 began to unite with the objective of knowing, applying and spreading the fundamental ideas of economic solidarity,

The intention was immediately that of stimulating and collaborating with the organization of micro-economy projects that had the aim of activating processes of social transformation and productive networks, of commercialization and consumerism.

The objectives that the Network still proposes in addition to spreading the ideas of an alternative economy are: to favor critical consumption, to constitute a network of fair, solidarity commerce, to stimulate the creation of commercial consumption, to create spaces of formation, to arrange for experiences, making them ever more meaningful.

The micro-economy groups, called local cells, meet frequently and put into act a

process based on three steps: action, reflection, new action. The representatives of these local cells gather every three months to share experiences.

They seek to build a new knowledge of stimulating and reinforcing working through networking. The experiences lived are organized in such a way as to favor the growth of processes of production and commercialization.

A convincing testimony

Sr. Ana Beatriz Freitas Mattos, FMA belonging to the province of Sao Paulo, Brazil, worked for three years in a project for economic solidarity before coming to Italy to frequent the Salesian Spirituality Course at Casa *Ersilia Canta*. We asked her a few questions to try to understand in reality the opportunities and challenges of this type of project.

DMA –What has it meant for you to be working in an economic solidarity project?

Sr. Ana Beatriz-For me speaking of economic solidarity mean speaking of the Kingdom of God and its values. The mentality of this economic vision is not gain, but the person. The work is conceived of as a true means of the redemption of human dignity and solidarity takes the place of individualism. It means sharing the experience of creation with a production group and making everyday life a place of learning humanity. One regains the pleasure of working creatively. Too often people are mortified by illegal work without any guarantee of the workers' rights.

Buying raw material for production, calculating a fair price, working hard, looking for creative ways to repair the errors committed in the manufacture of the products, thinking, deciding together, working together, making mistakes together, rejoicing together have all brought growth to the group of women with whom I worked and I, too, found myself richer and more filled with hope in seeing little successes, little steps.

“Economic solidarity of the people or more precisely collaboration in solidarity favors a new way of living and relating to one another, it deals with a new vision of the world by respecting differences and the richness that each person bears. The Economic solidarity of the people guarantees to all persons better conditions on the material, educational, political, communications levels and it promotes the freedom and well-being of all.

**Challenges for the solidarity of ethical Producers:*

- quality production
- seeking technical assistance to improve production
- developing and exercising cultural and associations cooperatives
- creating channels and close relationships with consumers and alternative forms for the sale of products
- obtaining the capital that will give a start to productive activity.

*Source” Province of St. Catherine, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Popular Economic Solidarity 2007*

DMA-What have you received from the women with whom you have worked?

Sr.Ana Beatriz-I can say without hesitation that they have given me much friendship and the courage to face a new journey, the desire to contribute to the well-being of many other persons.

The women with whom I have shared this experience have helped me to believe more in the educational process that is being carried out beginning from shared experience and they have helped me to touch with my own hand the importance of educating self and others, reinforcing trust that walking humbly with our God in life we must be agents of social transformation.

DMA-According to you, why is it important for the FMA to commit themselves and to support micro-credit projects notwithstanding the difficulties encountered?

Sr. Ana Beatriz- We are responsible for an educational charism and we cannot lose this opportunity to promote life and to spread the Gospel.

It is important to create democratic structures to promote active participation in all economic and social processes. In today's situation of a worldwide economic crisis we have further understood that it is important to connect economic and social development.

Through the educational processes and activities of economic solidarity, we can act and favor the connection between economic and social development.

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Precariousness - How far?

Palma Lionetti

“Precariousness: this is the common denominator that touches any environment in which we find our selves living.” (Guidelines for the Educational Mission N.20)

Beginning from this affirmation we could write rivers of words to take an X-ray of our society that the much cited author Bauman already in 1999 described the society of uncertainty in which “individual freedom reigns supreme” becoming the basic value against which every other value must be evaluated and the measure against which the wisdom of every norm and super-individual decision is to be compared.

In his “Civilization and its Discontents” Freud emphasized that modern society chose “order and regulation” for self-interpretation, indicating the causes of discontent with the excess of order and the death of freedom. Today the post-modernists live the discomfort provoked by the game of freedom in which “those who have lost it console themselves with the hope of winning next time, while the joy of the victor is obfuscated by the presentment of loss. For both this signifies that nothing is stable, but all is uncertain. Uncertainty, however, is the bearer of different messages: to those who lose, it says that all is still not lost and so they continue to play, while the victor whispers that every triumph is precarious!

