

# dma

Da Mihi Animas

RIVISTA DELLE FIGLIE DI MARIA AUSILIATRICE

2017  
YEAR LXIV  
quarterly

## Prophecy of going

Poste Italiane SpA - Spedizione in Abbonamento Postale - DL 353/2003 (conv. in L. 27/02/2004 n° 46) art. 1, comma 2 - DCB Roma





**Publisher**

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**Layout and graphics**  
VICIS Srl

**Pagination and typography**  
VICIS Srl  
V.le delle Provincie, 37 - 00162 Roma  
www.vicis.it

**Extra-commercial Edition**

The **dma** magazine is made on  
FSC certified ecological paper,  
consisting of pure e.c.f. and  
a high recovery fiber content  
(at least 25%).

Photos FMA Archive  
Photos Shutterstock



**Associata USPI**  
Unione Stampa  
Periodica Italiana

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**Dossier**



The year of 2017 DMA Magazine concludes by inviting us to enter the heart of the Prophecy of going. We allowed ourselves to be inhabited by the Prophecy of *contact*, *fraternity*, and *tenderness*. Our '*prophetic backpack*' is ready to undertake the journey where the Lord of Life calls us, with the strength of *going* together to Him.

The *prophecy of going* evokes the God who walks, who accompanies us, who treads on our soil and knows it. He becomes a companion and stands next to us. The missionary call urges us to go and, as we walk, we feel our heart burning, because it is an inhabited call. God is with us, we do not go alone. It is a going in the company of the Trinity-communion. Walking puts us in the condition of being "outgoing" permanently, of learning to accord our pace with the rhythm of the people and, while walking, to seek together the meaning of Life.

The *prophecy of going* puts us in a position to leave and leave again 'from the feet to the heart and from the heart to the feet'. It is an existential exercise that seeks to give meaning to Life, to the call of God, to discerning a mission. It's going towards. It is embracing unthought of realities and taking care of the other. It is living attentive to the complexity of life. *Going* presupposes an inner movement to live on the same '*frequency*' of God. To be on the same *wavelength*, being able to capture His message of life and to walk with the same rhythm of the steps of Jesus among the people of our time.

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## Editorial

# The prophecy of going

To take possession of this prophecy is to allow oneself to be questioned by the Will of God, by His daily calls, by the meaning of His life. Going puts us in front of two interconnected realities: the *path* and the *walker*. The path "dialogs" with the walker. It is on the path that we can find the reasons for our faith and hope, for social responsibility, for the commitment to transform the world. The path is the space-opportunity to live with others, to cohabit intercultural realities, to create solidarity in relationships, and to open up to eternal learning.

*Walking* and the *road* weave a relationship and the commitment to live open to the newness of God and to lead an existence dedicated to humanity. The strength of this gift to the other finds meaning in the Lord who proclaims Himself, "the Way, Truth, and Life". Illuminated by the truth that is Jesus, life becomes deep, beautiful, attractive; it makes space for the incarnation of the Word in the soil of contemporaneity. In the company of others, we become pilgrims towards the goal of our interior life.

The pilgrim needs tents for the stops and the tent that accompanies is the home of the Trinity. *Going* in the company of the love of the Father, of the presence of the Son, and of the light of the Spirit, changes us at every step and sustains us on the evangelical paths of our time.

# Peace as a journey

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“Jesus was at dinner with his disciples, the last supper, and he said to them: I leave you peace, I give you my peace, not as the world gives it, do I give it to you” (Jn 14, 27-31).

Faced with the risk of being enchanted by a “peaceful, artificial, and anesthetized peace” - complete with a “do not disturb” sign - typical of the world which everyone can make for themselves, Pope Francis reiterated the true essence of peace that gives us instead, Jesus: “a real peace” because rooted in the cross, able to go through the many daily tribulations of life, between suffering and illness.

God’s peace is a real peace, He enters the reality of life, does not deny life. And life is like this: there is suffering, there is sickness, there are wars... Peace is not tranquility!

In daily life when we get angry and lose peace, when our heart is disturbed, it is because we are not able to live life with its crosses and pains; we are not able to ask for the *grace of peace*.

The great Protestant theologian **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** spoke of “grace at a high price”. Maybe it’s time for us to get used to thinking that even **peace has very high costs**. Lowered prices are suspicious. Dizzying discounts lead one to believe that the goods are damaged. Off-season sales are ambiguous. And the enticing

offers below cost make us think of surrogates. Peace is not the fabulous prize of a lottery that can be won with the mere price of a single ticket. *Those who bet on peace must cash out coins of tears, misunderstandings, and blood.*

## ■ The march for peace

Every day millions of people set off in the world to escape death and despair. Today we, in many different ways, walk together with them to achieve Peace. Their pain and their anguish are, in some way, our own because we feel close to them, we hear their cries for help, we want to do something, react, respond, protect. For many it seems useless, inconclusive to face these problems with a march of peace and fraternity. For many it is just another way to get out and stay comfortably seated in their own garden of privileges and illusions. The truth is that we feel at peace, while there is war. A real war, even if very different from

*There is no journey for peace. Peace is the journey.*  
(Mahatma Gandhi)

those of the past. A disguised war of peace. A war fought in large part by others, far from us, which allows us to think about our business, our self-interest, what concerns us, and this suits us.

Every now and then a picture, an image, an attack, a tragedy, a fact that strikes us and we have a burst of awareness, of involvement. But it does not last long. Everyone is interested in the facts that involve them directly, at the moment. Facts that have an impact on the medium to long term or that do not immediately involve us are constantly removed or deleted from our agenda, through selfishness, indifference or ignorance. Because the perspective is different. This is time for closures. Not just of borders.

We no longer raise our head from the piece of land we tread. We close our eyes on the world, while the world becomes increasingly interconnected and interdependent. We close our eyes on the future, because it continues to surprise us and disquiet us. There is nothing that can compete with the things that concern us or worry us, here and now. We remain slaves of a media system that turns our attention on and off with the same speed with which we change the television channel. Meanwhile, the facts move, follow each other, multiply, get complicated by rapidly changing the reality, upsetting our beliefs, forcing us to deal with increasingly difficult and complex problems. Faced with this overwhelming reality, participating in a march for peace and fraternity means overcoming indifference, resignation, mistrust, recovering the ability to think, to act and not just to re-act, to do it together and not alone.

**Reconnect with the pain** of the world, of all the people who are agonizing due to hunger, thirst, and lack of care, those who are tormented by bombs, natural disasters, those who try to escape, those who lose their job, those who cannot find work, abused women, raped... We touch the deep pain of life, because it makes us all more human. **Turn the spotlight** on the many positive things that happen, the simple things that many people do without waiting for someone else, the many ways in which “peace” is made, the many small daily steps towards a peaceful society. **Investing on young people and on formation** to be aware and responsible citizens in a globalized, interconnected, and interdependent world, in continuous and



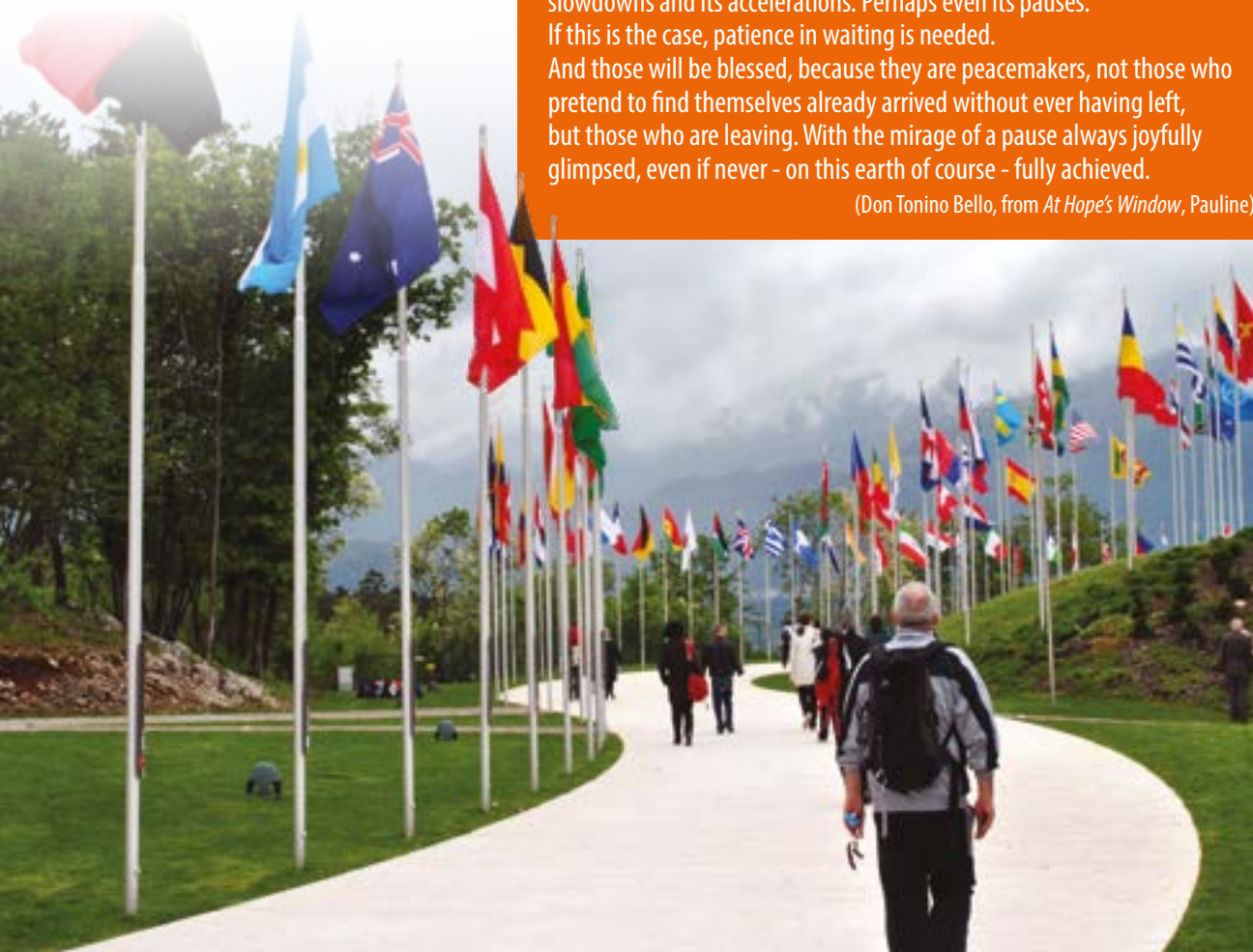


rapid change. **Make peace at 0 km.** Learn to make peace in the things we do, in the places where we work, in our communities and territories: take care of each other and the environment, fight against all forms of violence and social exclusion, organize to welcome those who come from other worlds, to build an economy of solidarity... in the conviction that everything we do for peace in us, in our communities and cities, will contribute to building peace in the world. This is the hope that we cultivate: together and on the journey, peace is possible!

### Peace as a journey

Actually, we are not very used to linking the term PEACE with dynamic concepts. We rarely hear: "That man gets tired in peace", "fights in peace", "grabs life with his teeth in peace". More common in our language are the expressions: "Sit in peace", "read in peace", "meditate in peace" and, obviously, "rest in peace". In short, peace recalls more the dressing gown than the traveler's backpack. More the comfort of the living room than the dangers of the road. More the fireplace than the workshop teeming with problems. More the silence of the desert than the traffic of the metropolis. More the penumbra recollection of a church than a town meeting. More the mystery of the night than the noises of noon. Perhaps a revolution of mentality is needed to understand that peace is not a given, but a conquest. Not a consumer good, but the product of a commitment. Not a starting ribbon, but a finishing tape. Peace requires struggle, suffering, tenacity. It requires a high price of incomprehension and sacrifice. Refusing the temptation of pleasure. Not tolerating sedentary attitudes. Not annulling conflict. It does not have much to do with a trivial "peaceful life". Yes, peace more than a goal is a journey. And, moreover, an uphill journey. It means then that it has its roadmaps and its rhythms, its preferential paths and its technical times, its slowdowns and its accelerations. Perhaps even its pauses. If this is the case, patience in waiting is needed. And those will be blessed, because they are peacemakers, not those who pretend to find themselves already arrived without ever having left, but those who are leaving. With the mirage of a pause always joyfully glimpsed, even if never - on this earth of course - fully achieved.

(Don Tonino Bello, from *At Hope's Window*, Pauline)



# Commit ourselves to sustainable consumption

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**Our planet earth needs to be respected and safeguarded: from this point of view, by 2030 it is important to guarantee sustainable consumption and production patterns, the responsible use of resources, the reduction of waste and the chemicals released by large multinational companies, implementing for this purpose sustainable policies based on the recycling of products.**

### ■ The SDO 12: a crucial goal

*Ensuring sustainable models of production and consumption* is what the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 proposes, in connection with many other themes of Agenda 2030, so its full realization can be a decisive factor for the implementation of the common goal (<http://www.asvis.it/goal12/l-italia-e-il-goal/>).

*The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) considers Objective 12, both in the natural capital group, together with climate, oceans, and biodiversity; and in the economic capital group, together with energy, employment, and infrastructure. Furthermore, the realization of commitments for production and consumption patterns cannot be tackled without a strong connection





with Objective 4, education as a specific activity is envisaged for citizens/ consumers, young people, and companies.

