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#nooneexcluded  
Called... to choose

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Maria Ausiliatrice  
Via Ateneo Salesiano, 81  
00139 Roma  
tel. +39 06872741  
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[www.rivistadma.org](http://www.rivistadma.org)  
[editor@rivistadma.org](mailto:editor@rivistadma.org)  
[dmanews1@cgfma.org](mailto:dmanews1@cgfma.org)

**Director responsible**

Mariagrazia Curti

**Editorial board**

Maria Helena Moreira  
Gabriella Imperatore

**Collaborators  
on this issue**

Julia Arciniegas, Luisa Nicolosi,  
Mara Borsi, Caterina Cangia,  
Anna Rita Cristaino, Attilio Danese,  
Emilia Di Massimo,  
Giulia Paola di Nicola,  
Mariano Diotto,  
Gabriella Imperatore, Palma Lionetti,  
Elena Rastello, Paolo Ondarza,  
Martha Seide,  
Pham Thi Kim Ngan Maria,  
Mary Terzo (translator).

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**Dossier**





This year in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on young people that is approaching, sensitive to God's calls, we have undertaken with young people a path of faith in the heart of vocational discernment. This journey has invited us to deepen three verbs - *recognizing, interpreting, and choosing* - (cf. EG 51) that set us on the path of discernment according to the Spirit of God.

*Recognizing* requires in us the ability to listen to the person. The mystery of the other is welcomed, in a profound interior dialog with the Lord, attentive to *interpreting* what the Spirit is arousing in each one. And here the pastoral care of vocations is called to help young people make choices and make free, conscious decisions, stripped of any interest other than the Gospel.

*Choosing* implies the constant questioning of the first meaning of life, passing from *why* to *for whom*, drawing from the heart of the mission the call of God to each person. It is letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit of God that helps to refine our gaze revealing horizons, letting ourselves be interrogated by meaningful questions. The accompaniment of the young is led by the hand of God who counts on our mediation. Through the young, attentive to the breath of the Spirit, the Church will be able to perceive the voice of the Lord that still resonates today (cf. Working Instrument: *Youth, faith and vocational discernment*).

Choosing requires openness to daily discernment as growth in the faith, as the capacity to read the signs of God in the events of life, in our personal history, in the movements of the heart. To discern is to have the Spirit of God as one 'permanently' invited with whom we follow our life paths, bringing meaning and light.

Pope Francis presented the Synod's Working Instrument to the young, entrusting it to them as a compass for the journey toward the Synod. And he turns to them, manifesting his desire together with the Bishops, to become still more 'collaborators for their joy' (2 Cor 1: 24). And he affirms that a better world is built thanks to them as well, to their desire for change, and to their generosity. He exhorts them to not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who suggests to them daring choices, and to not hesitate when their conscience asks them to risk in order to follow the Teacher (Letter of the Pope to the young people on the occasion of the presentation of the Working Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops). It is a call for them as well to awaken the joy of being companions of the young entrusted to us and with them discover God's plan. *Called to choose...* To call is to "*awaken desire, move people from what keeps them blocked, ask questions for which there are no prefabricated answers*". Called to listen, attention to God who passes and visits our life. God keeps calling us. And this call desires a generous and full Yes.

We entrust all young people to Mary Help of Christians. May each one feel the nearness of Our Lady, hear her Yes, encouraging them to give their life in the joy of a missionary 'here I am'.

## Editorial

### Called... to choose

**Maria Helena Moreira**

[mhmoreira@cgfma.org](mailto:mhmoreira@cgfma.org)

# Peace is the way of the Young

Gabriella Imperatore, FMA  
gimperatore@cgfma.org

It is the continent of Youth that ‘makes’ Peace. It is they, the young, the authentic agents of change that appear on the world stage, and fight for the respect for Human Rights and freedom, for ethical development in solidarity, for the construction of a real peace between peoples and Nations.

## ■ Peace building education

“Dignity is the goal, education is the medium”: this is the slogan printed on the blue sweatshirts of the *Latin Patriarchate School* in Beit Jala, the first Latin school in Palestine, founded in 1854 to bring the message of faith, education, and instruction to all, regardless of faith, social class, and gender. A real challenge to educate young people “not to fight against others, but to cooperate to build a future of coexistence, respect, rights, and dignity”. All with just one tool: education. The protagonists today are about 900

students of the 31 classes of the school, all aged between 4 and 18 years together with the other schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, a network of 44 Institutes scattered between Palestine (13), Israel (6) and Jordan (25), with about 20 thousand students. Education is not only aimed at the students’ professionalism, but also at educating them, so that they may become people of hope, love, and justice. It teaches young people

of different faiths: Christians, Muslims, Druses, to live in peace and mutual respect; to rebuild hope by giving care and attention to the littlest ones. “Religion is not a problem in school. A friendship that is born amid the school desks and that consolidates outside, becomes the glue of a society that is increasingly united and supportive”. This is how the young law students think who attend the “Multiculturalism and diversity” course at the Hebrew

*The path of peace and justice passes through young people and education.*

مدرسة البصيركية اللاتينية  
بيت جالا  
Dignity is the Goal  
Education is the tool

University of Jerusalem. Among their commitments is the elimination of misunderstandings in order to help society grow. One way is communication because the contacts, the possibilities to know each other and to see each other, are the basis of a possible coexistence.

## ■ An economy of restitution

To make peace and build a future of hope, young people propose ‘the economy of restitution’. It is not a utopia. It is possible today as never before in history. The resources are there to give the opportunity of a dignified life to all. It is about making them accessible to all, of ‘returning them’, to promote the common good, rejecting greed, personal, group, and national selfishness, of too much in the hands of too few.