In this rather bizarre game it is especially the young people who have the impression of being “free”, of trying

every way to realize their own initiatives, in which they need to gain success. The price of all this is that of feeling oneself always and everywhere as being judged and examined, under inspection or on the edge of failure. The consequence is that the young people find it difficult to foresee the future.

When we speak of a relationship between young people and the future, there is another aspect that must be taken into consideration. To know if a society will have a fruitful future, it is important to understand how and how much the young people feel socially and culturally generated by the adult generations and how, in turn, they feel in condition to generate their future and tomorrow’s society. If they are to be generated it means to be desired, wanted, cared for, and loved so that they may be the recipients of good things on the part of the adults, then in these generational terms they may not feel that they are “truly wanted”. They have the impression that society can do without them and their maturing. For this reason today constitutes a true problem of assuming responsibility on the social and private level. Yes to love, no to more structured bonds, i.e., those that bring a commitment that conditions their lives. Even their approach to work moves between seeking and dissatisfaction. On the one hand responsibility toward work is taken as an objective from early adolescence and there is a widespread increase everywhere of students /workers; on the

other hand, the condition of “dissent” is projected to old age. In both cases the typical time of the season of youthful transition between responsibility and professionalism falls because people find themselves either eternally young or suddenly old.

Differentials

The meeting of these new social phenomena see precariousness, social fragmentation, widespread vulnerability, the weakening of groups, the ever more accented differentials between rich and poor, does not happen on a purely academic or theoretical level, but on that which is educational-pastoral.

Therefore, taking for granted that our pastoral action is guided by its three criteria: redemptive incarnation, priority of evangelization, educational dimension of ministry, we can ask if these objectives, the way and different methodological options, flow from the circularity between faith and experience vital to the young people. In other words how does precariousness question, for example, *animation*, which methods should be used to interpret existence and to create culture? If during these years the study of the Preventive System through the pedagogical perspective of reference (cultural, evangelizing, social, and communicative) how does it become a “method” for our pastoral action?

Hope and resilience

In the case of precariousness, a good way to explore in terms of educational-pastoral itineraries could be that of the relationship between hope and resilience.

When in the version of Hesiod, Pandora opened the vase and spread Fatigue, Illness, Vice, Passion and Old Age among mortals, she left Hope at the bottom of the container to keep people from committing suicide. Who chooses hope will not allow self to be seduced by Pandora’s gifts that dispense evil and contradiction, and instead allow themselves to choose the will to live that has as its origin the pleasure of existing even in the presence of ambiguity and uncertainty.

On the other hand, Benedict XVI reminds us that “the soul of education, like all of life, could be only a trustworthy hope. Today our hope is threatened on many sides and we even run the risk of becoming like the ancient pagans, people “without hope, and without God in this world”, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Ephesus (*Eph2, 12*). It is precisely here that we find the most profound difficulty for a truly educational work: at the root of the educational crisis there is, in fact, a crisis of trust in life.”

Therefore, so that hope may resist all disillusion, it must find the way to transform itself by theological virtues into human virtues, into that capacity for resilience that is not simply the ability to resist adverse events, but the active process that unfolds in the dynamic relationship between the person and the context (social, relational, institutional). It acts in such a way that gradually even hope becomes passion insofar as it corresponds to a trusting attitude in the confrontations with reality and *the capacity for imagination because* it is moved ahead by the capacity for a better future accompanied by the awareness of the uncertainty of tomorrow.

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The disappearance of facts

Graziella Curti

On what do we base information today? When we read newspapers or listen to radio and TV news we frequently think to ourselves “These are only words...nothing more”.

There is an emptiness of real facts or an exploitation of events that frequently impede us from approaching social reality to catch in it any depth or truth. It impedes us from living responsible citizenship.

Some time ago, Marco Travaglio, a noted journalist published a book entitled *The Disappearance of Facts* where he mourns the bad habits of an indifferent journalism, one that is cynical and often lazy. In the foreword of his text he writes: “There are those who hide facts because they do not know them; they are ignorant, unprepared, and sloppy, and they have no desire to study, to become informed, to update themselves.”