### ■ Waste - Saving

According to the FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 32% of the waste of agricultural products occurs during production, 22% in harvesting, 11% in industrial processing, 13% in distribution, and 22% by the consumer at home or at the restaurant. These data are confirmed in the facts and figures reported by the SDO 12.

Every year, for example, about a third of the food produced, corresponding to 1.3 billion tons, worth about one trillion dollars, ends up in the trash, or goes bad due to transport systems or inadequate agricultural practices. Despite this, 2 billion people worldwide are obese or overweight,

*“Only by starting to cultivate solid virtues is self-giving possible in an ecological commitment”.*  
(LS 211)

### ■ Sustainable consumption and production

The concept of “sustainable production and consumption patterns” is not new in the international debate, given that

without taking into account that excessive consumption of food produces harmful effects on health and the environment.

Technological advances have promoted an increase in energy efficiency, yet energy use in OECD countries will continue to grow by another 35% by 2020. The energy use of commercial activities and housing is the second sector after the transport for energy use growth.

If the world’s population would use energy-saving light bulbs, it would save 120 billion dollars a year. And if it reached 9.6 billion a year by 2050, three planets would be needed to meet the demand for natural resources necessary to support current lifestyles.



for several decades the importance of acting on the production side has been affirmed, reducing the use of natural resources, and on the consumption side, sensitizing citizens to responsible consumption.

Similarly, this model implies the guarantee of access to basic services, to decent and environmentally friendly jobs and to a better quality of life for all. Its implementation contributes to the realization of the overall development plans, the reduction of future economic, environmental, and social costs, the improvement of economic competitiveness and poverty reduction.

The SDO 12 clearly indicates that achieving sustainable development requires changing the way of producing and consuming, reducing the carbon footprint, improving the efficiency of natural resources, and disposing of toxic waste appropriately. Equally important, however, is to encourage industries, businesses, and consumers to recycle and reduce waste, and progressively pursue the transition to the circular economy.

### ■ Do more and better with less

The rate of consumption, waste, and alteration of the environment has surpassed the possibilities of the planet in such a way that the current lifestyle, being unsustainable, results only in catastrophes, as in fact is already happening periodically in different regions. The mitigation of the effects of the current imbalance depends on what we do now, especially if we think of the responsibility that will be given to those who will have to endure the worst consequences (LS, 161). Consumption and sustainable production aim to “do more and better with less”, increasing the benefits in terms of well-being drawn from economic activities, by reducing the use of resources, degradation, and pollution throughout the production cycle, thus improving the quality of life (cf <http://www.monolitedigitale.it/agenda-2030-onu/obiettivo-12-garantire-modelli-sostenibili-produzione-consumo/>).

Therefore, the goals identified around SDO 12 are numerous, the achievement of which implies, first of all, the implementation of the

*10-year Framework of Sustainable Consumption and Production Programs*, making all countries participate, including those in development. On this line, it becomes necessary to achieve by 2020 a safe environmental management of chemicals and waste through their life cycle, according to international standards, and substantially reduce their release into air, water,

and soil, in order to limit their negative impact on human health and the environment. It requests that companies be encouraged, especially multinationals, to adopt sustainable practices and integrate them into their periodic reports. Furthermore, by 2030, every human being must be aware of sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

*“May our age be remembered for the reawakening of a new reverence for life, for the determination to achieve sustainability, for the acceleration of the struggle for justice and peace, and for the joyful celebration of life”*

Charter of the Earth (LS 208)

### ■ Educate to sustainable consumption

In addition to commitments at the political, institutional, and global levels, it is urgent to strategically design a real and proper education on saving and sustainable consumption. This formation path should allow new generations to acquire the necessary tools to position themselves critically in the reality dominated by the logic of the market. In fact, we are all committed to respecting creation because we are all responsible for the ethically, socially, and ecologically unsustainable situation that our planet is living. Therefore, we are all called to commit ourselves to reverse the current trend of consumption (LS 206). In this context, it is urgent to form “educators capable of re-establishing the pedagogical itineraries of an ecological ethics, so that they can effectively help growth in solidarity, responsibility, and care based on compassion” (LS 210).



To educate on saving and sustainable consumption is in a certain sense to recover the value of responsible citizenship in order to accompany young people to make informed choices regarding real and not induced needs, services and products that are necessary and not superfluous. This involves acting on multiple plans to orientate towards a sustainable lifestyle: for example, applying the 5 R rule of the Ronchi Decree: to collect, recycle, reuse, reduce, and recover; pass from the philosophy of having

to that of being for a deep renewal of the false values that govern our societies (Angelini A. Pizzuto P., *Manual of Ecology, Sustainability, and Environmental Education*, 2007). Furthermore, it is urgent to recover the ethics of the essential and the care that makes us experience that everything “is part of a generous and dignified creativity that shows the best of the human being” (LS 211). This is why the OSS 4, which calls for quality education for all, is transversal and fundamental to achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.



# Going, the weight of words

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Going is a bit of a metaphor of life: “*this going and coming, this slow death, this eternal return like the wave of the sea*”. In going we feed on bread and words. When we think of our past or we find ourselves in some circumstances that remind us of it, we can still feel inside ourselves, often with the same tonality, the words that nourished us, gave wings and opened horizons of hope and beauty, as well as those that hurt us, upset us, forced us to mark the step.

The **word** is what makes us different from animals, humanizes us. Faced with certain attitudes of animals, especially those of the dog, it is said that they lack only the word. The human being is the speaking being. *Lacan* “indicates our most authentic dimension is in the ‘mystery of the speaking body’”. Human beings are made to go out of themselves, to communicate: they need, desire, are nostalgic for this. Among the various ways to get in touch with people, speaking is one of the most used. With the word one can establish a positive interpersonal relationship, but also weaken it and demolish it. The word has enormous power: it can create and destroy; comfort and induce anguish; heal and make sick. It can be used with a vast range, as well as modalities, and even tones.





Talking can be a simple, harmless, and even pleasant chatter, a pastime; a banal repetitiveness and a boring gripe; a gossip, a creeping murmuring, a slander, a peremptory imposition, a devastating assault; **but it can also be a gift** of understanding, of tenderness, of comfort, of support, of stimulating good, of clarification, of teaching, of joyful and cheerful creativity, of prophetic openness to that hope which gives flavor and meaning to life, and which lets you glimpse Life.

In everyday life, in families and in communities, all modalities and tones can be experienced, even if support, comfort, and recommendation are generally predominant. Sometimes, however, it seems that banal and boring repetitiveness prevails, the lament with the tone of claim, the imposition to do or not do a certain thing, the highlighting of the facts of criminal news. Perhaps it is only a circumscribed fact in the context in which I live, but lately complaints seem to me to have become the nucleus of every discourse, an epidemic. We are complaining because others, despite being in a situation of relative well-being, complain, and this without realizing that we are doing the same thing. It is depressing especially for those who listen and cannot intervene because they do not want to cause any harm.

it to break free and “get out” of old cultural precluding patterns. It makes us prudent, aware of not having the whole truth, respectful of the “diverse” and wiser in speaking with them.

The **reading** par excellence especially for a Christian, the one that most nourishes the inner life and enhances the ability to understand what is valuable, and to orient oneself in the midst of so many attractive and flattering perspectives, remains the Word. The inner enrichment depends a lot on how the reading is approached. Reading in order to find light for one’s own doubts, to orient oneself in choices, to nurture life is important, even to do it for a pastime, study, information, can offer reasons for reflection and flashes of light.

Some events such as a birth, a death or a cataclysm can become excellent opportunities for personal reflection and meditation. **S o c i a l** openness and encounters for

formation, study, friendship, and prayer are also very useful for interior enrichment. The comparison with those who have investigated a particular topic, with those who have had similar or different experiences, with those who have found some solution or with those who seek one is always important.

**Reflection, meditation, comparison** are necessary means to go beyond the surface, to find some

flash of light and truth about events and oneself, to unify oneself, give meaning to one’s own existence, and find “something to say” to others. All this also requires times and spaces of silence, difficult to find today, but still possible. In the field of official psychology, mention is made of the importance of attending formation courses in reference to meditation,

especially in the field of sports. And authentic sport, in part, is a paradigm of life. Current culture privileges activity, efficiency of doing, speed, alacrity, passivity, and even a certain stupidity. Technological innovations also very useful and important, with the noises and the lights of progress, have increasingly diminished and still diminish the times and spaces of silence and of night. Night, symbol of darkness, of the

STOPPA Francesco, *The Lost Rib. The resources of the feminine and the construction of the human*, Life and Thought, Milan 2017, pg. 54.

In *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis, while speaking of the family community, says that if you want the word, dialog to become a gift, communication, and not end in boring and inconsistent conversations “**you have to have something to say** and this requires an inner richness that is nourished by *reading, by personal reflection, by prayer, and by openness to society*” (AL 141).

The suggestions that are proposed below are strictly interconnected. Reading, every reading can enrich inwardly, even that of authors who think differently. The serene, critical confrontation, devoid of preconceptions about “the different” opens the mind, allows





indistinct, of anguish, of deception, of death, is also a symbol of silence, of restful repose, of gestation: it is the preparation for dawn, for light, for life. Christmas, the birth of the Word is celebrated in December, on one of the darkest and longest nights of the year. Words that arise from the painful labor of long, dark nights can be as black as darkness, but more often than not have the density of light and the astonishment of dawn.

The noises that most impede inner enrichment are excessive worries, jealousies, envies, difficulty in elaborating and overcoming suffering, anger, and resentment for wrongs, offenses, and humiliations. If these feelings are allowed to settle in the soul, they do not

bring peace, they make a lot of *noise*, fill times and spaces with brooding over revenge and color words with a sad and poisonous rancor.

From what world is the world, the difficulties, even with different aspects according to the contexts, the epochs, the cultures, have always been and probably

will continue to be there until life and history have run their course. They are inherent and co-natural to the limitations of the human being. And as our ancestors, with fewer possibilities than ours, have survived with dignity, we can do as well.

The studies on *resilience*, “the ability to draw from the adversities encountered even a strengthening of personal resources”, through scientifically documented data, have shown that people are endowed with more resources and energy than they think.

Meringolo Patrizia, Chiadini Moira, Nardone Giorgio, *Resilience. When the human being draws strength from misfortunes, in Contemporary psychology*, May-June 2017, p. 32.

As I mentioned in some previous reflections, the potentials that we have become efficient and effective only through constant training, done not so much from the obligation to obey a rule, but from personal choice.

Personal resources trained, nourished, and enriched by reading, reflection, meditation, and confrontation with others can help to overcome the temptation to let go and to believe that you

know everything, and puts you in a position to overcome the difficulties that life presents, including those created by *noise*, even if very painful and difficult to process.

If then, through deep meditation, the Word finds a dwelling in the profound silences of the soul, He heals, purifies, strengthens personal resources. The words that come from here and that are offered to those who approach

along the passing of the days or, amplified by new technologies, reach those who are far away, become prophetic living words that illumine meaning, comfort, heal, and save. Bearers of this radiant power are not the usual sermons impregnated with moralism and centered on “having to be”. They can also be the simplest words of recognition and greeting, like an intense and affectionate “hello”.

## The prophecy of going

### DOSSIER





# The prophecy of going

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To inhabit the world in the sign of real encounter and of every day conversation, in the daily places where life is spent with courage and audacity. To meet men and women in the passing of the days at work, in cares, in affections, in desires, and dreams. “Outgoing” for new ways with the joyful power of the Good News of the Gospel.

## ■ The invitation to “go out”

Our times are marked by a process of deep and continuous change whose characteristics are difficult to define. It is a time of great complexity in which multiply visions of life, ways of thinking of the person, the family, friendship, love, work; there are multiple experiences and possibilities. The consequences of fragmentation, dispersion, and individualism make relationships fragile. In the face of all of this, it is not possible to refrain from questioning God’s today about the opportunities and the problems placed in the Church’s mission from the time we live in and by the changes that

characterize it. We are called to the fatigue and the joy of listening to the culture of our times to discern in it, traces of God’s presence and to renew the **missionary mandate**, foundation of the life of the Church and of the vocation of every believer and consecrated person.

The joy of rediscovering the Gospel, that is, Jesus, the One who gives life and the real meaning of existence, who urges us to **‘go out’**. For Pope Francis, the meaning of this ‘going out’ is both geographical and existential. It is going toward the other, toward other subjects, cultures, people, the impoverished, the discarded, the desperate, the failures. It is also going out of ourselves, an existential exodus, that requires abandoning our own self-referentiality, our comforts, our certainties, and our too-rigid visions, the heavy and cumbersome structures that ‘cage Jesus and His Gospel in’ and do not permit an authentic proclamation, but only a doctrinal exposition that does not challenge real life.

We ‘go out’, we go on an ‘exodus’, almost like itinerant nomads with Jesus along the streets of the world to give everyone the ‘liberating joy of the Gospel’ that has changed us from within and changes us continually.

The initiative of ‘going out’ is not ours; it is God’s because we are called to go out and to walk according to His Word, His criteria, His dynamics, and not ours. In the Bible, *Abraham* accepts to leave and go to a new land. *Moses* is sent to lead his people out of slavery and to enter the promised land as free people. The *seventy-two disciples* are sent by Jesus in simplicity and without power. Jesus Himself is led by the Spirit to always go elsewhere, toward other towns. All are called to this missionary ‘going out’, aware that the Word we sow and proclaim has its own efficacy that goes beyond human plans and common places, to discern the road that the Lord is asking them to follow.