*Young people do not wait for peace, they make it.*

The economy of restitution measures its efficiency, above all, in making everyone protagonists of the economic process and producing real resources that can give opportunities for constant growth to the whole society. Multiply for each person life, ability, dignity, conditions to do, opportunities to participate, freedom to choose, to be. Restitution to all countries in the world of opportunities for development and economic growth. Restitution of the right to work to adults, thus stemming the scourge of child labor. Restitution of the possibility of research and access to technology. The economy of restitution is a helping hand to save a sinking boat: humanity overwhelmed by unbearable inequalities that render ‘excluded’ a great part of humanity in both poor and rich countries.





### Ethical t-shirts

*Ape Italian Style*, a company that stands on the outskirts of Milan and produces solidarity t-shirts with natural fabrics. "Good generates good", "The road opens by walking", "Everything starts if you want" are some of the slogans chosen and printed on these T-shirts produced by a Social Cooperative in the Municipality of Oggiono, which employs disabled children or those who have difficulty in insertion.

Alessandro Ferrari comes from the world of advertising graphics and worked as a graphic designer for a company until the day when, entering the oratory and meeting the educators, he decided to quit his job to become an educator, to stay with the children and help others.

Remaining with children, teenagers, and young people who always wore t-shirts that had vulgar phrases, he decided to design t-shirts. Then at a spiritual retreat at the Sermig of Turin, he met Ernesto Olivero and learned about restitution, that is, recognizing that life is a gift from God and therefore the return of his goods, abilities, time, and every resource to humanity that groans is its logical consequence. So the passion for fashion, for the communication of the good has been realized in communicating beautiful things with t-shirts, in writing motivational phrases, with values, and with each one, a percentage of the profit given to the poor.



### Let's get back on the road to peace

Towards the *Perugia-Assisi March*, 7 October 2018, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the Charter that, after a terrible series of wars and carnage, has put humanity on the path of peace. By international law, it is the *compass* that will help us to get out of the serious general crisis in which we have been pushed and to find the way to a better future for all.

**Let's take back** this compass!

**Let's rediscover** its usefulness and value! **Let's learn** to use it and **let's get on the road to peace immediately**.

There are many things to do. **Let's share** the denunciation, but also the search for solutions.

**Let's invest** in young people. **Let's desert** competition. **Let's dare** fraternity. **Let's find out** together the importance and the beauty of the cure. **Let's take** responsibility for protecting. **Let's make** the economy of fraternity grow. **Let's educate** ourselves to Peace. **Let's stop** the wars.

**Let's walk together** on the road that regenerates trust, hope, and the will to change. **Let's build** a new policy based on respect for the "dignity of all members of the human family and their equal and inalienable rights". **Let's choose** nonviolence. **Let's defend** and build an inclusive, supportive, welcoming society... of Peace!

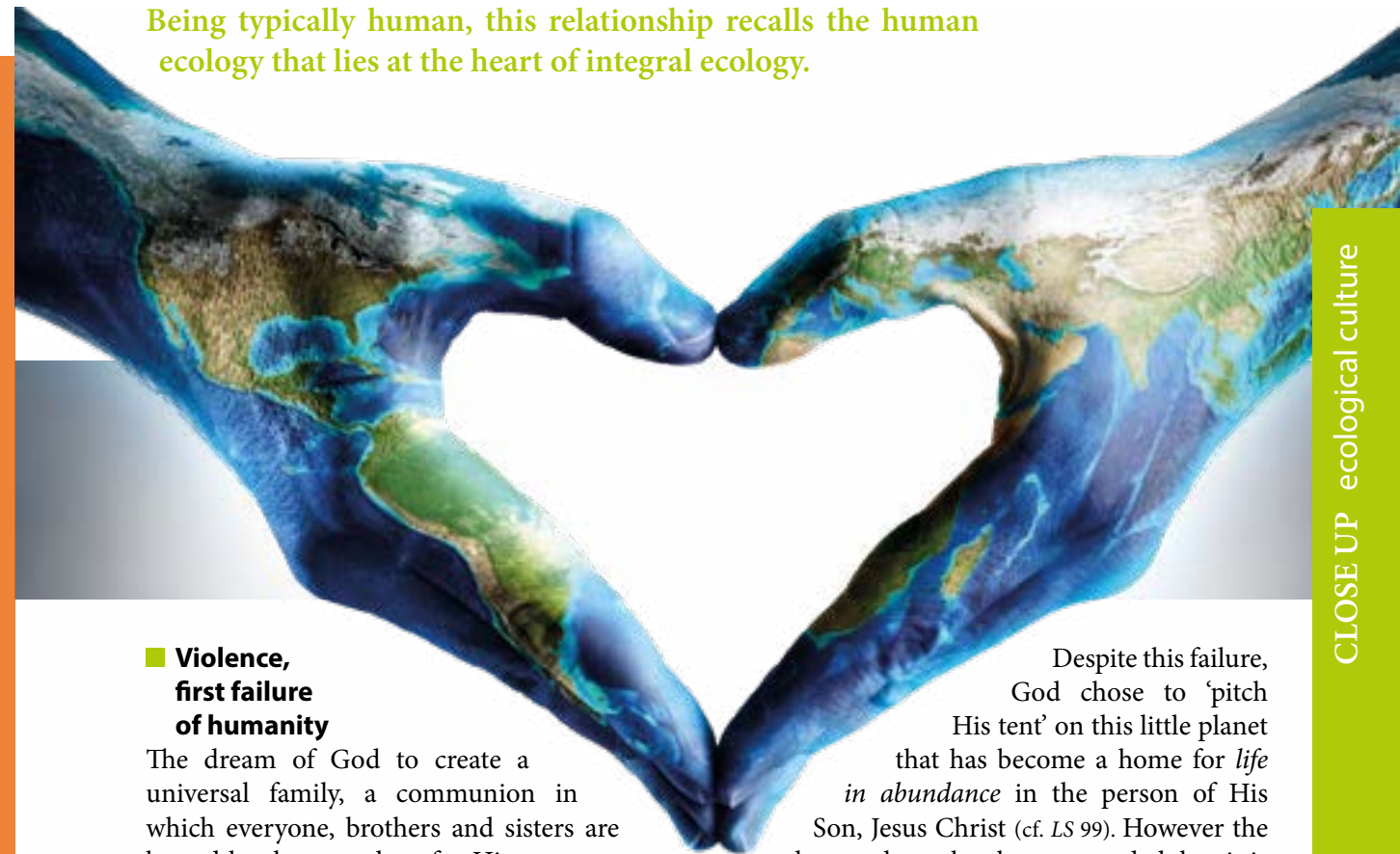
**Courage to all the artisans of peace!**