Sadly, communications professionals frequently choose to render a *half service*. They delegate work to others, something that is understandable for poorly paid outside collaborators, but it is less so for those on the inside who receive good salaries. This system is seriously incorrect, because it negates the truth of what is really happening to citizens.

Information and democracy

Luigi Ciotti, a frontier priest who gives much importance to correct information as a support for his social commitment to people at risk, when consulted on the informational quality of the media drew a

rather negative picture: “We should not place the adjective ‘free’ beside the word ‘information’. Information is either free or it simply not information, it is propaganda, marketing, falsification. Yet, never before as during these years has it been necessary to specify, clarify,



if necessary, to denounce. The word is too often bridled, the pen blunted, chronicles mutilated or rigged. In a world that has become global, governed by the pre-eminence of the financial marketplace, where even the person is stripped of his/her centrality and transformed into merchandise, even information is too often ruled by vested interests or ideas very different from those of truth.” And he adds with the clarity that distinguishes his commitment toward those who have no voice: “There is an evil information that comes from



the dishonesty of the analysis and from the loss of objectivity, and there is another that depends on the omission of reality, hiding facts and aspects that characterize social life in all its plurality and difference. We deal with two faces of the same coin, and in doing so the cost is always our freedom. It is a freedom of knowing and of choosing, of knowing and deciding, but also of telling ourselves.” Sadly, the information filters, dictated by economic interest and political power, continue to marginalize poor countries, to ignore the tragedies of the Kivu, of Sudan, of others while they dedicate too much space to the so-called gossip about celebrities and their stupid chatter.

It is also true that in order to make the news Africa and other depressed regions need to have at least 200 deaths while wealthy countries who possess 90% of the press agencies, can publish even marginal events throughout the whole world.

The weak link

Since 2005 the community of Capodarco, a place of hospitality for the marginalized had advertised *The Weakest Link* Award given for the best examples of radio, television and short wave transmissions that have narrated facts and events of people who have been defined as “fragile”, because they are “on the outskirts” or are “marginalized”.

In fact, the best journalists think that the strength of the chain of communications

depends on the resistance of its weak link. We see therefore among the productions receiving an award there is a report filmed in Ghana, in Accra, on the occasion of the African Cup, that tells the stories of the young African players who are all aspiring for a trip to Europe. The first images show camps of red dirt, large plazas, arenas, garbage dumps, all transformed into playing fields by the creativity of those who are poor. On the contrary, there is presented the difference between the aspirations and the local clans with respect to the fame of affairs of European soccer.

An award was also merited for a report on Srebrenica, the city destroyed in 1995, symbol of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it revealed to the world the massacre of ethnic hatred unknown to most people. This was an event that the media, with its complicity, wanted to erase and forget.



What can be done?

There are many means of communication today. Notwithstanding this, those who are serious about wanting to be informed, are forced to do deep research, to compare sources and

possibly, to have recourse to sure news sources.

Almost all information structures, newspapers and TV have their own interests in the area of politics, and economics by which they are financed.

If we look at the international press, even the online versions, we ask ourselves: "What is the difference between the newspaper on the left or the right? Between the democratic, republican or liberal? The name?" It has been said of these information products: "They seem like so many brands of detergent. Different ingredients, the same owners."

They have said...

Facts are stubborn (even though they are almost always interpreted and contextualized), and are at times explosive.

When they are uncomfortable for the powerful the best thing to do is eliminate them.

Daniel Barbieri

Mr. Kenner meets Mr. Wire who is fighting the newspapers. "I am a great adversary of newspapers", says Mr. Wire, "I don't want newspapers." Mr. Kenner responded : "I am an ever greater adversary of newspapers; I want newspapers that are free."

Bertolt Brecht

There are those who hide facts even from themselves, because they are afraid to have to change their minds.

Marco Travaglio

There are, however, a few free voices. For example, for more than ten years in Italy there has been an online news agency called MISNA, which has its sources in the testimonies of missionaries who live in the most media ignored places, communicate the facts of their situation truthfully, drawing a clearer picture of the situations and problems.

Even if rare, luckily there are still journalists with independent brains who are not dependent on lobbies.

Then there are a few indispensable operations to have information that is closer to the truth.

1. Many, among the freer names, are NGOs or missionaries. It is up to us to value and support them
2. To do this, it is necessary on our part that we be willing to do research, compare different possibly complementary informational sources.
3. We are asked for a cultural study that will help to decodify news, to seek within the causes, not judging them in their effect.
4. It is also indispensable to be present and attentive to that which happens nearby and far from us.
5. "Because the right to be informed, to be free and aware, does not come from on high or the outside, but is realized in places where each one works and is in play on a daily basis, in that journey of working together to build a future of justice and democracy."