## ■ Ruth: courageous foreigner

Ruth is an example for all those who like her have the courage to leave their land, their home, their relatives, and follow the “sweetness” of fraternal guidance (*Naomi*) towards salvation, through

the paths of suffering and bitterness. The choice of Ruth is one of heroic fidelity and piety; her decision implies the abandonment of her own people and adhesion to a foreign people.

Ruth - whose name means “friend” - takes *Naomi’s* journey in reverse; it is not hers. She leaves her parents and all that she possesses in *Moab*, fulfilling a vow of love and faith: she is not, in fact, moved by prophetic voices, nor has she been sent by a messenger of God. She simply feels she has a mission.

Ruth is a welcoming, enterprising, and courageous woman, an untiring worker. She is poor, widowed, defenseless, and a foreigner who distinguishes herself for her merits that permit her to acquire a new citizenship and social recognition ‘*honoris causa*’.

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature” (Mc 16: 15). “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1: 8).

This is the missionary mandate that the Risen One leaves to His disciples and that is addressed to every disciple of all times.

## ■ The ‘style’ of an ‘outgoing’ Church

“Jesus went to all the cities and villages teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and curing every illness and infirmity. On seeing the crowds, He felt compassion” (Mt 9: 35-36). Look at Christ, missionary of the Father, to proclaim according to His style: a way of being, of acting, of doing in line with the Gospel He proclaims, to be credible evangelizers and to proclaim that Christ has changed our life. It is for this reason that Christ spends more time with His disciples to educate them to a life style that is simple, moderate, without power, peaceful, welcoming, compassionate, prophetic...rather than teach them the whole content of the Kerygma. Thus, we need to enter into the triple dynamic of seeing, having compassion, acting, attitudes that have distinguished the life and very mission of Jesus. **Seeing** means being attentive to what happens in the world, open to the reality that surrounds us to discover the passage of God



in History. **Having compassion** means living with heartfelt mercy, close to those who are little and needy – “As they got out of the boat, He saw the huge crowd and He felt compassion for them” (Mc 6, 34). **Acting** means igniting hope and speaking about salvation.



“Outgoing”, opening the *doors*, not only that of the Church, but the *rooms* of daily life where people come and go. The Gospel is here in the fears of the poor, in the meeting of friends who share confidences and worries, in the dialog that comes by chance.

*What does it mean for our educating communities, for each of us, to be part of an outgoing Church?*

Take the initiative, go to meet, look for those distant to offer life, solidarity, rights. Get involved, have sympathy and empathy, lower yourself, kneel, shorten the distances. Accompany patiently all the stages of situations of human life; bear the fruit of new life and take care of it. Show through your life, all the liberating and renewing energy of the Word; celebrate every step ahead in evangelization and in offering the love of God ‘to make the world more human’ (GS 40).

### ■ Proclaim, witness, serve

“We are marked by the educational charism, we identify with the predilection of Jesus for the poor and the little ones, with the attitude of the Good Shepherd, with the solicitude to listen, love, help, and serve. Christ, sent by the Father, is our model of apostolic and missionary action” (Cf. C 26).

*What is our possible mission?* Love for the Church is translated into an attitude of listening,

fidelity, and attentive service to it. Being “on the way” is expressed in openness to the needs of the Church and the world, with a missionary heart and mentality.

Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* (No. 273): “We must recognize ourselves as marked by fire for this mission of illuminating, blessing, vivifying, lifting, healing, liberating”.

And to set one’s own life as a mission one must make an effort to pass from the culture of the *ego* to the culture of *we*, deciding “in the depths of our being to be with others and for others” at the service of others. We are called to be light and blessing, life and liberation for others; following the example of Christ who “went everywhere doing good” (Acts 10:38).

### With the heart’s peripheries

The invitation to change mentality, to accomplish a pastoral conversion was one choice of GC XXIII. Rediscover the original charism of the

Founders, who were not afraid to go out to the street to proclaim the Lord; to be clothed again with

missionary ardor, with courage that does not hesitate in the face of difficulties, with tenacity in fulfilling the mission that God entrusts to each educating community. “Outside the door and along the river”, we read in the *Letter to Consecrated Persons* “**Proclaim**”. Be present in “situations of misery and oppression, of doubt and discomfort, of fear and solitude, showing that God’s tenderness has no limits”. All this requires energy, prayer, sacrifice, and firmness so that the ‘periphery’ does not remain only an abstract word but becomes daily reality in which to evaluate every moment of our vocation. *Broaden your vision, missionaries of joy and of hope*; go beyond, without fear, ready to collaborate with every person of good will so that the Word reaches to the ends of the earth, so that everyone will be guaranteed human rights and dignity; so that everyone will be free from humiliation and situations of rejection and marginalization, of prejudice, indifference, and injustice that condemn without appeal.

In practice, it is a matter of finding new ways to walk with the poor, the neediest, accompanying them in their daily lives. “*Being in the periphery helps to see and understand better*” (Pope Francis). Looking at the world from the periphery, one finds the courage to face new challenges, experimenting with different solutions and logics. The eye is called to see the peripheries and the heart to immerse itself in them: “Accept the risk of new recipients (of the Gospel), not chosen at our convenience, but exploring the new peripheries with audacity and compassion, with ever-renewed kindness” (EG No. 76).

The journey with the poor guarantees an integral and supportive humanism, is bound to non-violent action, to the context of the family today, and to renewed educational tasks. The new frontiers are geographic, cultural, social, and existential, requiring the capacity for acceptance and cordial openness to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, knowing that tribulation will not be lacking and that the struggle with evil is renewed every day. Hope is stronger. It is generative and gladly adheres to what the Spirit is doing today, even in our Institute.





### *In the educational frontiers*

Reflection on contemporary anthropology is a prophetic challenge for the whole Church. It requires intelligence, passion, intuition, and a renewed educational responsibility capable of offering spaces in which to experience the value of friendship, to form affectivity, and develop a fundamental relationship with the mystery of God. It requires finding new ways of educational convergence within the plurality of situations, to identify new bases for welcoming the faith, for human and cultural promotion, and, where conditions allow it, for the explicit proclamation of Jesus, for respect and for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

18 GC XXIII reminds us of our mission to go out to the youth outskirts. They are the poor of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello who, today as yesterday, present themselves as migrants, people looking for asylum, bread, work, dignity, and meaning for life. “The new frontiers of the mission require a change of mentality to serve the Gospel in all its freshness and power of attraction. We are called to open new ways to go to the young and *with them* to the poorest. For various reasons, we find it impossible to continue some traditional works that have been very fruitful in other times. We welcome this challenge as a providential opportunity to invent new ways of invigorating the creative force of our charism. It requires a lot of prayer to know how to interpret new challenges, discern and share not only as a community, but with other groups of the Salesian Family, of the Church, and with other religious Congregations. It is necessary to reawaken, at a personal and community level, a new passion for building of the Kingdom of God. Without passion, it is impossible to open new ways that demand audacity and the ability to risk. Our commitment is to remain faithful to the call received and to grow in love, in giving, in creativity to be today “*prophecy, closeness, hope*” (cf. Circular 965).

*How are our educating communities missionaries of the Word, ready to go out of our house and open paths of hope and of love?*





## ■ Walking

We go where the Lord goes, in whom we have our abode; according to Him, as His disciples, let us go borne by Him... The “places” where the evangelizing dynamism unfolds are the houses and streets, work, any place (EG 127). In particular, the streets and houses of others take on a decidedly dense value because they allude to the dialog that the Church of missionary disciples is called to seek and practice with the other; it is about dialog with everyone.

We return from every journey with the memory of someone, rather than something. There is a knowledge of the places through the stories of men and women encountered along the way, and the eyes of memory can more easily see the expressions of their faces rather than the beauty of so many landscapes.

And many of them become friends with whom a bond is created, to the point that the reason for other departures is the desire to come back to see them again to keep alive the passion that unites us: *da mihi animas* and *I entrust them to you!*

*“From every trip ones returns with the memory of someone, rather than something”*

## ■ Sharing the journey

The French poet, **Charles Péguy**, poetically affirms that God is not surprised so much by the faith of human beings, nor by their charity. What really fills Him with awe and emotion is the hope of the people; “That those poor children, seeing how things are going, still believe things will be better tomorrow morning”, he writes. The image of the poet recalls the faces of so many people that have left this world: farmers, poor workers, migrants searching for a better future, who tenaciously struggled notwithstanding the bitterness of today’s difficulties so full of trials, animated, however, by the trust that their children would have a more just and serene life. They struggled for their children, they struggled in hope. Hope is the urge of the heart of those who leave home, country, sometimes even family and parents – think of the migrants – to seek a better life, one that is worthier for themselves and their loved ones. It is also the urge of the heart of those who welcome them: the desire to meet each other, to know each other, to dialog...

*Walking  
we learn life,  
Walking  
we know things  
Walking  
the wounds of yesterday are healed.  
Walking  
looking at a star  
listening to a voice  
following the prints of other footsteps.  
Walking  
seeking life  
healing the wounds  
left by suffering.  
Nothing can erase the memory  
of the journey taken.*

(Rubén Blades)



Hope is the urge to ‘share the journey’, because the journey is made in two: those who come to our country and we who go toward their heart to understand them, to understand their culture, their language. It is a trip for two but without hope that trip cannot be made. Hope is the urge to share the journey of life. We must not be afraid! We must not be afraid to share hope!

*“Walk, the path is nothing but the traces of your footsteps. Walk, there is no path; the path opens as you walk”*

(Antonio Machado)

From the Circular of the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians n. 973

*Community listening to the cry of the poor*

## The choice for poor youth

According to our Founder, “There is no young person who cannot be redeemed. The condition to redeem is indicated by the ‘noble Woman in the dream at nine years of age’ to Johnny Bosco: **“Make yourself humble, strong, robust”**. Don Bosco’s predilection for poor and abandoned youth does not only come from his ability, but from the mission God had indicated to him. Through the maternal intervention of Mary, Don Bosco understood this mission. She showed him the field where he was to work, that is, poor youth. Thus, it was not the works that determined his choices, but the mission received from God, the love of predilection for poor abandoned youth left to themselves. The priority mission remains that of being signs and expressions of God’s foreseeing love for the poorest young people according to the maternal style of love that gives, shares, and lets itself be converted by the young people themselves. The pastoral conversion singled out by Pope Francis to the entire Church asks us to return to the origins of the Salesian mission to rediscover the fire of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle* that animated him and review our actual presences and choices in this light.

*Which passion moves us in our choices; which action do we take; how do we live the cetera tolle?* Our educational mission, in the style of prevention centered on relationships, directs us not only to do good to the young, but to share life with them.

Our way of educating the young must be able to transmit through life witness and words what really counts, that is, love even in little things. Happiness lies here, not in possessing and in having. Cultivating a poor heart in the young means helping them to open themselves to gratuity and to gratitude; to know how to enjoy the small joys which are spread on the human path and which we often do not notice. In a word, it means accompanying them along the lines of a humanism in solidarity able to build the civilization of love” (Mother Yvonne Reungoat).





# Accompany the return to the faith

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The current situation of the Church requires the creation of spaces in which men and women can freely access the God of Jesus Christ, accompanied in their search with a spirit of compassion and openness.

The Church itself also needs those who come from outside to become “new” and capable of “being a sign and instrument” of the Kingdom of God in today’s world. The new areas of the search for faith are not only for the proper proclamation of the Gospel, but also for renewing the often-habitual life of our communities. Experience shows that in the community, the entry of new believers has always produced openings and progress that otherwise would not have happened.

The meeting with people who question themselves, who want to start believing in Jesus and to live the ecclesial experience, challenge the educating community to take particular care of the quality of reception and listening. Often the first living contact with the Church is after years of distance and “hearsay”, and this welcome can be decisive for the journey of recovery of the “those beginning again”. The first impression often lasts long and affects every subsequent approach. We must ensure that the language is immediate and spontaneous, without complicated ties or legalisms.

The proclamation of faith, for those who start from the beginning, requires attention to language to avoid expressing itself in obsolete or incomprehensible terms for today’s culture. In the contemporary context, negative motivations (renunciations, mortifications) are no longer convincing nor is too much theoretical reasoning (we must also take into account the multiple feelings and experiences of life);

the same is for anonymous relationships in which everyone remains in their shell of indifference.

For an adult to be able to mature convinced decisions takes time; it is not enough to listen to a homily, however well done. Three or four meetings during Lent or a short course in theology or the Bible are not enough, even though led by experts and in an incisive way. If we want the Christian faith to penetrate the folds of everyday life, it is necessary to leave time for this to happen.

Time and the journey need people dedicated to this type of accompaniment.

## ■ Accompany the search

Whoever accompanies the men and women who are searching is a person of faith who looks with respect at the person and lets self be enriched by this experience, without judging the intimacy or the deep mystery. They know how to be an interlocutor, witness, and how to spend time to enter into the life of the other, living with them concrete experiences, walking beside them, with their rhythms, taking on the person and leaving them free.