# Nonviolence as a just relationship

Sr Julia Arciniegas – Sr Martha Séide

j.arciniegas@cgfma.org – mseide@yahoo.com

Starting from violence as the first failure of humanity, the contribution offers a brief reflection inviting us to move from a culture of violence to non-violence as a just relationship. Being typically human, this relationship recalls the human ecology that lies at the heart of integral ecology.



### Violence, first failure of humanity

The dream of God to create a universal family, a communion in which everyone, brothers and sisters are bound by the same love for Him, was soon shattered (cf. LS 89.92). Violence entered the world with the first fratricidal murder. Creation was upset by an internal war that broke the bonds, not only among humans, but also between them and the earthly garden. That violence that is the origin of sin is also manifested in the symptoms of sickness that we experience in the soil, in water, in the air, and in living beings (cf. LS 217).

Despite this failure, God chose to 'pitch His tent' on this little planet that has become a home for *life in abundance* in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. LS 99). However the human heart has been wounded, but it is always the arbiter of its freedom.

The existing wars, the causes that unleash them, and the consequences that ensue from them today make so many parts of the world bloody, while many other wars threaten to explode with renewed violence, supported by the advent of nuclear power used for purposes of war. *Can we say that ours is a culture of violence?*



### ■ From a culture of violence to a just relationship

According to the scholar Domenico Muscò, *“The culture of violence rests on an anthropological model that sees war as a just factor because it sees the human being as the dominator of nature; but, in reality, violence is a creation of humans to free their aggression according to a logic of purpose and domination, where they count on force as an instrument for resolving conflict”* (For a culture of nonviolence, 12). From this perspective, even today, the ‘humanitarian’ war that veils hidden interests is justified, prolonging the dramatic chain of barbaric violence to the detriment of the most vulnerable populations. Faced with these scenarios, it is necessary to cultivate a critical capacity to have tools not only to identify the violence inherent in the dominant socio-political system, but above all to understand the mechanisms underlying this bellicose relationship between peoples, and work for the construction of a just relationship.

This relationship invites another way of conceiving humanity, no longer as the arrogant ruler of creation, but as a responsible administrator. In this sense, as Professor Spólnik points out to the school of the teacher F. Ebner: *“The just relationship is an ordered relationship, appropriate to humans, according to their intimate nature, precisely what it takes for humans and that it is peculiar to them. The just adjective immediately calls for the need to act in the right way to live just relationships. Living relationships, especially living them in the just way, implies a very human way of acting. This gives each person a real existential dilemma, experienced in varying degrees, throughout the whole of existence”* (Encounter is the just relationship, 182).

In support of this vision we need urgent efforts, on the one hand, to strengthen the process of building non-violent civil society and, on the other, to look after the common home in all its aspects. In this sense, the just relationship is effectively combined with a human ecology that is at the heart of integral ecology (cf. LS 137).

### ■ The just relationship as integral ecology

“If the human is a relational being, the fundamental problem of their existence is to understand how they should relate to the world in which they are inserted” (Spólnik 183), considering not only the world of others, but also of creation. In fact, *“human existence is based on three closely related fundamental relationships: relationship with God, with neighbor, and with the earth”* (LS 66). This is why human ecology is at the center of integral ecology. If humans do not value their own peculiarities of knowledge, will, freedom, and responsibility to enter into relationship with other creatures in the just way, there is the risk of the rupture that consequently leads to conflict and violence.

So, as some commentators of *Laudato si* highlight, integral ecology brings us back to human ecology, up to a kind of spiritual ecology: the gaze towards creation brings us back to intimacy with God the Father, the care of the common home still allows that touching ‘feeling at home’ (LS 151), which is the in-depth understanding that “the whole material universe is a language of God’s love, of His boundless affection for us” (84). Along this line, we can understand just relationship, as a relationship in personal openness to spiritual realities. This implies the ability to cultivate on the one hand, interiority to make one’s choices converge towards the full humanization of oneself and, on the other, openness to the other that requires meeting in mutual recognition of our vocation to reciprocity (Spólnik 184-187).

Therefore, in

order to live the relationship appropriately, it is necessary to transform the culture of violence into the culture of encounter.

### ■ Non-violence as the culture of encounter

The culture of encounter is a very recurring theme in the teaching of Pope Francis that often puts him in opposition to the throw-away culture that generates the waste of resources, exclusion, prejudices, indifference, and violence. The invitation to believers and to all people of good will is to overcome all obstacles to learn the art of authentic dialog, so that encounter becomes a culture that permeates all human civilization in a pluriform

harmony (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* 220). This implies, according to the Pope, the ability to cultivate the attitude of

attention, listening, compassion, the courage to stop to talk and not just negotiate, say a word, smile because people often pass each other, but they never meet. It is a commitment that involves everyone as that of nonviolence according to the great Italian master Aldo Capitini when he affirms that “nonviolence is not something that concerns only the just and the situations of individuals; on the contrary, it links and unites the people, fraternalizes multitudes, and we must see it precisely in this virtue” (Capitini 1967b, 30).