Information, News, Novelties
from the world of media

Twittermania

Maria Antonia Chinello and Lucy Roces

YouTube, Facebook, MySpace are familiar words wherever one speaks of social networks and blogs, of Web 2.0, network environments for relationships and sharing. Differences exist within these spaces, but the philosophy is the same: to connect among themselves and interact with persons who are distant in time and space, to reach known friends and to meet new ones. Then why don't you Tweet, too?

On the changing horizon of Web 2.0 *Twitter* has been making its way. It is a *social network* that is threatening the primacy of *Facebook* and *MySpace*.

The name "*Twitter*" corresponds to the sound of the word *Tweeter*, a derivative of the English word *to tweet* that means "to chirp". The *Twitter* logo is, in fact, a bluebird.

On the official site (<http://twitter.com>) one can read: "*Twitter* is a service to communicate with friends, family and colleagues through an exchange of brief, quick exchanges, frequently responses to a simple question such as: "*What are you doing?*"

It is a network and a service of *microblogging* that allows one to send frequent updates to one's profile with text messages that are no longer than 140 characters through the site itself, or through SMS from cell phones or Instant Messenger programs and e-mail. *Twitter* was defined as a telegraphic service of Web 2.0: frequent, brief messages are sent often during the day to tell others what you are doing, thinking, how you feel, who you have met, what are the programs, the

unforeseen events, commitments and pauses. All in 140 characters...it is a rapid, fragmented, communications that responds to the synthesized mode of those who inhabit the Net with its ever more pervasive and hectic connections. Setting up a *Twitter* page is easy and different from the *Facebook* environment, the most popular social network (during this time), and there are not many. Even here it is possible to write about preferences, personal interests, to create a list of friends to indicate links and upload photos, video and audio. The difference lies in the updating system. While *Facebook* needs a computer to send messages, *Twitter* can be managed through a cell phone or mail.

Why use *Twitter*? We read the answer on the official site: "Because even the most banal updates are significant for those who like one another, especially when they take place in real time."

Easy, right? Always connected, true? Always available, don't you think?

Communication in 140 characters

Twitter was created in March 2006 by the *Obvious Corporation* of San Francisco, California in the United States. From September 2007 on, it became the *social network* that registered the highest increase of users (+600%) and one time visitors (+343%). In February 2009 *Compete.com*, a measuring company for web access classified it in third place, behind *Facebook* and *MySpace*. At the beginning of this year, *Twitter* registered



seven million one time visitors. Its co-founders Biz Stone and Evan Williams were indicated in Time Magazine's list of the 100 most important and influential persons on a worldwide level: the new gurus of technology, on a warm and friendly Net.

Since the service became immediately popular (at least in the United States), many people used *Twitter* to manage campaigns and to organize information against a social background.

James Karl Buck, a student who received a degree from the university of California, Berkeley, was in Mahalla (Egypt) for an anti government protest when he and his interpreter Mohammed Maree were arrested. At the police station Buck used his cell phone to send a message to his friends and contacts updating his *Twitter* page. Only one word..."arrested". In a few seconds, colleagues in the United States and blogger friends in Egypt were alerted. Within 24 hours, there was another message to friends and contacts: "Freed".

Even a queen communicates through *Twitter*. It is the choice of Rania of Jordan (<http://twitter.com/Queenrania>), who decided to create her network

profile on a social network to tell about the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to her country (May 8-11, 2009). On her page Rania explains her reasons: "We need to listen to the Pope. Our region is in great need of a message of peace." And then the first message: "This is a special day here in Amman. It is not everyday that the Pope comes to visit."

Last March George Stephanopoulos of ABC News interviewed Senator John McCain. This was the case of a "*twitterview*" since the questions and answers were sent through *Twitter*.

During the fires that struck Australia a few months ago, many *Twitter* users described the event that was easily located through the internal search engine of the site. One study entitled *Following the trail of earthquakes online. How the network of Italian social media reacted to the disaster in Abruzzo* reveals how among all the social networks surely *Twitter* was the application which, along with *Facebook*, was the most used to communicate the earthquake to the world. Even today many Italians are using *Twitter* to offer lodging, help and every type of comfort to the victims.