It is a person who shares life in all its aspects (emotional, physical, intellectual, professional, spiritual ...), discovering in the other the positive potentials and helping them to express their desires and deep aspirations.

Accompanying an adult toward the Christian faith is amore a style than a task. More than in what is said, accompaniment is in the way it is said: at the opportune moment, using the motivations appropriate to the interlocutor, knowing well their way of feeling them and receiving them.

Accompaniment is not so much in the meetings that are conducted with clarity and efficacy (as a good animator is capable of doing), but rather and above all in the personal rapport that is established outside of the meetings, building on the search for a new relationship with Christ and with the Church.

Accompaniment is not only about the kindness with which people are treated; it is above all in the ability to help one’s interlocutor perceive the faith with the heart and to re-express it in its cultural and personal universe.

The accompaniers in making the journey to faith with someone, are also transformed: they are no longer the persons they were before. They are different because sharing and friendship have changed them.

This is also the case for a community that is committed to accompanying and is capable of it: in the exercise of accompaniment, it is transformed into something other than what it was at the beginning. In fact, every community has the concrete face of the people by which it is formed, embodying the faith and the Christian life in a particular culture, with a particular sensitivity, with a particular tone.

The accompaniment of those beginning again is a new service, asked for by the missionary situation of the ‘outgoing’ Church. Thus, the necessity to break with habitual ways and to map out new paths, establishing unusual schedules, entering into the life of the other, with kindness, asking

for hospitality in their life, into which we can bring life, learning to distinguish between the language of signs that refer to Church tradition.

*The accompanier is a friend and walks alongside, stimulating the search and indicating the steps to take together.*



It is living charity in the concreteness of daily gestures, because the charity of Christ urges us to lovingly assist every man and woman whose path we cross even if only for a moment. If the pastoral commitment today is to 'form Christians' beginning with the situation of contemporary religious fragmentation, the

educating community is asked to become 'the possible place' in which the desire to accompany is a response of the readiness to place oneself in discussion and above all, the readiness to be a 'witness companion' of a search and of an encounter: with Christ who alone saves life.



### A restless heart thirsty for the infinite

95 years and they are just barely felt. *Sister Maria Pia Giudici* remains a volcano of energy despite her age and continues to transmit to the young people and to all the people who reach San Biagio (Subiaco, Italy) enthusiasm for God and for a life lived with intensity and passion. With the other sisters of the community, she continues to offer those who arrive on the slopes of Mount Taleo simplicity, sobriety, prayer, and work. All guests, from small to large, are invited to share prayer and work with the community.

Every year about a thousand people reach San Biagio in search of silence, listening, dialog in order to have a decidedly Christian life. Many, aware or not, suffer from the continuous storm of voices, proposals, ideologies offered as commercials. Many people hear, but do not listen. In fact, listening requires the capacity for silence, waiting, welcoming other people and creatures. Sister Maria Pia often recalls that "it is impossible to live relational dynamics that allow, above all, mutual listening if people are not capable of silence, waiting, listening to themselves and their own deep spiritual experiences". This is why the aim of the community is to make every person grow, for all who come and stay for a while in San Biagio, in an atmosphere of sacredness, where beauty is firmly united with truth and goodness.



### Visayan Forum: against trafficking in human beings

*Cecilia Flores-Oebanda* is a Filipino who grew up during the turbulent years of the dictatorship of Marcos, president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. Due to her opposition to the dictatorship, she was forced to flee and hide with her husband in the mountains. Captured, then, by the military, she remained in prison for 4 years. In 1986, at the fall of the dictatorship, Cecilia and her family were finally free. She moved to Manila where in 1991, she founded *Visayan Forum* against the trafficking of human beings. The mission seeks to defend the rights of Filipino workers and combat, above all, the risk that they will fall into human trafficking, exploitation, and modern slavery. Today, the *Visayan Forum* program promotes preventive activities. Cecilia says: "Let's go to the schools to create a counter culture that teaches that material things are not everything and that dignity is more important than the promise of wealth".





# The “pearl” of love

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*“Love is patient, charity is benevolent; it is not envious, does not boast, does not swell with pride, does not lack respect, does not seek its own interest, does not get angry, does not take into account the evil received, does not enjoy injustice but rejoices in the truth. Excuses all, believes all, hopes all, bears all” (1 Cor 13: 4-7).*

These are the “pearls of love” that are lived and cultivated in the life that the spouses share every day, between themselves and with their children. Therefore, it is precious to stop to specify its meaning and to try to apply it to the concrete existence of every family.

## ■ Charity is not envious

Frustration, inability to bear one’s own limitations can lead one to desire that the other person also undergo our trials and envy our successes. This shows that we are not interested in their happiness, or rather we are saddened, because we are focused on our well-being. Envy condemns us “to live with little joy, since, as Jesus said, “we are more blessed in giving than in receiving”” (Acts 20:35). On the other hand, love does not regret the good of the other (Acts 7: 9, 17.5), indeed it “leads us to a sincere appreciation of every human being, recognizing their right to happiness” (AL 96). The family is the place where one learns to share the joy of others (AL 110) and to accept that each one must make their own way” (Eph 2:19).

## ■ Charity does not lack respect, does not get angry

Motions of pride, outbursts of anger, lead to lashing out against the “guilty” one. For a good marriage it is essential to learn to control the escalation of anger and transform it into civil and constructive confrontation. It is one thing to feel the force of aggression that erupts in the face of an offense and another is to consent to anger and let it dominate us. Anger “only makes us sick and ends up isolating us. Indignation is healthy when it leads us to react to a serious injustice, but it is harmful when it tends to impregnate all our attitudes towards others” (AL 103). Those who love strive to address the other with delicacy so as not to hurt them: “entering the life of the other, even when it is part of our life, calls for the delicacy of a non-invasive attitude, which renews trust and respect [...] love, the more intimate and deep it is, the more it demands respect for freedom and the ability to wait for the other to open the door of their heart”. The spouses should do everything to make themselves lovable, because love “does not work roughly. Its ways, words, gestures, are pleasant. It hates making others suffer” (AL 99).

## ■ Possible forgiveness

Wise prevention can avoid the unnecessary suffering of quarrels, of days and days of deafening silence, of long faces, of more or less low blows. How can faith with the covenant of love be kept without taking forgiveness into account? We

do not refer only to possible betrayals; just a misunderstanding because small quarrels explode daily, and we arrive at incommunicability. We must learn to make peace, but how? “Get on my knees? No! Just a small gesture, and the family harmony returns. Just a caress,

without words” (AL 104). To avoid the pitfalls of a confused forgiveness too quickly given with oblivion one must create the conditions of inner availability that prevent the word or gesture of reconciliation from appearing as a purely muscular effort. We must also find the right moment to give the floor and listen to the other to clarify the different points of view, since love exceeds justice, but does not replace it. Otherwise it would be what Jankélévitch called the “forgetful forgiveness”, the fruit of levity and indifference.

Who forgives self knows how to forgive: “So many times our mistakes, or the critical gaze of the people we love, made us lose our affection for ourselves ... We need to forgive ourselves, in order to have this same attitude towards others” (AL 107). Forgiveness demands humility: “The logic of Christian love is not that one feels superior to others and needs to make them feel their power, but that “whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant”, Mt 20: 27 (AL 98). This advice is also valid for the family:

*“Put on humility with each other, because God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”, 1 Pet 5: 5 (AL 98).*

Forgiveness is above all the fruit of grace that leads us to overcome the analysis of rights and wrongs and rekindles spent love, turning us into protagonists of regeneration of life. The life of the couple is warmed, saved by the eruption of the flow of gratuity, which transfigures the wounds into resources of deeper bonds.

## ■ Charity excuses everything

To excuse everything means “keeping silence” about the negative of the other person, limiting judgment, containing the inclination to launch condemnations: “Do not condemn and you will not be condemned” (Lk 6:37). “Do not smite one another” (Jas 4:11). “Stopping from damaging the

For further information: *Catechesis* (13 May 2015): *L’Osservatore Romano*, May 14, 2015, p. 8; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 114, a. 2, ad 1 and AL 99.

For further information: Giulia Paola DI NICOLA and Attilio DANESE, *Pardon for... gift. As a resource for society and the family*, Effatà, Torino 2006.





image of the other is a way to strengthen one's own, to dispel grudges and envies without paying attention to the damage we cause. Many times, we forget that defamation can be a great sin, a serious offense to God, when it seriously affects the good reputation of others by causing them very difficult damages to repair" (AL 112). Hence the recommendation to the spouses to speak well of each other. "Spouses who love and belong to each other, speak well of each other, try to show the good side of their spouse beyond their weaknesses and mistakes. In any case, they maintain silence so as not to damage their image. We can easily accept that we are all a complex combination of light and shadows. I do not expect love to be perfect to appreciate it. We love each other as we are now, with our limitations, but the fact that love is imperfect does not mean that it is false or that it is not real. It is real, but limited and earthly and neither can be expected to play the role of a divine being nor be at the service of all of each other's needs. Love coexists with imperfection, excuse, and knows how to be silent in front of the limits of the person loved" (AL 113).

#### ■ Trusts (believes all)

Conjugal reciprocity: "makes a relationship of freedom possible. There is no need to control the other, to follow steps minutely, to avoid it escaping from our arms. Love renounces control, makes spaces of autonomy possible, openness to the world, and new experiences, allows the relationship to be enriched. In this way the spouses, finding themselves, can live the joy of sharing what they have received and learned outside the family circle. At the same time, it makes sincerity and



transparency possible, because when one knows that one is trusted and appreciated for their basic goodness, then they show themselves as they are, without concealment" (AL 115).

#### ■ Bears all

Love marries with the adverb 'despite'. To put it in the words of Pope Francis: "Sometimes I admire the attitude of people who had to separate themselves from their spouse to protect themselves from physical violence, and yet, because of conjugal charity that knows how to go beyond feelings, they have been able to act for their good, although through others, in times of illness, suffering or difficulty" (AL 119). You cannot expect everyone to face difficult situations with the same weapons and know how to overcome them. The relationship with suffering is personal and mysterious, requires assent in the secret of the soul, which cannot be delegated to others. Its beauty is perceived from above when you see the embroidery of the whole and you are able to value the good fruits of suffering.

#### ■ Hopes everything

Those who love always hope that the other can improve: "that it is possible to mature, that the most hidden potentials of its being will germinate one day, that God writes straight on crooked lines and draws some good from the evils that can be overcome on this earth" (AL 116). Love hopes that "The darkness will be defeated" and sees from heaven the other: "completely transformed by the resurrection of Christ; their fragilities, darkness or pathologies will no longer exist. There, the authentic being of that person will shine with all its power of good and beauty" and we will be able "to wait for that fullness that one day will be received in the celestial Kingdom, although now it is not visible" (AL 117).



# Work and Family

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The need to affirm “the irreplaceable role of women in the family and in the education of children”, as well as “the essential contribution of working women to the construction of economic and political structures rich in humanity”, is a preoccupation that Pope Francis has often highlighted together with his invitation and to identify “concrete suggestions and positive models to harmonize work commitments and family needs” in the contemporary context often characterized by an irreconcilable dichotomy between family life and work organization.

The Holy Father wanted to bring to light the need to leave behind a mentality of ‘either/or’ that places work and family in opposition in order to embrace that of the ‘and/and’ aimed at joining the two areas: “*Why is it assumed that women have to earn less than men? No! They have the same rights. Disparity is a real scandal*”.