In his address to the National Ecclesial Congress of Florence 2015, Pope Francis recommended in a special way the capacity of dialog for a





culture of encounter. “Remember also that the best way to talk is not to talk and discuss, but to do something together, to build together, to make plans: not only among Catholics, but together with all those who have good will”. It is an invitation to welcome and transform them into educational paths in order to be able to accompany the new generations towards the construction of a humanism in solidarity.

#### ■ Educate in and to a just relationship

Daily experience and research support that much of our life and our being are deeply conditioned by the relational context in which we live. This is why education is above all a question of facts. Educators are called to create favorable conditions to facilitate this arduous task. The educational relationship progressively becomes a positive experience of encounter capable of “arousing personal and interpersonal dynamics that initiate the other into the mystery of encounter with

*“We propose that the Catholic Church develop and take into consideration the transition to a just-Peace approach based on evangelical nonviolence” (Pax Christi International and others).*

personal accompaniment as a true initiator” (Spolnik 2004, 299). This is why education in a just relationship must take place in the appropriate form where the educator is the first to know the right path to travel and undertake with the

growing person, the journey toward home, or that leads to the discovery of the truth of one’s being in openness toward others. In this case the educator is a witness to the encounter marked by love, by gift, by freedom, and by reciprocity.

In the view of integral ecology, the experience

of the relational climate has practical implications in the relationship with things and the surrounding world. In this sense, educating the new generations to nonviolence is to restore the hope that it is possible to realize a society in solidarity in this world

where the resolution of conflicts, inherent in every area of human existence, can take place, not by force of arms, but with that of mutual love.



# Generation GEN: educational opportunities, risks, and challenges

Luisa Nicolosi, FMA

lunicolosi@tiscali.it

We live in a constantly changing society in which the Internet and digital technology permeate the life of young and old, increasing the opportunities for knowledge and sharing, together with the educational risks and challenges of our actual globalized society. Among the digital instruments, the smartphone has become an integral part of our way of thinking, of communicating, and of choosing. Every aspect of daily life is, in fact, conditioned by this ‘small intelligent telephone’ that is able to take pictures, download videos, surf the internet, send email, and be in continuous contact with others.





### ■ Together on the Network

Above all, adolescents are the great users of the smartphone to the point that we speak of **Generation GEN**, the iPhone Generation, to indicate young people from 13 to 19 years old who have grown up with the smartphone in their hand and live their social life on the phone.

Pre-adolescents in particular, use the smartphone for games, to download

videos, and to listen to music, while adolescents and young people use it to chat, post self-made content or shared from the Web. Even adults use it to keep themselves informed and to face the numerous situations of daily and professional life. In families with teenagers, chat communication represents an emotional regulator to manage conflicts and to exchange praises because to say 'lol' or 'sorry' through the text message is less embarrassing than to say it in person. In

fact, more and more frequently parents and children speak through chat and around the use of mobile phones are centered the power struggles to have more time and space in which it is licit or convenient to use it. Both children and parents consider it an essential instrument for communication, to facilitate the organization of family life, and to be reachable in case of need.

For adolescents, the use of the mobile is not reduced to conversation or limits the deepening of culture. On the contrary it stimulates studying the content of news on the web read by chance and allows overcoming the intergenerational and transgenerational communication gap.

In the ecclesial world, the use of the smartphone is frequent and not only among young consecrated people. The widespread use of the internet and the social network in the Church is

transforming pastoral interactions and action even among religious, priests, and laity. Often the young people of the 'Selfie Generation' communicate easily and in depth in a chat with a priest or religious, facing even personal discourses, questions of faith, vocational discernment, asking them to be an educating and evangelizing presence even on the digital platforms where it is possible to proclaim the 'Gospel of Vocation'. In the intercultural communities, the cell phone is also a means of communion with families and communities in their country of origin and allows sharing and feeling close even though living far away. It is important to always keep in mind that in educative accompaniment, as in fraternal life, communication *online* is complementary and does not substitute the face to face encounter and that a telephone call is humanly more enriching than a text message.

### ■ The traps of the Net

From the point of view of psychological functions it is established that the Web influences young people to build their own identity, their vision of the world, and their being in the world: posting a text, a photo or a video is not just a way of asserting one's own presence in the digital platform, but satisfies the search *to appear in order to be*, the need to please others to receive confirmation of their value and feel part of a large media community. According to the psychotherapist **Di Gregorio**, new technologies on the one hand, offer great possibilities for exchange, simplify life, and improve communication at a distance. On the other hand, they make young people and adults less able to pay attention to and have empathy towards those facing them, and they encourage the spread of digital narcissism. This expression, typical of the *selfie society*, is a neologism used to indicate the current social system in which the cult of self and self-celebration of one's own image has grown out of proportion through the practice of selfies, photographic self-portraits.

The smartphone is the instrument par excellence that increases this new form of narcissism - mixed with exhibitionism and voyeurism - characterized by the



need for self-affirmation and self-enhancement on the Net and by the curiosity to look at the lives of others with a consequent increase in depressive experiences, vulnerability, and inability to code and modulate emotions in the interpersonal relationship replaced by the one mediated by the screen of a smartphone or a tablet.