E-vangelizing

In his message for the 43rd World Day of Communications, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "The new digital technologies are determining fundamental changes in the communications models and in human relationships(...)"

When we feel the need to draw close to other persons, when we want to get to better know them and to make

ourselves known, we are responding to God's call, a call that is impressed in our nature of being created in the image and likeness of God, the God of communications and communion."

In Germany, the Protestant bishops are working to "translate" the entire Bible into *Twitter* language. In Ireland, Cardinal Sean Brady invited the users of the social network to give the gift of a daily prayer through a *Twitter* or mail message. "This will create a sea of prayer that could reinforce our sense of solidarity and remind those who receive it that there is someone who is taking care of them."

Is there a place in our FMA life for a means such as *Twitter*? It depends, as usual, on how we use it so that it may become a channel of communication

which, without doubt is not a substitute for but an accompaniment and support for the educational relationship.

It is Don Bosco who teaches us: "*I make use of those long recreations to approach every boy. With a word whispered in the ear to one I give a recommendation for a better observance of obedience, to another for better punctuality to the study of catechism, to a third to come to confession, and to another I suggest a thought for reflection, and so on...*"

Used with pedagogical wisdom, *Twitter* could be the *whispered word in the ear* of our times.

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The "other" Net

Gimp: Free graphics

If you want a graphic editing program that is more complete than Microsoft Paint but don't want to spend a lot to acquire the very expensive *Adobe Photoshop* or *CorelDraw*, *GIMP* is on the Net.

Gimp is the acronym for *GNU Image Manipulation Program*,

freely distributed software to draw, re-touch photos, elaborate, compose and create images and graphics.

The site: <http://gimp.linux.it> contains information on how to download, install, use and amplify the program.

The project came into being at the end of 1998 and the first results came from version 1.1.3 of *GIMP*. After a period of inactivity the program began again and actually was completely translated. Now, at the end of 2008, the site was updated with the aim of re-proposing the software through a more actual web platform.

GIMP was written and developed for the UNIX platform, but it also functions with Windows, Mac and OS/2. Once installed, the program may be continually updated with ulterior applications and solutions to communicate with the image.





Sensitive, intimate drama in which an emotionally repressed economics professor (Richard Jenkins) discovers a couple (Haaz Sleiman and Danai Gurira), both undocumented aliens, unwittingly squatting in his long-unvisited Greenwich Village apartment as the result of a scam and becomes involved in their travails, eventually also forming a bond with the young man's mother (Hiam Abbass). Writer-director Tom McCarthy's affecting film makes its political point with intelligence, subtle humor and a deep sense of compassion. Implied cohabitation and a few expletives uttered under extreme duress. A-III -- adults. (PG-13) **2008**

Full Review from USCCB site

The Visitor

The post-Sept. 11 travails of undocumented Middle Eastern immigrants -- along with the personal awakening of a previously isolated character -- are explored in the sensitive, intimate drama "The Visitor" (Overture).

Traveling from his Connecticut campus to his long-unvisited Greenwich Village apartment to speak at New York University, emotionally repressed, widowed economics professor Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins) is startled to discover two squatters. Realizing that Syrian political refugee Tarek Khalil (Haaz Sleiman) and his Senegalese girlfriend, Zainab (Danai Gurira), have been the duped victims of a scam, he allows them to remain with him until they can find other lodging.

Despite Zainab's misgivings about their host, Tarek takes a liking to Walter, teaching him to play the African drum. (Walter, whose late wife was a gifted pianist, had earlier tried and failed to master that instrument.)

Walter's breakthrough moment comes when he, Tarek and a group of other drummers serenade passers-by in Central Park. On their way home after this happy triumph, however, a misunderstanding in the subway leads to Tarek's arrest.

Facing deportation, Tarek is forced to rely on the bewildered and outraged Walter as his

conduit to the outside world, since Zainab cannot visit him for fear of being deported herself. Walter puts his life on hold and generously hires Mr. Shah (Amir



Arison), an immigration lawyer, to defend Tarek. But the attorney -- whose own uncle was deported after raising a family in the United States -- is hardly optimistic.

Concerned that she hasn't heard from Tarek for some time, his mother, Mouna (Hiam Abbass), journeys to New York. Walter breaks the news to her and, as the two of them join forces to cope with the arbitrary policies of the for-profit detention center where Tarek is being held, they form a gentle romantic bond.