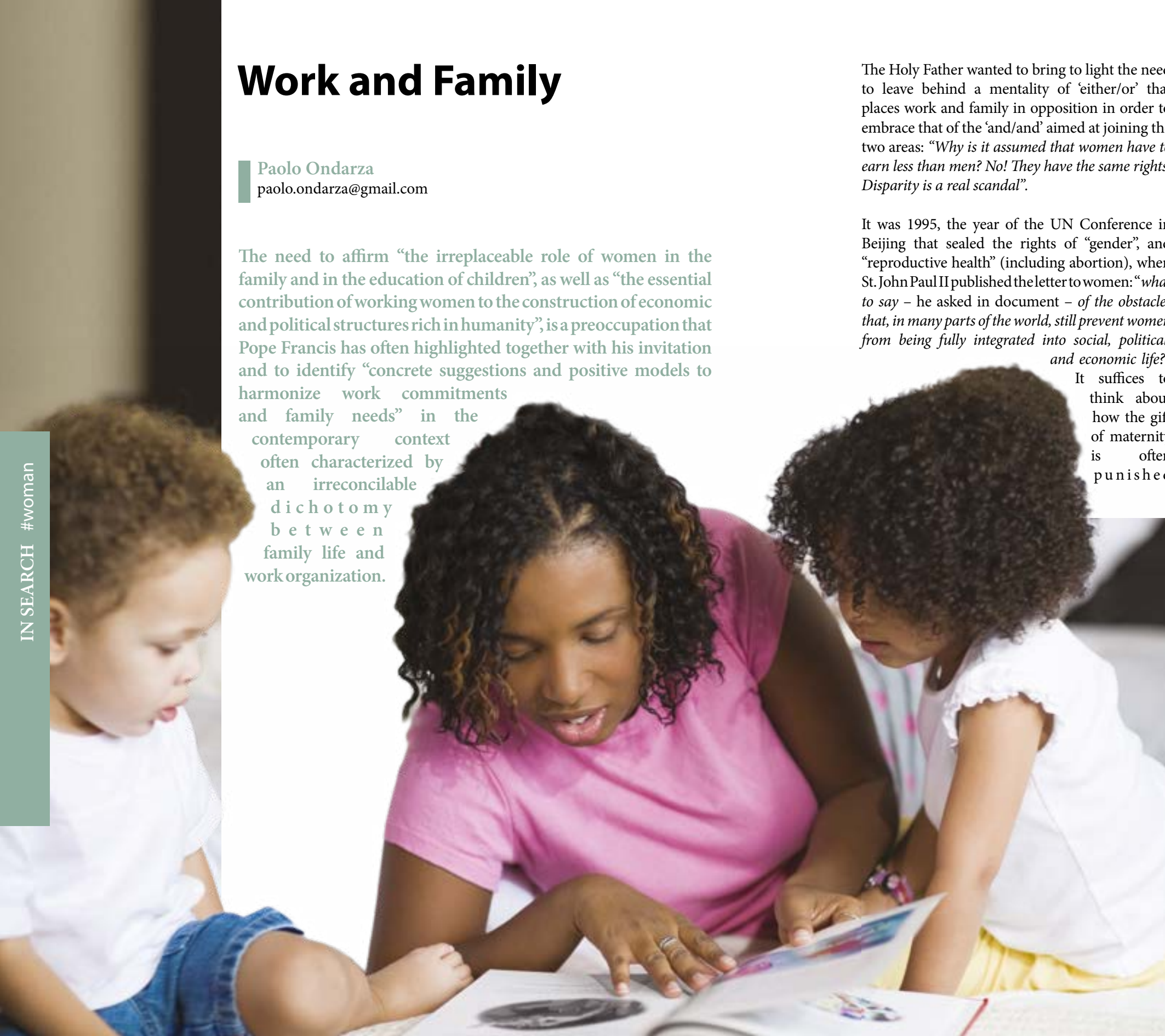
It was 1995, the year of the UN Conference in Beijing that sealed the rights of “gender”, and “reproductive health” (including abortion), when St. John Paul II published the letter to women: “*what to say – he asked in document – of the obstacles that, in many parts of the world, still prevent women from being fully integrated into social, political, and economic life?*”

It suffices to think about how the gift of maternity is often punished

rather than rewarded, even though we owe humanity and even survival to it. Certainly, there is still much more to be done so that being a woman and a mother does not lead to discrimination. It is urgent to obtain everywhere an *effective equality* of the rights of the person and therefore, equal pay for equal work, protection of the worker-mother, fair progression in career, equality between spouses in family law, recognition of everything related to the rights and duties of the citizen in a democratic regime”.

Although in the last twenty years there have been declarations of commitment by national governments and significant progress has been made in several countries, much remains to be done. On a global level, the salaries of women are lower than those of men, despite the workload being proportionately reversed. In the rich countries, the female unemployment rate is higher than the male one, and the average wage is lower. In fact, most female workers are concentrated in lower paying and more precarious jobs. 65-90% of part-time contracts are held by women. In the South of the world, women suffer a greater workload than men and often have to give up education. 60% of the agricultural labor force in the majority of African countries is represented by the female sex. The real sex market remains a global issue: more and more women who have immigrated to the West with the mirage of a better life, end up as slaves of trafficking. This blatant sexual discrimination clashes with the demonstrated entrepreneurial ability of women: microcredit initiatives tend to favor women’s activities. As for the maternity factor, for example in Italy, 30% of women, when they become mothers, interrupt their work because they are forced to bear excessive family duties, compared to 3% of fathers. According to the Family Forum in Italy, a country with sub-zero births, having a child is one of the first causes of poverty. The specifically female abilities, especially motherhood - wrote Francesco in *Amoris Laetitia* - confer “duties, because being a woman also involves a unique mission on this earth, which society must protect and preserve for the good of all”.

“Today we recognize as fully legitimate, and even desirable, that women want to study, work, develop





their skills, and have goals. At the same time, we cannot ignore the need for children to have a mother's presence, especially in the first years of life. The truth is that the woman stands before the man as a mother, and from her, the world is born". *How to keep family and work together?* Responds **Adele Ercolano**, creator and manager of the first European Masters in "Reconciliation Family and Work" at the Pontifical Queen of Apostles University:

"The reconciliation of family and work is a question that concerns everyone, both women and men, even if in several countries, including Italy, it still has an almost exclusively female connotation. It is still women who request and benefit from reconciliation policies such as part-time work. Despite almost thirty years of conciliation policies, in which much has been done, it is possible for women today to conciliate, but it is by no means a foregone conclusion. Many critical issues remain to be overcome: a work organization based on timetables that are often too rigid and that absorb people's lives and which are not adapted to the needs of family life; the lack of adequate and accessible services and timetables for all families".

***In which parts of the world it is easier to be a worker and a mother. Where is it harder?***

"It is easier to be a mother in those countries where there are policies to support motherhood, parenting, and general family policies. Countries like Denmark, Holland, Germany, and France are certainly more mother-friendly. In fact, in these States the demographic rate is quite high when compared with Italy, where we have the phenomenon of empty cradles. Among the Western countries where it is not easy to be a working mother, contrary to what one thinks, there is the United States, where mothers are given a few weeks of maternity leave and very few subsidies".

***The female salary remains lower than the male one. What are the causes of this "scandal", as Pope Francis called it?***

"Pope Francis is right to define the low wages of

women as a scandal; women are great workers and discrimination is something unacceptable. The reasons for the *gender pay gap* are many, in my opinion the principle cause has cultural roots. For example, think of typically female professions such as teachers, nurses, or caregivers: these are jobs associated with more modest salaries simply because they are traditionally feminine. Instead, we should recognize the high human and social value of this work, enhancing them in economic terms".

***In the letter to women, St. John Paul II highlighted how detrimental it was for a woman worker to become a mother. Has the situation changed since the time of the pink quotas and the battles for gender equality?***

"The years do not pass in vain; fortunately, there are changes: virtuous realities are on the increase and in general there is a greater awareness not only by women but also by the corporate culture, both in Italy and globally. There is still much to be done, but change is taking place and it is also visible".

***Often the woman, even in the workplace, is confined to roles that degrade her dignity and body (advertising, sex market...). What is being done globally to protect the dignity of these women?***

"While on the one hand there is growing awareness in monitoring the respectful representation of the image of women in the media and in advertising (there are several initiatives undertaken in this regard), certainly it still happens today to see advertisements or TV programs harmful to the image of the woman in different countries. It is a very complex issue, which requires a commitment and a strong sense of responsibility towards everyone, especially the younger generation, by those who manage, create, and produce multimedia communication products. For there to be a culture of respect, we must create awareness of the power of the media and its consequences.

An extremely complex and dramatic issue concerns the commercialization of the body, the

enslavement of women, on which instead there is very little awareness, very few political initiatives, and on which it is above all the religious who take action all over the world to protect and restore dignity to women who are victims of this terrible violence".

***On the educational level, what proposals should be made to rethink the relationship between women and work?***

"I mention one. The 2016 Institute of Higher Studies on Women launched the *Value@Work*

*project, the Person at the Center*, a group for the sharing and reorganization of the world of work, promoted in collaboration with the Fidelis Institute of Social and Economic Ethics, both of the Pontifical University Queen of Apostles, made up of an interdisciplinary team of academics, representatives of institutions, companies, and industry associations, to promote an organizational culture that is family-friendly, responsible for guiding and measuring every economic, political, and social dynamic".





# Journeying with the young FMA

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The Institute, in the Church, in the diversity of the expressions of Consecrated Life, lives a favorable season, inhabits a time and a space full of opportunities and resources, at the same time complex and fragmented. A dynamic dwelling in the search for ways through which to accompany young people called to follow Christ in an unconditional service to young people, especially to the poorest.

Today, the mystical and prophetic dimension that characterizes Consecrated Life in the Church and in society impels us to follow the steps of Jesus, to assume His sentiments, to communicate, to reveal, to make present in daily life the story of God's foreseeing and merciful love; to announce with the young people the Good News of the Gospel, to give signs for the poorest, to always be 'outgoing' towards the geographical and existential peripheries, as missionaries of hope and joy. All this is not to be taken for granted. It requires a constant and decisive start of the journey, guided by tailor-made formation itineraries, in

fidelity to the person "called", to the Gospel, to the Charism, to the socio-cultural context inhabited. Formation is a handicraft work that takes place in an 'itinerant' shop where, in docility to the Spirit and accompanied by mediations, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are shaped and formed in every formative stage and in all the ages of life. What today calls to the Institute is the challenge of the formation of the new generations and especially in the last decades, the accompaniment of the Temporary Professed in their insertion in community on mission, a privileged place for the progressive construction of the identity of the Daughters of

Mary Help of Christians. To form educators capable of 'awakening the world' who, by living fidelity, give reason for the joy that dwells in them, become witness, proclamation, closeness, expressing in this way the pastoral charity proper to the Salesian charism.

They are young people who have chosen to consecrate themselves to God in our religious family, living the beauty of a life that, before being 'commitment', is, above all, a gift of love and happiness.

Reflection on the **Temporary Profession** is a strategic choice for the development of the charism, because it is enriched by the creative contribution of the new generations of FMA. In this way, the vocational growth of each sister is encouraged, and new paths are opened to respond boldly to the appeals of the youth world, in fidelity to the dream of God and of the Founders, St. John Bosco and Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello.

This initial journey, in fact, lays the foundation for ongoing formation to be, not only possible, but also desired, sought, cared for, loved.

## ■ The steps of the process

Starting this reflection process on the period of Temporary Vows has aroused great expectations: all, and especially the Temporary Professed, await clear and well-founded guidelines that will help them to grow in their vocational identity, to enhance the mystagogical and missionary dimension of the communities so that testimony is contagious and they will experience amazement and gratuitousness in the encounter with what is new and different. The criteria that guided the reflection from the beginning were those of listening to reality, of involvement, of participation, of intercongregational and intercultural comparison, in creative fidelity to the charism, to the Magisterium of the Church and of the Institute. A single and great certainty has animated and

guided the various steps in the process: The Holy Spirit will not fail to give His light and His guidance to offer formation that meets the needs of today.

## ■ Do what He tells you

Listening to the experience of the Temporary Professed, the formation communities, and the formators by means of questionnaires has allowed us to broaden our gaze on the reality of Temporary Vows world-wide. It confronted us with a reality bearing signs of life and at the same time of labor, of an 'already and not yet' that expresses the joy and commitment of going towards the progressive consolidation of the FMA identity.

The biblical text of Mary at Cana (Jn 2: 1-11), has been identified as the inspiring icon of the mystagogical mission of the formator, of openness to the Spirit, and of the docility of the Temporary Professed on the journey towards the total gift of self to God in the sequela of Christ, of the involvement and the prevenient attention of the community that joyfully celebrates the feast generated by the transformation

of water into wine.

The text of the Guidelines proposes for the attention of all the experiences of the Temporary Professed, the communities, and the formators, the provocations, the convictions, and the choices to be privileged. Between the lines emerge some dreams that the young FMA carry within them, which would become more and more a reality in personal life and in educating communities, even if, sometimes, they are not able to express it adequately.



Guidelines for the formation stage of Temporary Profession, FMA INSTITUTE - Rome, 2017.

## ■ The dreams

Many are the dreams, and many are the situations that live in us, in the communities, in the mission, and in the various contexts.

- *Live fully the Covenant of love with the Lord in such a way as to fill their whole life with happiness, placing*





Christ affectively and effectively at the center and integrating in Him, all the dimensions of their life, in the one passion for God and for the young.

- *Be communities in the state of ongoing formation*, mystical and prophetic communities in which the values of the Gospel and the spirit of Mornese are lived. Communities in which all the sisters feel they are disciples on a journey, involved in the formation process, respectful of the growth rhythm of each person.

- *Build communities that are simple and agile, open to be intercultural, intergenerational, Intercongregational*, happy in living the Salesian vocation; that weave deep interpersonal relationships, experience reciprocal accompaniment, capable of risking with the passion of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*.

- *Be poor communities for the poor, reaching out to the existential peripheries of the community itself and of the educational mission*, able to make courageous choices of austerity, rejection of the logic of waste and the dynamics of consumerism. The totality of belonging to Christ can become the welcoming place for all of humanity.

- *Experience the joy of an effectively shared mission*: open space for personal, institutional, and virtual relationships, broaden the mind and the heart, guide the capacity for joyful abnegation toward what is relationship, communication, accompaniment, collaboration,

and communion for a more fruitful mission. Assume co-responsibly the challenge of journeying together – laity, religious, young people.

- *Feel heirs of the dreams of our Founders, of the sisters* who preceded us and who had the courage to dream big, to be able to prophesize today and keep alive what had inflamed their heart one day. Be from generation to generation, the memory and prophecy of God's foreseeing Love among the young.