From the annual report of the National Adolescence Observatory 2017, it emerges that among the increasing risks for adolescents who use the smartphone without adequate adult supervision, we have - beyond cyberbullying - also: *grooming* or online grooming of adolescents on the net from adults who hide behind false profiles; *binge watching*, intended as a binge of video and streaming tv series; *sexting*, i.e. taking selfies or filming sex videos and sending them to chats; *revengeporn*, or revenge through the publication on social media of intimate and compromising material with the aim of causing damage to the other person, to cause anxiety, depression, and suicide; *KILFIE* or *selfie killer*, or selfie in which to get *likes* and shares, you risk your life; *homophobia* - literally fear of remaining without a mobile phone (*no mobile phone - phobia*) or disconnection syndrome - the phobia of being disconnected from the mobile phone network contact to the point of experiencing feelings of anxiety and malaise, restlessness and aggression with acts of obsessive strategies that, as in other forms of dependence, limit the possibility of serenely conducting life (see [www.adolescienza.it/osservatorio](http://www.adolescienza.it/osservatorio)).



### ■ The media skills

In the face of these risks, the road to prohibition or psychological terrorism on the dangers of the Internet is ineffective and threatens to remove young people from a conscious digital citizenship. Since youth protection goes beyond the digital literacy of adults, an effective strategy to counter these risks is to educate on media competences taking into account that children need models to learn to use the media responsibly. Media competence goes far beyond simple technical mastery. It implies knowing how to use personal data on the Internet with caution, evaluate

information critically, respect social rules also on the web, and use the media to encourage active participation in social life. In fact, it is useful to stimulate reflection and discussion on the risks and opportunities of new technologies and the Net for example by talking about the dangers of social networks or the emotional effects of a video game, motivating rules that limit the use of media and promoting peer comparison in a process of educational co-responsibility in which young people help adults in technical knowledge and adults educate themselves to the sense of responsibility and critical spirit on the use of technology (see [www.giovanimedia.ch/it](http://www.giovanimedia.ch/it)). Today, as in the past, it is necessary that the children and young people of the iGeneration be educated, through face-to-face relationships, to develop the social skills necessary for common life, such as empathy, sense of self and the other, respect for diversity, healthy management of conflicts. Perhaps it is possible to avoid the fear of the young American writer Jonathan Safran Foer: "I fear that the more we will have the world at our fingertips, the farther away it will be from our hearts" (Foer J.S. "So connected, so distant" Corriere della Sera, 13 June 2013).



### To know more:

- Di Gregorio Luciano, *The selfie society. Narcissism and feelings of self in the smartphone era*, F. Angeli 2017.
- Marchetti Rita, *Presence and use of new technologies and the internet in the ecclesial world* in: Pasqualetti Fabio (edited), *Rethinking communication*, 2015, Las Roma.
- Vetri Orsola, *The Family? Look for it in WhatsApp*, in *Famiglia Cristiana* n.45, 5 November 2017, pag. 31-32.
- On the media skills: <http://www.educa.ch/it/guides>



## DOSSIER | Called... to choose

### Educating is... exploring new paths





# Educating is... exploring new paths

PG CIAM a cura di Elena Rastello, FMA  
elenarastello@cgfma.org

Africa is the cradle of humanity, the third largest continent on the planet and the one with the largest number of countries: 54. Inhabited by over 1.2 billion inhabitants, it is also the youngest continent on the planet, with an unimaginable variety of landscapes, ethnic groups, languages...

Here, in 94 educating communities, in 22 countries of Africa and Madagascar, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are daily engaged in educational service according to the style of the preventive system of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello.

## LISTENING TO AFRICA AND ITS YOUNG PEOPLE

### ■ Young women implementing change

*"Pope Francis, I am very grateful to you, as is every young person in Africa: together we sincerely hope that this meeting marks the possibility of making a change in our lives as young people, in the societies in which we live, in the Church that we feel is ours, and especially in our families".* Thus concluded the brief presentation of Africa and the expectations of young people for the African continent, of the young **Tendai Karombo**, President of the National Council of Young Catholics of Zimbabwe, to Pope Francis and to the youth present at the Pre-Synod Meeting in March 2018. She describes the challenges of young people on the continent, talking about socio-economic conditions that block their growth, the exploitation of child labor, the disintegration of the family, and the chaos of society.

Later, **Blessing Okoedionm**, a young Nigerian victim of trafficking, whose story is told in the book *The Courage of Freedom*, Ed. Pauline 2017, poses a provocative question in the dialog with the Pope: *"...with faith in a God who does not sleep I have found the courage to denounce and get out of that hell and now I make my cry for help and liberation of many young women, my sisters, still humiliated and enslaved today. How to help young people to become aware of this 'crime against humanity', how to help them remain human and to counter and overcome a sick mentality that reduces women to slaves, to the property of men, to merchandise, either for profit or for their own selfish pleasure? Dear Pope Francis, what worries me most is precisely the question of too many clients and many of these, as has been said, are Catholics. I wonder and ask you, but is the Church that is still too male-dominated able to question itself truthfully about this high demand by clients? Can it be credible in proposing to young people paths of relationship between men and women that are free and liberating?"*

*"We young people hope that every person can feel responsible for the lives of young people, as an African proverb says: It takes an entire village to educate a child. Young people hope:*

- in an inclusive society;
- in a Church that is ready and willing to transform itself, and is also a transforming force for its young people;
- in a peaceful and conflict-free society;
- in access to education for all, so that we can live in communities that offer progress and development to citizens;
- in a Church that is always actively committed to raising people and society from problems and critical issues, to urge the community to look for alternatives that are evangelical and just;
- in their possibility of being able to contribute and be involved in a significant way for the growth and development of the Church in Africa.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Holy Father, Pope Francis for having the young at heart, for believing in us, and for having offered us this opportunity to look within ourselves and put ourselves into play as responsible young people" (*Tendai Karombo*, Rome March 19, 2018).