Writer-director Tom McCarthy's affecting film makes its political point with intelligence, subtle humor and a deep sense of compassion. He effectively portrays the impersonal, morally indifferent system that eventually manages to trap, in different ways, both Tarek and Walter: a soulless world of anonymous buildings, florescent lights, poured concrete walls and petty, easily threatened bureaucrats.

The film contains implied cohabitation and a few expletives uttered under extreme duress. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



Interesting Websites
Edited by Anna Mariani
Comunicazionifmario.net

<http://web.math.unifi.it>

This is the site of a museum dedicated exclusively to mathematics and its application to render the material interactive and entertaining. It is in Italian and it is possible to find a calendar for alternating Sundays to learn math at any age.

<http://www.exploratorium.edu>

This is the site of the famous Exploratorium of San Francisco, the first Science Center of the World founded by Frank Oppenhiemer. It is a highly interactive site in English in which the user can perform online experiments, listen to spoken documents and consult an large digital library containing high resolution images filmed in Quicktime and many other scientific documents.

There are many online educational services for visitors, teachers and museum buffs. There is an innovative series of webcasts (television transmissions via the Internet) from different locations, extreme locations such as Antarctica, for the project Origins or unique occasions such as the solar eclipse in Central Africa. Also very interesting is the behind the scenes work that shows the work involved in the production of the exhibits. The site is visible in English, French, Spanish and Japanese.

<http://www.exploradome.com>

The Explor@dome of Paris is an interactive space in French dedicated to the discovery of science, art and multimedia that interact with the development of culture and education and scientific diffusion.



<http://www.gsc.org.uk>

The Glasgow Science Centre is one of the main Scottish Tourist attractions. It presents hundreds of interactive exhibits, a planetarium and an IMAX cinema. The site is in English and offers much material for downloading.



I'm a little confused. I am surrounded by persons who continually use "new" words that they have heard from or met friends that use these words ...and I have a great difficulty in understanding them.

The other day I was in the community room for recreation. At this point we are only a few faithful members there. After a few minutes a little group of Sisters who were speaking about the young people arrived and they were saying strange phrases such as : "I have Johnny in my list of contacts, if you want , I can reach him for you. "You know, Christina has added me to her friends. This is a great step forward because she had admitted me to her world." Humph!

Another Sister arrives and says: "I have 400 friends on ...(a word that I don't know how to pronounce nor write...I hope you can understand it on your own) I even found some of my classmates who I have not heard from for many years!"

I had them explain to me (more than once, to tell the truth) what they were speaking about. They told me that on the Internet there are sites where you can write your name and surname , put your picture and then you can write what you're doing, or thinking. Then all those who are on your list of friends can read what you have written, comment on it and then write what they are doing so you can comment.

"Nice, huh? I could not answer because I had never tried it. Certainly, a good thought, perhaps that of the meditation, or a sentence from a good reading, that all could read, could be available...but I am not very practical at the computer. There are my peers who, notwithstanding their advanced age, have succeeded in familiarizing themselves a fit with this instrument. And then, sure enough, they can try to share their meditation!?!"

They have also advised me to read the articles in DMA that regard communication. But this was too complicated. It was not enough to have an Italian dictionary, I would also need one in English. However, at my age, even learning another language is truly too much. Yet, I still have my doubts...some questions that I can't answer on my own. I'll share them with you. Who am I to include among my friends? And then, if no one wants me as a friend, what will I do? And then having to write what one does, and thinks...It's not very easy... And then if everyone can read them...

This time of communication, however, is disturbing. In times past when someone wanted to know what the others were doing they were called busybodies...now instead it is being in step with the times. Maybe. Certainly, times have changed.

Till next time...

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

DOSSIER: Open Cenacle: To the story and stories of yesterday and today
CLOSE UP: Women in the Word Transformed by love
IN SEARCH OF: Polis Earth, Mother Earth
COMMUNICATING: Youngpeople.com Web radio



In communicating, thinking of one's own vocation...this is the way of being happy for one's whole life. (Don Bosco)

THE PATHS



THE PATHS OF THE WORD THE MISSION

*WHAT I SAY TO YOU IN THE DARKNESS
SPEAK IN THE LIGHT;
WHAT YOU HEAR WHISPERED,
PROCLAIM ON THE HOUSETOPS*

Matthew 10,27