The Guidelines were inspired by attentive and respectful listening, in constant dialog with the journey of Consecrated Life today, by the requirements of the Charism, and of the formation experience of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

### ■ New paths of hope and of prophecy

By welcoming answers, reflections, suggestions, we lived a true experience of the Holy Spirit; we felt in some way inhabited by the life of so many sisters and communities who with their confidence and evangelical paresis shared with us their experience on the formative stage of Temporary Vows. We all got involved as a family preparing for a daughter's wedding party! Mary at Cana continues to accompany us in the vital assumption of these Guidelines, in accepting the invitation: *Do what He tells you*. The new wine of joy does never

stops cheering our fraternal table. It is enriched by the new wine of young sisters who offer communities the prophetic novelty of the joyful and sparkling proclamation of the Gospel. The Guidelines are indications that the Institute gives to all the Provinces, the communities, the Temporary Professed, to offer an authoritative proposal for discernment and revision of the formative stage of the Temporary Vows.

The Formation Plan '*Rooted in the Covenant*', remains the reference document, both in its global approach and in reference to the indications on the specific stage of Temporary Vows. The Guidelines deepen some aspects that today require special attention and care.

Each Province is called to inculturate them, actualizing them in their own reality, and integrating them with further contributions from the formators, the Temporary Professed, and each sister of the Province.

The Guidelines will certainly inspire, with the power of the Spirit, new paths of hope and prophecy that will recreate renewed "Covenants of love"

DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *Rooted in the Covenant. Formation Plan of the FMA, Turin, LDC 2000.*

involving everyone, especially the young, in the abundance of the banquet and the joy of the feast. Mary, woman of the good wine, guides us and renews the feast of the Covenant with us.

# The power of witness

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**WYD in Krakow, a strong and moving experience for thousands of young people from all over the world. "Go against the current. Do not bury the talents, the gifts God has given you. Do not be afraid to dream big things. Young people remember, life must be put into play for great ideals. The real WYD begins now!" (Pope Francis).**

"Today I have to stop at your house". The WYD begins today and continues tomorrow, at home, because it is there that Jesus wants to meet the young. The Lord does not want to be alone in the beautiful city of Krakow or in dear memories, He wants to come to your home, to live your everyday life: study and the first years of work, friendships and affections, projects and dreams. He wants His Word to speak to your every day, to have His Gospel become yours, and to be your "navigator" on the roads of life.

### ■ Communion in God

"I found in this experience great strength that remained even when I returned home; even when the routine is resumed, the faith that somehow I have strengthened has not been erased. What I have tried most of all and has accompanied me to Krakow among thousands and thousands of young people, nations, and different languages, was the

*I believe in the sun even when it isn't shining; I believe in love even when I do not feel it; I believe in God even when He is silent.*

communion that was between all of us, among the people and groups that were there and with whom we have been together a long or a short time, with whom we sang on the train, tram, bus, road, over bridges and on lawns. What struck me immediately was that it was not the kindness or the attempt to fraternize to unite everyone, but we felt a profound communion, even in greeting one among the thousands of people who passed by and that we surely would not see again. We felt God among us who united and governed everything, bringing us a great

flow of joy and love from one person to another. "Lord, I thank you because you love me;

*I'm sure you love me; let me fall in love with my life". Not of my defects, which are to be corrected, of life, which is a great gift: it is time to love and be loved"* (Pope Francis). This is the phrase that I continue to carry in my heart".

### ■ The true meaning of life

"I could see how my fears and uncertainties do not belong only to me, but to all the young





people who wonder what the true meaning of their life is. Many times, we do not feel loved, accepted, we do not find our place in the world and this hurts us; we need a momentum, a background symphony from which to start to build ourselves. God gives us a great opportunity to change the world and makes us understand

that we are *“Go through the streets following the madness of our God”* (Pope Francis) doing so, that we can

change things. I share the Pope’s message, because I myself have had moments of despair, of temptations and laziness - and it can still happen - like the “sofa-happiness”. I was very happy in my stay in Poland: the dimension of hospitality, the courtesy of the people, the beauty of small daily gestures made me recover the sense and the beauty of simplicity. I have made new acquaintances, I have seen people of every nation and I have understood how beautiful it is to be part of a great reality that is the Church.

I am a young university student with many doubts, many expectations and hopes. Pope Francis encouraged me, gave me the strength

to go forward, despite the difficulties and the sofa that is always there, ready to welcome me to make myself immobile. To all my peers and myself I say to think that many years

ago the young Karol Wojtyla asked the same questions that we ask ourselves today, on the sense of the world and on our place in it”.

### ■ The world at Krakow

“The WYD of Krakow is lived in the name of internationality and interculturality. The youth of the planet, all the continents together, found

themselves at one moment as one person in the country of John Paul II. Yes, the world met in Cracow, an indescribable energy in Europe without frontiers. The young people of the whole world were joking, singing, having fun together in an atmosphere and with an unparalleled energy. I think of Blonia: it was fantastic. The whole world was fraternal. We exchanged personal items (bracelets, flags ...) in a unique joy. We felt part of the same family, despite the different nationalities. The Polish families were exceptionally hospitable. Our friend, the young friend of Pope Francis, spoke to all young people.

I remember that during the Vigil at the *Campus Misericordia* I met at four in the morning with Canadians, Africans, Europeans, Asians. In Krakow I was able to touch international law in its practical dimension”.

### ■ I count on you!

“Today’s world needs young people who believe that life offers them a mission; who do not get tired of witnessing with their lives the love of Christ. Pope Francis, in the prayer vigil on the eve of the Roman diocesan WYD, the young people of Rome and Lazio spoke about the upcoming Synod of Bishops on young people and said: “From Krakow to Panama. But, in the middle of the Synod, a Synod from which no young person should feel excluded. But, let’s do the Synod for young Catholics? No. The Synod is the Synod *with* and *for* all young people! The young are the protagonists. Even young people who feel agnostic, who have lukewarm faith? Yes, even young people who are far from the Church. This is the Synod of young people and we all want to hear from each other. Every young person has something to say to others, has something to say to adults, has something to say to priests, nuns, Bishops and the Pope. We all need to hear you!”

The Church needs the young. The Church, the world will change if we walk together, with and for the young. “*We want to start from your life and we ask you to help us to re-think the Church together, because you are the Church, not only of the future, but of today. Then...I rely on you! I need your contribution! Are you with me?*”.

# Leadership and circularity

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*The need for authoritative and loving leadership, among male and female religious, starts from the assumption that the people who live within the community organization are human beings and because they express themselves to the best of themselves, love and charity are necessary, which flow from mutual respect and understanding. The way in which the superior or animator of a community perceives the members of the community, on the ability to listen to their needs, the clarity with which they affirm their authority, are elements that influence both those who exercise authority and those who participate with their own resources for the common growth of the group.*

The superior is required to have a minimum of skills to lead a religious community, necessary and important skills for themselves and for the others. Those who can tolerate the frustrations that can arise in the community, listen to the sisters who present themselves to her, intervene without being invasive, solicit the recognition and use of personal resources, is certainly a person who exercises the service of authority with competence or, at least, is a person who seeks to





refine her abilities. It has been amply confirmed by social psychology that a competent leader or, one that grows in her competence, is well received within the group and the group itself facilitates her journey toward the increase of her abilities.

### ■ Leadership and interpersonal relationships

The relationships that exist between community superiors and group members are vital for the development of healthy leadership. Today the focus is increasingly centered on relational behaviors that base effective and structuring leadership for people and their goals. Moreover, the centrality of relationships helps the group to direct itself, with the mediation of the leader, to the contents that are part of the common project. People meet, clash, talk, plan together and in all of this authority influences, not so much by the rules it dictates, but rather by its reassuring and perspective presence that allows the group to give meaning to the various actions performed in everyday life. The dynamics of a group include the development of transactions that people weave together and that represent the relational language with which they express their intentions, their expectations, their joys, their needs, and their personal interests. Participating in this laboratory of relationships means, for the superior, being aware of the relational events of her community, for which she proposes herself as a constant and empathetic reference figure. Faced with the diversity of interpersonal situations, the leader has the task of facilitating collaboration between people living in the community through a proactive awareness of the various positions, with the intent of helping the group to grow in a coordinated way towards the objectives shared. Effective leadership requires both specific interpersonal and structural skills, as well as a clear response of awareness and contact with the different situations present in the community. Otherwise, when this balance between structure and relationships is missing, there is the risk of having a sort of separation between the rules and the real experiences of

the group: the superior expects people to obey; they probably do, but their heart and their mind lie elsewhere. This is why, in the phase of the organization of the community group, it is fundamental that communication of the relational contents is real and corresponds to what actually happens in community relations, since the interpersonal dynamics are directly related to the psychological processes that people live in the common platform represented by common life.

If then in the community, the contents are not conveyed in a meaningful way for the group, so that people can effectively take part in the meaning of what is proposed by authority for the common good - and not only on the cognitive level but also on the emotional level - the progressive disaffection may become a lack of motivation to participate in the proposed initiatives.

The leader must then consider the events that happen in the community according to the significance they have for the group and participate with her characteristics, with her strengths and her defects, in the events of the fraternity. To make this commitment fruitful, it is necessary that she be continuously involved in re-evaluating her own potentialities and the resources of others, starting from the concrete situations that all live in community, to really build that community "we" which is an inexhaustible source of fraternal communion, founded on communion in Christ Jesus.

In order to achieve this, it is essential that the people proposed to lead the communities are able to perceive the interpersonal dynamics made of actions and reciprocal reactions, to detect potential resources present in themselves and in others and to evaluate the behavior to adopt to arrive at authentic cooperative models of *leadership*. The task is to promote awareness of what is lived in the community, facilitating the development of personal and interpersonal potential, so that everyone is actively involved in managing the different situations that characterize common life.

### ■ Enable ourselves for circularity

Authority operative of unity is one that is concerned with creating the favorable climate for sharing and co-responsibility, which arouses the contribution of all to the things of all, which encourages the sisters to take responsibility and are able to respect them. The authority of the superior is therefore exercised because the religious house is not simply a place of residence, an agglomeration of subjects, each of whom leads an individual story, but a fraternal community. The exercise of new forms of organization and coordination of religious life, which start with

greater circularity, promotes greater active and plural participation and listening to all the voices, taking into consideration the opinions

Giuseppe CREA, *Authority and interpersonal dynamics in consecrated life*, in *Consecration and Service* - October 2003.

Cleusa ANDREATTA e Susana Maria ROCCA, *Circularity and the diverse ways of exercising power* (Humanitas Institute UNISINOS - Brazil).

of a greater number of members. It implies a creative journey of constructing processes of discernment, in certain aspects and practices, thus guaranteeing greater participation and co-responsibility in reflection and in decisions.





# New scenarios and forms of presence

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In previous issues, we have reflected on methods and communication strategies that can be considered by the provinces, schools, formation and promotion centers, family homes, and any other work that intends to “present itself outside” and keep in touch with the territory. We let ourselves be guided by some questions: *Is there a link between communication and organization? How to manage communication inside and outside our works? Which channels and strategies can we use to effectively inform, make ourselves known, and be effective in the territory?*

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COMMUNICATE



## ■ Communication for consecrated life

The Congregations and Religious Institutes use communication for the evangelizing mission, according to their own charisms, to proclaim Jesus to the world with the languages and forms of today. Mother Tecla Merlo, founder together with Fr. Alberione, of the Daughters of St. Paul, wrote one day that she wanted to have “a thousand lives for the Gospel”. Therefore, not used as an end in itself, but rather channels to make known one’s own identity, one’s own values. A service, therefore, to the Church and to the person, to the world and, for us Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to the young. Our religious families, like the Church, are *subjects of communication*. They have the right to communicate, inform, and disseminate messages and ideas like many other public and private institutions. At the same time, they are the *object of communication*, because often the activities, the positions taken, the works are the subject of information disseminated through the different and varied channels of communication.

It is therefore necessary to offer true and appropriate information to the professionals in communication who are responsible for informing about the Church and the religious world. As well as “offering a contribution proposing a reflection on the causes, the logic, and the consequences of misinformation in the media and helping to promote professional journalism, which always seeks the truth, a journalism of peace that promotes understanding between people”. This is what we read in the note issued by the Secretariat for Communication in announcing the theme that Pope Francis chose for the 52nd World Communications Day 2018: “*Truth will make you free*” (Jn 8:32). *False news and peace journalism*.

The Institute of the FMA, like many other Congregations, has committed itself throughout history to an organic and organized presence of the media in the Net. It is not always easy: the

*“Communication takes place when, in addition to the message, there is also a supplement of soul”*  
(Henry Bergson)

*“We cannot expect things to change if we keep doing the same things”*  
(Albert Einstein)

management of communication, if it wants to be a quality message, requires adequate planning and a strategy of constant presence and professionalism. Much remains to be done, especially to be studied to be present in the digital continent, just thinking about the breadth of forms and languages that has reached the spread of the Internet. Just think of the different social networks and the multiple platforms for instant communication. It is there that we are called to promote evangelization through a personal, community, and institutional witness, guaranteeing professionalism and quality in the content, explaining and arguing the identity, the spiritual message, and public activity, in accordance with the information needs of the moment.

## ■ The digital square

Institutional communication cannot be separated from digital technologies. The web, in particular, is the most used channel. We could take an example from the Public Administration that, for the provision of institutional services, is gradually transforming sites and information portals into real “virtual counters”, a point of welcome and access for a much larger and more diversified number of users than of any other traditional counter. The goal is to refine the offer more and more and to provide the citizen with contents and tools to respond to requests, establishing an inclusive dialog. In this way, the “recipients” are no longer understood as passive users, but rather as interlocutors, co-protagonists of a continuous dialogic communicative process.