### ■ Let the young people educate us

For some time now we have in our hands the *Synod Working Instrument* and we are studying it in the educating communities: five chapters that present a Church that *recognizes* young people in their reality, with the confident gaze of the disciples, of the disciples of Jesus. It is not only a good analysis of the context of world youth, they are pages that urge us to be converted, to become God's people who take care of His children, teenagers, young people. Take care of them, remain with them, be on their side. These are the convictions shared during General Chapter XXIII, in dialog with young people coming from the Provinces of the world. They express the commitment to let ourselves be educated and evangelized by the young, as it was for the community of Junín de los Andes, which allowed itself to be provoked to live the Gospel more radically, following the example of holiness of Laura Vicuña.

Young people ask us to be a more authentic Church, more

relational, more committed to justice. They are resilient, capable, creative, able to mobilize themselves for the causes in which they feel directly involved, to be authentic protagonists; they can be bearers of a style inspired by the Gospel. And they want to do it with the Church.

### FAITH, DISCERNMENT AND ACCOMPANIMENT

#### ■ Educating communities that transform culture and society

A few months ago, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, animators and coordinators of Youth Pastoral from 22 countries in Africa and Madagascar met in Kenya, where 94 educating communities, schools, oratory-youth centers, group homes, professional centers, and

Institutions of Higher Studies daily meet thousands of boys and girls, pre-adolescents, adolescents, young people, their families, and educators. They are transforming culture and society through the Preventive System.

Together with the challenges and needs, a precious treasure is present in the heart of Africa, an *immense spiritual lung* of a humanity tried by the crisis of faith but which, thanks to the extraordinary human and spiritual wealth of its children, its multicolored cultures, its soil and

subsoil full of resources, looks forward with hope. The strength of the *community that educates* is great, that creates the typically Salesian environment, where there is an atmosphere of joy and enthusiasm, a family style, acceptance and respect; reasonableness of the integral educational proposals; the appreciation of music, play, dance, theater and feasts; the celebrations of the sacraments included in the daily journey of small Christian communities that vibrate in vast geographical territories with variegated faces and languages.

#### Young people and Christians, because Africa is the spiritual lung of the world

*Young people, Christians, citizens:* between the formation of conscience and the demands of justice and peace, of sustainable development and the environment.

*Young people and Christians* dealing with anthropological and cultural changes, with appreciation, dialog, and sharing, with African cosmology that includes ancestors, children who must be born, with all of creation.

*Young people who believe in the family*, in its potential and its values, even if faced with the westernization of culture.

*Young people and Christians* who are formed with the Bible, who announce the Gospel, who ask us to accompany them to the *encounter with Jesus who changes their lives* in environments saturated with human and Christian values, offering silence and service, formation and prayer, joy and commitment, in which

teenagers and young people open themselves to question and to search. They are usually affected by the family spirit, by the respect and by the goodness with which they are treated, by the quality of what they receive: culture and professionalism that makes them discover, sometimes for the first time, that they too have dignity.

*What an excellent field to live to the full the preventive principle of the point accessible to the good, the positive anthropological vision of young people rooted in Christian humanism and in reference to the person as the image of God!*

*Young missionaries of young people* in the Salesian Youth Movement, with Salesian spirituality, animation, and missionary spirit, responsible for the mission with gratuitousness in service, in the logic of giving, and with a profound sense of sacrifice: it is the courage to face life with a positive attitude and hope for reality.

*Young people, Africa's richness:* between committed, coherent faith and life at 360°. Study, value of free time, culture, professionalism, job placement manager, civil economy, and entrepreneurship.





Educated women who educate the social community: it is the most beautiful joy, that of seeing little girls, teenagers, young women who can face the urgent need to be and become competent and prophetic Salesian educators together with the laity in the educating communities; witnesses, who go to young people choosing the demanding path of trust, of being with young people, of spending time with them in listening, in gratuitousness; with dignity and esteem; fully valuing the African vision of life and living it with deep respect, especially in multi-religious environments where Islam and traditional African religion are present.

For the community, educating in the 'Salesian style' with mind, heart, and hands in harmony with Mary Domenica Mazzarello and Don Bosco, means to *begin with the poor* in a social transformation that discovers resources and opportunities in the face of illiteracy, wars, hunger, oppression, migration.

### PASTORAL ACTION

#### ■ A young continent where the Preventive system 'speaks' and challenges

A mother, when her creature is not yet able to verbalize its basic needs, manages to understand them by guaranteeing them what they need to live. We are men and women on a journey to understand every day the mystery of life that surrounds us. We discover - especially on the African continent - *'being for'* is



of the woman who becomes aware first and works regarding the essential that is happening and that is lacking around the table of humanity, knowing how to see the focal point with the intelligence of the heart and not only through reasoning or the immediate and precise analysis of all the elements. The support among educators, the continuous remaining among young people to guide them, remind them of the motivation for service, being present in their groups, and in many moments of daily life, continually re-motivating decisions taken: everything seems to be a *simple accompaniment of the group*, but it is undoubtedly the educational intervention that bears fruit in youthful attitudes and lifestyle choices. Listening to the vocation story of so many African sisters, one perceives that warmth, spontaneity, providing space, friendly closeness have given rise to a sense of responsibility and freedom in responding.

In Group homes, oratories, professional centers, many girls continually show their resilience: they are intelligent and energetic in surviving even very difficult situations; skilled, creative, wise in making use of their resources to *change paths*, becoming themselves the subject of pastoral care for recovery and reintegration. The internalization of the integral educational project has become a stimulus and motivation to help others on the same path.





The intelligence of the heart has always taught the FMA educating communities to seek and welcome collaboration with other forces, not ecclesial, but of authentic human sensitivity. The *networking* with what already exists in a certain territory for the exchange of good experiences and also for possible support, helps society to become aware, responsible, and nurture in itself a sense of healthy disquiet towards the little ones and the young to move on new and alternative steps of inclusion.