## ■ Seven steps to communicate

Sites, portals, news, videos, social media, newsletters, blogs, platforms... the channels and tools to focus on are many. It is important to clarify, before planning, “*who and what do we want to communicate?*”. From this, starts a delicate operation of image (content + form) that needs some elements: *Screen Design, Content,*

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*Accessibility, Navigation, Media Use, Interactivity, Consistency.*

*Screen Design* is the graphic aspect, the management of spaces, the use of colors, the choice of the font, and the ease of reading the text.

*Content* is about word processing, with a focus on language that must be simple and effective. Check and update information, highlight deadlines, and update dates, monitor accesses, needs, and satisfaction of recipients, evaluate any revisions in the IT architecture, are all activities that must be regularly accounted for.

*Accessibility*, the ability to provide services and furnish information accessible to

everyone, even by those who, due to disability, need special technologies or configurations.

*Navigation* is the imperative to set up facilitated routes, an architecture of contents that is functional for the purpose of communication, with practical tools that open to links, connections, multimedia.

*Media Use*, is the use of animations and the management of multimedia contents: graphic elements, photo galleries, recordings and direct radio or video. The goal remains the integration in a single environment of content in different digital formats.

*Interactivity*, to activate interaction channels, express

opinions, obtain clarifications or further in-depth information.

And let's go back to the beginning. Communicating an institution, a group, an organization, even using marketing and advertising techniques to defend values, organize religious events or propose ideas, requires that the genuine sense of *communication* be safeguarded, the bidirectional osmosis where "Only the one who receives and participates communicates, who is able to exchange the gift (*munus*) received with a sense of sacred gratitude". Because, as Henry Bergson said, "*communication takes place when, in addition to the message, there is also a supplement of soul*".

## Aging gracefully... a lovely journey!

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"Grow old along with me, / The best is yet to be, / the last of life, / for which the first was made." These are the words Robert Browning puts on the lips of Rabbi ben Ezra in the poem of the same name which we can use to comment on two films on the stage of life called old age.

In "*Ella & John*" of Paolo Virzì, old age is spoken of with irony, tenderness, and emotion. "*Our Souls at Night*" of Ritesh Batra (*The Lunchbox*) confronts the theme of senile solitude with detachment, without pietism or dramatic forcing. Both films are an attempt to change the picture in the narration of old age, thus freeing us from the idea that it is impossible 'love each other as adults'.

"*Ella & John*" ("*The Leisure Seeker*"), deals with the novel "*A Trip Against the Traffic*" of Michael Zadoorian, and is the translation of a road movie of Paul Virzì, an Italian Director who, respectful of the setting in the United States, makes it a universal film.

Helen Mirren and Donald Sutherland magnificently interpret Ella and John, an elderly couple who decide to take one last trip together, without telling anyone, and, in spite of their advanced age and perhaps imminent death, continue to love each other. It is a film that does not slide into the usual rhetoric overflowing with mawkish and pathetic sentimentalism. The Tuscan Director, already





renowned for “*Crazy Joy*” (presented in the section Quinzaine des Réalisateurs of the Cannes Festival of 2016) knew how to transform a senile and inane idea into an ambitious film able to be narrated with deep sentiment.

In fact, in Virzi, as a critic writes, “*there is nothing you cannot laugh at and the comedy is never synonymous with the ridiculous, rather, every weakness and every comical problem brings more empathy for the personages, giving them a fragile humanity that ennobles them, drawing them close to us, instead of turning them into clowns.*”

How not to be fascinated by **John**. A professor of literature fond of Hemingway who is now losing his memory and is more and more absent-minded and not self-sufficient. He fills his lapses with memories, pages of literature, and knows how to create an incredible feeling with anyone who listens to him thanks to his very open, curious, and unpredictable mind.

And by **Ella**, totally different, light, and at the same time, keen and snappy despite her age. Determined, lovingly stubborn, fabulously impermeable to every rule because with a moving tenacity, she goes straight to her goal: bring her husband with whom she is still in love, on a last great trip. And she does it to flee the apprehensions of the doctors and of their children, going

against the tide, but never against her heart, amid the thousand difficulties that do not frighten her. It is a splendid film about illness, about what it means to love each other even when there is only one head that is still functioning in the couple, but the hearts are still there and beat for each other with the extraordinary capacity to bear the burden of the one that is slowing down. Looking at them, there is laughter and tears, thanks to the skill of the writers who knew how to translate the book from which the story is taken, as movies know how to do. Paul Virzi is great for knowing how to meet these two stars, Helen Mirren and Donald Sutherland, deciding to do together what would also be a trip toward the Oscar.

From the intimate journey lived as a love flight of *Ella & John*, that between irony, tenderness, and emotion will fascinate the public, my attention turns to another monumental couple of the great cinema: Jane Fonda and Robert Redford in the role of Eddie and Louise in “*Our Souls at Night*”.

Both have been widowed for a long time, with adult children who for years no longer live with them. Eddie presents himself in the evening after a supper at Louis’s home, with the proposal: “Do you want to come and sleep with me some night? Not for sex, but to talk”. In reality, although the two have lived in

houses close by, they have never frequented each other personally. What they know of each other is exclusively what the town’s voices have recounted through the years. Thus, they too take a trip, and even here, it is a feminine initiative! It is a simple story, like the simple days of the two elderly people who need someone to say, ‘Good Night’ to at the end of the day; two solitudes in search of comfort and of rooted traditions; a simple story, a simple presentation, and simple environments.

However, the two protagonists of this caliber and experience – 79 years old and the other 81 – in whatever context or personage, would risk disappearing. Not with them! Above all in the case of Redford, aged in an enviable way, with that ever-powerful gaze, able to express so much with only one look, is capable as few others to avoid imposing himself, or superimposing himself on the interpretation. And Jane Fonda splendidly interprets this woman

who takes her courage in hand and succeeds to break a routine, capable of re-opening a journal of pages glued by time (one of the most beautiful scenes of this film so rich in detail!), but always finds a balance.

As the critic has already written: “A Comfort Movie that leaves us with the clear sensation that not much is missing. No ‘Big News’, only the possibility of living life, day after day, being able to tell about it to someone at night.

To enjoy the magnificence of the panoramas of Colorado or the habits and friends of little Holt (like the stinging Dorian of a beautiful Bruce Dern) in which everything takes place. An archetypal Midwest, in which to settle in anticipation of the final plot shot, a light twist too, which one accepts with serenity. Especially after the small parenthesis with his daughter, Holly (Judy Greer, to contrast with her most unresolved son, Matthias Schoenaerts). A moment at which one arrives

slowly, accompanied and alongside the two ‘traveling companions’ and who, with a light touch, strikes the heart”.

*Ella & John* and *Our Souls at Night* are two films that will not change the history of film but represent an attempt [of what?] genuine in form and honest in content. Both able to point straight to the heart, the first with irony and tenderness, the other with sweetness and absolute purity, showing all the beauty and simplicity of two lives at a turning point, without slipping into the usual narrative cliché: “it’s never too late.” And they both do it through authentic champions (Helen Mirren-Donald Sutherland and Jane Fonda-Robert Redford) who, despite the years, still manage to convey the best of themselves, with great complicity and empathy involving the audience with elegance and refinement in the idea that “*Love as Adults*” is beautiful and growing old gracefully is possible.





# I was in hell

by Andrea C. Hoffmann, Patience I.

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*I was in hell.* The title says it all, because it really is the worst of nightmares that a young Nigerian Christian woman, Patience, lived in the two abductions suffered by Boko Haram, stories that Andrea Hoffmann, a German journalist, tells in the book. Patience was 25 and pregnant when she was kidnapped. She managed to escape, was kidnapped again, and she escaped again.

## ■ Patience, survived Boko Haram

Reading, *I Was in Hell. Fleeing from Boko Haram together with my daughter*, seems to echo the facts, episodes, words, notes already encountered in the literature that told of the madness of the Nazi concentration camps or that of the Soviet gulags.

In the story of this young mother (Patience, 25, was pregnant when she was kidnapped by Islamist terrorists from her village Ngoshe, near the city of Maiduguri, in northern Nigeria) many aspects of twentieth-century totalitarianism are reflected: the ideology that takes possession of men to make them commit inhuman acts; the extreme and innocent suffering of women, children, the elderly; the senselessness of blind violence.

Just seventeen, Patience is already a widow: her husband, who had been imposed on her, is killed by Boko Haram. Months later, she will find herself, a Christian, the second wife of a man whom she loves anyway. Meanwhile, Boko Haram is increasingly threatening. She will be captured in the first weeks of pregnancy, along with other girls (when she was already aware of Chibok girls). Petrified, she witnesses unspeakable actions (pregnant women gutted,



cannibalism...). With the help of a jihadist who feels sorry for her, and whom she discovers was a Christian, she manages to escape. But she will soon be captured again. Able to escape again, thanks to another jihadist who felt pity for her. She will fortunately find her husband in an impromptu refugee camp in Cameroon. But even here, Boko Haram suddenly comes. They attack and exterminate the men, including her spouse Ishaku, whose head she will see cut off. A few hours later, she gives birth alone, in the forest. She will then be helped by the soldiers' wives at the border to return to Nigeria, to Maiduguri: by now her village is burnt land. Who gives her the strength to go on is Gift, which means "gift": this is the name chosen for her child. *"I'm not so optimistic to say that I've left the worst behind, but I'm sure that for me and Gift the best is yet to come."*

Andrea Hoffmann, a German journalist, recounts the story of Patience, listening to her and weaving her testimony with that of other eye witnesses, coming to know of unspeakable actions; inhuman acts that are really from hell. The story of Patience is common, unfortunately, like that of many Nigerians who have lived in recent times, from when in 2010 Boko Haram launched its terrorist offensive on a large scale: the murder of her first husband, the raid on her village, her abduction together with other girls (the Christian males are beheaded on the spot by Boko Haram, which does not take male prisoners, but only female prisoners); forced marriages of girls of only 12 years old to militia thirsty for blood and pleasure. Her story contains many dramas within the drama, and it is only the courage and boldness of youth that restores her freedom and allows us to read her story.

## ■ We cannot say we do not know

In this story there is also the diagnosis of the absurdity of Islamic terrorism: "Outside it began to get dark. In the yard I heard Boko Haram's

men pray. How strange a God is theirs, I thought? Which God commands his faithful to kill or capture other human beings? Was it the same God to whom our Muslim neighbors prayed? They had never behaved like that and had never even mentioned the fact that God ordered them to do this. Even though I did not know much about it, I suspected that those men were making a big mistake. Someone must have poisoned their minds." In the simple consideration of Patience,

is the wise understanding of the true nature of terrorism: the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes.

There is a clear reference to the novel *Silence* by Shusaku Endo (today it is also on the screen directed by Martin Scorsese)

when Patience, witness of so much inhumanity against Christians by self-styled Muslims, does not restrain from asking God to account for all this: "I forced myself to remove all doubt from my heart. I needed my God, I needed Him more than anything else in the world. I begged the Lord to get me out of that hell and take me home. I prayed for the salvation of the other girls. "None of us has denied you. We just pretended to pray to Allah", I said, convinced I was speaking on behalf of everyone."

The village of Patience, Ngoshe, is located a few kilometers from Chibok, in the State of Borno, the place where a mass abduction of 276 girls took place in mid-2014. Andrea Hofmann, listening to the young protagonist and other witnesses, also re-builds the motivations of the gesture of the little known current head of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, and states: *"This is primarily due to the fact that it is really too dangerous to remain in the field. But also because we, Europeans and Americans, look elsewhere"*.

In giving the reasons for which she wrote this book, the author states: *"I wanted people to read the book, and I also wanted to write everything that Patience had told me. So I simply tried to stay true to the facts; for what they were, without exaggeration. To let everyone know what's happening in the region"*. Today, Patience is in



a Christian community, has a sewing machine, and is learning to use it to earn something as a seamstress. The author defines her as follows: *"She is shy and silent. You can actually perceive that she is a broken woman. But at the same time, she has always had to face incredible difficulties in her young life. If she had been a Westerner, perhaps she would not have made it. She,*

***"Outside it was getting dark. In the yard I heard Boko Haram's men pray. How strange a God is theirs, I thought? Which God commands his followers to kill or capture other human beings?"***

*too, will never forget, but thinks above all about surviving, taking care of her baby, and moving forward. This gives her strength".*

The story of Patience resounds with the suffering, tenacity, and courage of a multitude of women who fight and suffer in too many terrible scenarios of the world. An impressive story, a unique testimony about a tragedy of which we know little, a hymn to women's freedom beyond any ethnic group, any religion, any geographical distance, in the name of that luminous, indispensable absolute value that is life. This book, more than anything else, makes us enter the soul of a young woman from whom, perhaps, we would not suspect so much depth of vision, reasonableness, feelings... and even of true faith. Thanks to books like these, we cannot say we do not know and the international community cannot just turn away, as it has unfortunately done in other cases. Therefore, it is a "testimony" precious on many levels.

To know: *The Kidnapped Girls* of Wolfgang Bauer (*The New Frontier*) and, for the younger ones, *Stolen Girls*, and the stories of the *Girls Kidnapped by Boko Haram* by Viviana Mazza and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani (*Mondadori*), and also the story, different from the previous ones and always having to do with Nigerian Islamism, of *Safiya*, who escaped stoning.