### ■ Authoritative and credible in the history of young and old

The image of the midwife - typical of the African continent - inspires us in this synod time. She plays an important role, even if it is not central to accompanying the child after it is born. She has no connection with conception and it is not she who suffers the pains of childbirth, but she is present, she is there, she facilitates and accompanies

in their coming to light, to life. We have only a fragile grip on real faith and it is important to feel how tormenting the reality of believing in the redemption of Christ is, when it seems too weak or gives the impression of coming too slowly.

When this faith-trust is rooted in the educational work of a community, a spontaneous impulse is perceived in the generous and voluntary service of neighbor, especially of the little ones and the poor. Here the educational art of the midwife is expressed in identifying the impetus of life that emerges, and in facilitating its birth. The one who educates is not the cause of the drive to serve generously but can perceive the nuances of the life of the young, playing a role in orienting, in being a mediation of God's grace.

Here is the task: to be alongside, to walk together according to the times of human growth, to facilitate the encounter of grace among the little ones, adolescents, and young people with the Lord Jesus. For those who have discovered they

are not alone, that they are protected by a God who is a loving Father and a tender Mother, there is a profound urgency to be able to share the experience of a God who is so close, always invisibly by our side.

### ■ Links between generations

On a clear and serene morning a few years ago, we were walking with a group of young people to climb Mount Kenya with decisive, strong, energetic step. The landscape around us was beautiful and fresh. Along the way on the path in front of us, there was an elderly woman walking with a tired and slow pace, bent by a heavy load of wood for her hearth and, aware of our presence and without turning, she placed herself on the side of the path to let us pass. With simplicity and respect, the young people chose to slow down their pace and to silently walk at her pace. We walked uphill together and felt the deep and harmonious bond that had been established between us and

the elderly woman in a slow gait to the rhythm of our breathing. We could barely see her wrinkled face and hear her blessing for our journey. She turned onto another path and we continued our climb. We felt welcomed and accompanied. A link between generations had been created merely by walking at the same pace, at her pace! In that slow and weary gait she had left us, invisibly, something of herself and her past existence, when she certainly had more energy and strength.

That link between generations was an important lesson, which the African continent gives to today's humanity as a vision that fills with hope. In fact, it really only communicates to those who are decentralized, those who start from the other side, where the other person is, even if it can cost effort, relying on Kairos, the loving opportune moment in which God makes Himself met, communicates, and invites us to create something new, to explore new paths.

### The icon of 'Christ and the friend'

"At the end of the first meeting in Africa of the community of Taizè, held at *Mji wa furaha* - City of Joy, of Nairobi in November 2008 -, Frere Alois gave the young representatives of each nation a beautiful reproduction of a typical icon of Taizè, that of 'Christ and the friend', wishing the seven thousand young people who were listening to him the joy of the journey in company with Jesus, as His true friends.

Since that meeting, we continue to meet monthly to reflect, pray, and commit ourselves in front of that icon: it is one of the images that most significantly speaks to our heart of Jesus Friend who is at our side, accompanies us, walks with us.

In contemplating the icon, we immediately notice that the two persons, Jesus and His friend, look alike: the same height, the same *silhouette*, the same gaze, and the same radiance, however, they are not identical. The colors, the ample clothing, and the gestures are different. They do not look at each other in a relationship that excludes us but share with us the same horizon. Their silent faces, their huge eyes are open to receive us in peace.

Christ can be recognized by the cross evoked by the halo. At His side there is His companion on the journey. The arm of Jesus is on the shoulder of His friend, not in a possessive way, but rather to show us the bond that unites them and the responsibility that Jesus confers on His friend who turns toward his companion, finds support in Him, and encourages him to go ahead.

The companion, encouraged by Christ, makes a splendid gesture, the last for Jesus during His earthly life (cf. Lk 24:50): he blesses His Lord, manifesting and celebrating God the Father who wants to give us life in abundance.

Christ, the Word in person, holds in His hands a large precious book; the disciple friend has a small scroll: The Good News. Christ accompanies the friend to proclaim the Gospel in the whole world.

In contemplating this icon, we young people become aware of the call to be friends of Jesus. We feel that we ourselves can be that companion of Jesus' journey: A God who calls us friends because He has shared with all of us what He learned from the Father. Some of us young people in prayer before that icon, understand that Christ did not only bring a beautiful,

genial idea or begin an efficacious organization and structure. Rather, He involved Himself totally with life for communion with every person and peoples of all times. It is friendship that unties all of us, His companions. It is not a relationship between teacher and student, but a communion in which we belong to each other reciprocally, in mutual gift and cordial welcome. This bond does not impoverish us, it does not make us feel small before Jesus. Rather, it allows us to flourish and to bring forth fruit there, where we choose to be, *through* the other and *because of* the other".

*The young people of Mji wa furaha*





# Educators who awaken faith

Mara Borsi, FMA

mara@fma.it

*“In responding to those He met, Jesus sought the faith present in the other, as if He wanted to reawaken and bring out this faith”. This is what Enzo Bianchi affirms by presenting the figure of Jesus as an educator of the faith.*

No one can believe in place of another; faith is a personal act, which everyone must perform in freedom. Jesus knew that sometimes there is the absence of faith in people, an attitude that amazed Him and rendered Him powerless to work in their favor (see Mk 6: 6). He was also aware that there can be an unreliable faith in His Name, aroused by His performing signs, miracles, as the fourth Gospel notes: “Many, seeing the signs He was doing, put faith in His Name; but Jesus did not put faith in them” (Jn 2: 23-24), because people quickly become religious, but are slow to believe.

Instead, Jesus sought out those in whom He encountered authentic faith, and when this was present He could say: “Your faith has saved you”. Note that Jesus never said: “I saved you”, but rather: “Your faith has saved you” (Mk 5:34); “Go, and let it be done according to your faith” (Mt 8:13); “Woman, your faith is great! Let it be done as you desire” (Mt 15:28).