# Startups and the world of music

Mariano Diotto

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Startups are new companies that arise from innovative ideas and want to establish themselves in the market by seeking funds to subsidize themselves. If successful, they have the advantage that, having just been launched, they generally use a limited amount of both human and financial resources and are rich in the "desire to do". The goal of these new companies is to grow quickly to become real businesses.

In the music world there are startups that today have become internationally known multinationals.

**Spotify**, which is the most famous music service among young people and offers musical streaming of millions of songs in free or paid form, was born in 2008 by the Swedish startup Spotify Ab, and today has more than 140 million users throughout the world and more than 2 billion euros in turnover.

Also, the birth of **SoundCloud** begins from a startup. Originally it appeared in Stockholm, but in reality, it was officially founded in Berlin in August 2007 by the young Alex Ljung and Eric Wahlforss. SoundCloud is a website that allows musicians to collaborate, promote, and distribute their music thanks to this platform. The two founders wanted to give emerging musicians the opportunity to share their



talent with other people on the network; subsequently the site was transformed into a real business project, becoming an integral editorial tool that allowed singers and bands to digitally distribute their music, cutting down the costs of physical printing of the CD and distribution. In April 2009, SoundCloud received a loan of € 2,500,000 from Hansen's Doughty Technology Ventures, turning from a startup into a real company. This is an excellent example of the transformation of a winning idea into a real company.

### ■ Building relationships with their fans

An all-Italian example of a startup is **Musikee**. It is a web platform that allows emerging singers and bands to mobilize their friends by planning targeted actions for their fans to increase their fame through word of mouth, but digitally. Born in 2014 from the idea of a working team made up of some young people coming from Catholic University, the startup aims to offer musicians a digital tool through which to stimulate and direct the online and offline activities of their fans and friends. Since the world of the web and the social media have become popular among young people, the idea was to invent a simple system of missions and rewards: the fans perform activities proposed by the favorite artist, such as leafleting, sharing content on a blog or on social networks or buying CDs. As a bonus, they get the chance to access rewards thought of directly by their singer or band, such as a signed and posted photo on the net, or the backstage entry to a concert, or a quote from their social profiles. The musician can, therefore, engage the fans and spread their music with the help of their digital followers. The interesting aspect of this startup is that it begins with the analysis and use by young people of the digital world, putting it in first place and having as the **ultimate goal to create real relationships**.

### ■ From a failure to a winning idea: musical.ly

Another *mobile app* that is popular among young people is **musical.ly**. It describes itself as "*the social network of your videos*" and is a social platform addressed mainly to music lovers, allowing them to make original videos, starting from the songs of their musical idols, and then sharing them with friends on the net. Once the *app* is downloaded on the smartphone, a song can be selected from those available, you place yourself in front of a camera and start recording a movie in which you have to mimic the words of the song in playback mode, while this is reproduced in the background. Like all social networks there is a wide possibility of customization, such as filters that change speed by accelerating or slowing down the video, or you can apply masks on the face. Choosing, for example, to record in slow motion to simplify the labial that follows the words of the song, the software, after the recording, will speed up the movie and adapt it to the original song having, therefore, images that move more quickly while the song is reproduced at its normal speed. Once the video is recorded, you can share it with your friends directly in the *app* making it public.

For more info: <https://musikee.com> and <https://musical.ly>

In May 2017 **musical.ly** exceeded 200 million registered users, with about 12 million videos uploaded every day, but was founded in China in 2014 by two young people called Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang. Before launching **musical.ly**, they had created a social network for educational purposes, where users could learn and teach different subjects through short 3-5-minute videos. However, despite having found investors willing to finance this startup, the platform was unsuccessful, and so they decided to change targets and focus on teenagers. The initial idea was to create a platform that incorporates music and video into a social network and today the results can be seen.

# Storytelling through images and its formative power

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Stories are a very important component of culture and art and the art of narrating them, or storytelling and it never grows old. Practicing photography, when it is done in workshops for children and young people, often concludes with a visual storytelling that is sometimes called photo-narration or picture-story. Simply put, it is the way a photographer has of narrating a story through a series of photo shots. If we consider narration through photographs as an art, then the passion that dwelled in the heart and mind of the author of the photo story contagions those who 'listen with their eyes'.

### ■ To listen while looking

The phrase, 'a picture is worth ten thousand words' justifies the art of photographic storytelling even if it is not automatic for every picture to tell a story. Firstly, the images must be placed in a precise order that can be either chronological or serial, with the clear objective of reaching the heart of the people who look at them. Secondly, the captions that we add to our pictures





are fundamental because they help those who are looking at them to understand every single image to then be better able to grasp the general discourse of the photo story. Captions must simply amplify our understanding of the image but must not narrate the story. The narration belongs to the images themselves.

### ■ A pastoral storytelling along the lines of the Word of God

It is possible to reach many people pastorally through the good practice of the 'photographic story' when the theme chosen has a clear parallel with the Word of God. It is very beautiful to try to recount the parables of Jesus with actual photos taken in today's world for today's people. There is the 'Lost Sheep that is found', and the 'Prodigal Son' who is tenderly embraced by his Father, who never tired of waiting for his return, narrated with photos. And there is the infinite beauty of the Psalms. From each verse of some psalms, which are highly poetical, it is possible

to make a photographic account that flows, and first enchants the children involved in re-writing it with light. Certainly, it is possible to treasure the effort that a group of children puts into accomplishing a photographic story to shape it to truth, to the gift of itself, and to beauty. Among the psalms of praise most appropriate for a photo story are psalms 113-118, woven with beauty that hides among the poetic words, great spiritual energy that softens the soul and heals sick relationships. God, source of all good, can be praised, sung to, blessed, and celebrated with photos. The good and merciful God to whom the psalms weave praise, can be grasped by more than a hundred symbols nature gives us.

Daily situations of suffering, anguish, mistrust can easily be 'recounted' by the photos that have as captions, simply verses of the psalm, without any other comments from us. What possible pictures come to mind that can be joined to the verse: *"The Lord listens to the voice of my*

*sorrow"*? And there is *"In my anguish I invoked the Lord and He heard me"*. In the same way, it is possible to recount today in verse: *"the poor will eat and will be satisfied"*. Every psalm is born of an authentic human experience before God. It is possible to help children and young people understand this experience better by using photographs.

### ■ Step by step

Precisely as we do before any project, whether textual or graphic, it is indispensable to make a work plan. *Planning* is an essential part of photo storytelling. What we have in our mind and heart emerges in the photos we take. This is why it is important to have clear in mind and heart, what we want to say. After having clarified the theme, we must decide on an

opening picture, on some shots that recount a sequence of facts, and then an ending shot that is the shot that remains most impressed on the memory.

Often, we ask, *should I take only one shot or a series of shots?* It all depends on the story that is to be told. If an image alone represents only

We visit and study the link: <https://dailypost.wordpress.com/2014/07/31/visual-storytelling/> where the great photographer Laura Cook presents a series of tips to create visual narratives of impact.

We meditate with the children on the audacious theory that *Paul Claudel* expressed in 1943 in his article entitled *The Psalms and Photography*: "much more than art, even of sacred art, photography is prayer. If the Psalm makes us pray with words, the photograph of nature, divine creation, makes us pray with our gaze". Art that incorporates nature is, therefore, a form of prayer without words. A prayer of the gaze.

"We cultivate ourselves" in order to become photographers who know how to narrate:

- **think before acting:** I have clearly in mind the result I want to obtain;
- **learn to look:** I have to look at every reality around me with a photographic eye to be able to store it in my memory. Only in this way will I be able to anticipate the shot and, when the opportunity presents itself, I will take it;
- **reach the essential:** any narration must be genuine and true;
- **lose yourself "to discover":** I can grasp in a new and original way because I cultivate curiosity.



the partial truth, then it is necessary to propose more shots that become a visual unity of the narration, always with one theme, but with differentiated details.

We choose images that are 'strong' in the sense of emotionally involving, able to create a strong impact in those who look at them. We ask the children to trust their instincts. If they see a calm and quiet person in city traffic, this can well represent the search for peace in the midst of chaos. Photography has the power to fix moments of time that contain intense meanings, as in this case. We remember to be original, discarding the banal photos even if impeccable technically... and we remind the students of the pregnant phrase by **Roland Barthes**: *"every photograph is a certificate of presence"*.

And then how lovely, at the end of the workshop, when we "listen with our eyes" to what our children, surprising us, will show us along the lines of words like: *"...before you, the thoughts of my heart, Lord, my rock and my salvation..."*. Really how lovely!



# Punctuated life... blest life!

I want to close the year in beauty, suggesting to myself first of all, and also to each of you, friends who always read me with affection and good will, the reflection that has accompanied me in these past few days.

One of the last times I proposed a reflection on the meaning of words, to which, more often than we think, we make say things we really did not intend. And yet, even if we were attentive to the meanings we transmit, it could also happen that by speaking with little attention to punctuation, we communicate something other than what we wish to. It is simply this, dear friends: commas, periods, and all the small marks that punctuate our discourse are really indispensable! How would you take a breath if there weren't any commas? And how could you raise questions, express enthusiasm, or merely let your thought be intuited without question marks, exclamation points, and ellipses? And don't try to convince me that CAMILLA SAID: "A MOTHER IS A SPECIAL PERSON", is the same thing as saying CAMILLA, SAID THE MOTHER, IS A SPECIAL PERSON.

Well, our words cannot stand without punctuation marks and I will tell you more: even the young people we frequent will not be able to stand if we do not accept punctuating their life with many marks that pass unobserved and only make their importance felt when they are absent.

I think that it is very typical of the beloved charism of our Founders to enter into the life of the young like humble and efficacious punctuation marks; humble because they are characterized by the invisibility of those who know how to remain in the background; efficacious in the measure that they are the right mark, in the right place, at the right time.

Who knows, maybe we can write some new beatitudes, ones that are alternative, original.

Blessed are you, COMMAS, when you gift the young with short restorative pauses.

Blessed are you, QUESTION MARKS, because you force yourself to ask questions and take nothing for granted.

Blessed are you, COLONS, who allow them to re-organize the fragments of life.

Blessed are you, ELLIPSES, when you invite them to have patience, to be prudent, and to wait.

Blessed are you, PERIODS, because you show when it is necessary to stop, and perhaps, begin again.

Blessed are you, EXCLAMATION POINTS, if you highlight what makes life fascinating.

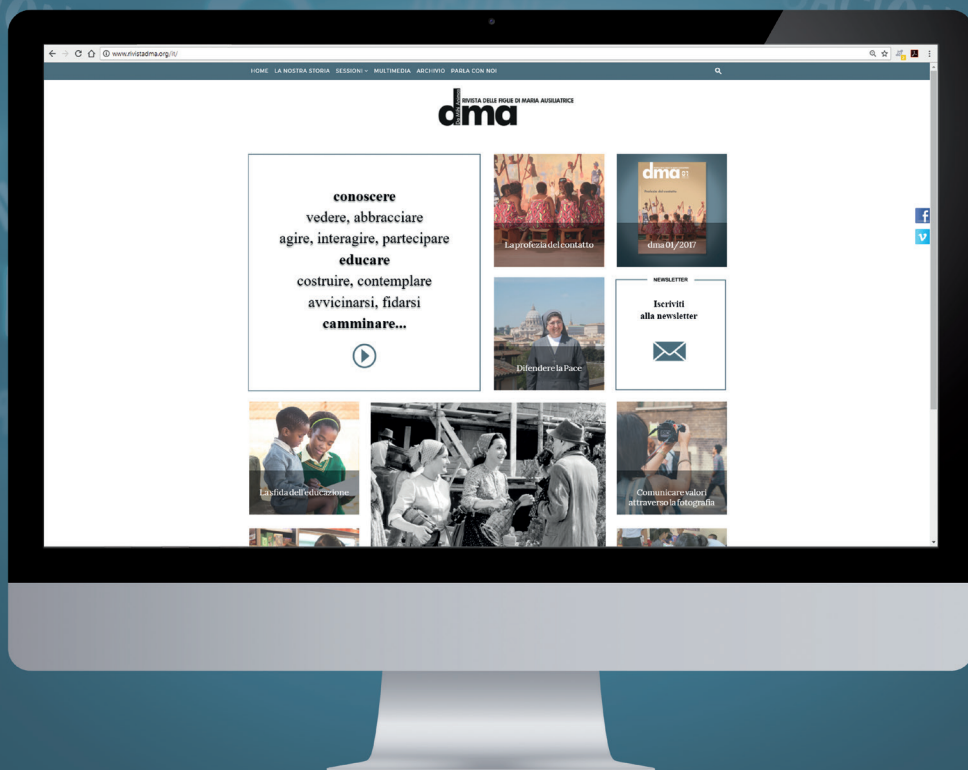
Blessed are you, QUOTATION MARKS, when you place the Word in their hands exactly as it is. Blessed are you, FMA of the whole world, who like untiring punctuation marks, you mark the life of the young because you tell a true story, so that it flows quickly toward God.

*Word of C.*





# WE ARE ON LINE!



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“Do what you can: God will do what we cannot do.  
Entrust everything to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and  
to Mary Help of Christians, and you will see what miracles are.”

(Don Bosco to Fr. Cagliero before departing, 14 November 1875)