Jesus Christ, our pedagogue, has traced out for us the model of true life and has educated the person who lives in Him. Let us therefore assume the saving lifestyle of our Savior, we children of the good Father and creatures of the good Teacher (Clement of Alexandria, the pedagogue I, 98, 1.3).



Jesus made faith possible or made the faith already present in the other emerge through His presence as a trustworthy and welcoming man who does not claim to be the one to heal and to save, but rather the faith of those who turn to Him.

In the prologue of the Encyclical *Deus caritas Est* (2005) it is written: “At the beginning of being a Christian there is not an ethical decision or a great idea, but the encounter ... with a Person that gives life a new horizon and with it, a decisive direction” (§ 1).

Often, we forget this truth and we risk rendering sterile the mission and the effort to communicate the Gospel. Precisely because the Gospel is good news, it wants to reach people in their heart and to instill in them first, faith in the goodness of human life, so that they can embark on the adventure of existence by believing in love.

It is in this sense that Jesus taught that nothing resists faith, even when it is in the measure of a mustard seed (Cf. Mt 17:20, Lk 17: 6), “the smallest of all seeds that are on earth” (Mk 4:31); what is necessary is not to doubt (Cf. Mk 11:23, Mt 21:21), because “everything is possible for those who believe” (Mk 9:23); and He even said He was in prayer, so that the faith of one of His disciples, Simon, would not fail (Cf. Lk 22:32).

## ■ Reciprocal gain

The educator, the animator in a group, the community involved in evangelization say words that do not depend on them, whose authority is based on more distant and decisive roots. At the same time and with the same intensity, they recognize that the right to the word which is intended to arouse faith requires a style and a coherence of life.

Education is a process that invests different interlocutors with full responsibility. Educators are involved in a relationship that everyone considers indispensable for their own life and that of others. In interactive play, exchange and comparison are experienced as mutual gains.

The tool through which the relationship is produced is basically linguistic: the educational relationship is a communicative relationship. The “word” constitutes it and makes it happen.

Each of the two interlocutors says something to the other, submitting to their attention a system of signs intended to recall vital contents: the proposal of a style of existence and a global project of life.

The same things can be said of that particular communicative relationship which we call “evangelization” in the ecclesial community. The ultimate mutual intention is growth in faith and in new life. The instrument is the word, witnessed and pronounced at the service of truth, by those who have the competence to do so.

Also in this case, it is a relationship that involves in the same responsibility and in the same passion, those who evangelize and those to whom evangelization is addressed.

## ■ An evocative style

The question today is, in my opinion, to be able to set up a model of educational relationship in which an evocative style of communication is realized.

The educator who makes proposals by “evoking”, calls into question the fundamental needs of life and places self at the service of projects that overcome and challenge. This is done, however, without claiming to say things in unreformable terms, as if this was the only truth that could be spoken.

The evocative model also assures the involvement of the interlocutor, which is an indispensable condition for an educational relationship. It is done without renouncing the function as a responsible adult and without slipping into those deductive schemes that immediately burn the possibility of real communication.

The educators tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth and of the faith that many people have had in Him, with a claim: they are asked to choose Him as the Lord of their own life, to “to see history like Him, to judge life like Him, to choose to love like Him, to hope as He teaches us to do, to live in Him communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit” (RdC 38).

The educator thus invades the most intimate sanctuary of the existence of a person, with a proposal that upsets the dominant logic.



The educator justifies this claim to have something important to say when the claim to be present as a witness to events already given is established, which measure our subjectivity on a daily basis.

This means the ability to concretely place gestures for the promotion of life, up to the willingness to give one's own life so that everyone has a little more life.

It means feeling one is at the service of a project that even surpasses one's own dreams and which is disturbing, because it forces one to measure the distance that separates the experience lived from the one desired. The educator feels "only" as a servant of this project, a servant as Jesus said of Himself and of His friends with regard to life, the gift of the Father, and a demanding commitment.



### A shepherd with the smell of the sheep:

#### José Gabriel Brochero

Pope Francis canonized the first Argentinian Saint on October 16, 2016. This is José Gabriel Brochero commonly known as the *gaucho priest*.

José Gabriel was born near Santa Rosa de Río Primero (Córdoba) on March 16, 1840, the fourth of ten children of a peasant family. In 1856 he entered the seminary and in 1866 he was ordained a priest. He lived the first years of priestly ministry as a pastoral collaborator at the cathedral of Córdoba and in 1869 he obtained the title of Master of Philosophy at the University of the city. Towards the end of the same year he was appointed parish priest of St. Albert, a town three days on horseback from the city. The parish located at two thousand meters above sea level has more than 10 thousand parishioners living in isolated, inaccessible places, without roads and social services. With his appointment, he devotes his whole life, not only to bringing the Gospel, but also to promoting the life of his people through schools and many social initiatives. In fact, with the help of his parishioners, he built more than 200 km of roads, schools, churches, and founded many towns. He even goes so far as to design a railroad branch to free his dear mountaineers from the poverty in which they lived, "abandoned by everyone but not by God", as he himself loved to repeat.

He generously gives himself to everyone, especially to the poor and to the farthest away; among them there are also numerous lepers from whom he contracted the disease that led to his death on 26 January 1914.

Brochero took Jesus' words seriously: "you will be my witnesses" and he lived them, arousing in many, faith in Him. True missionary and educator of the faith, he lived

the spirituality of the three A's: *aquí, allí allá*.

*Aquí: here in your heart.*

The mission begins in ourselves. It is necessary to enter one's heart, deeply and sincerely; it is often the most difficult and longest journey to travel.

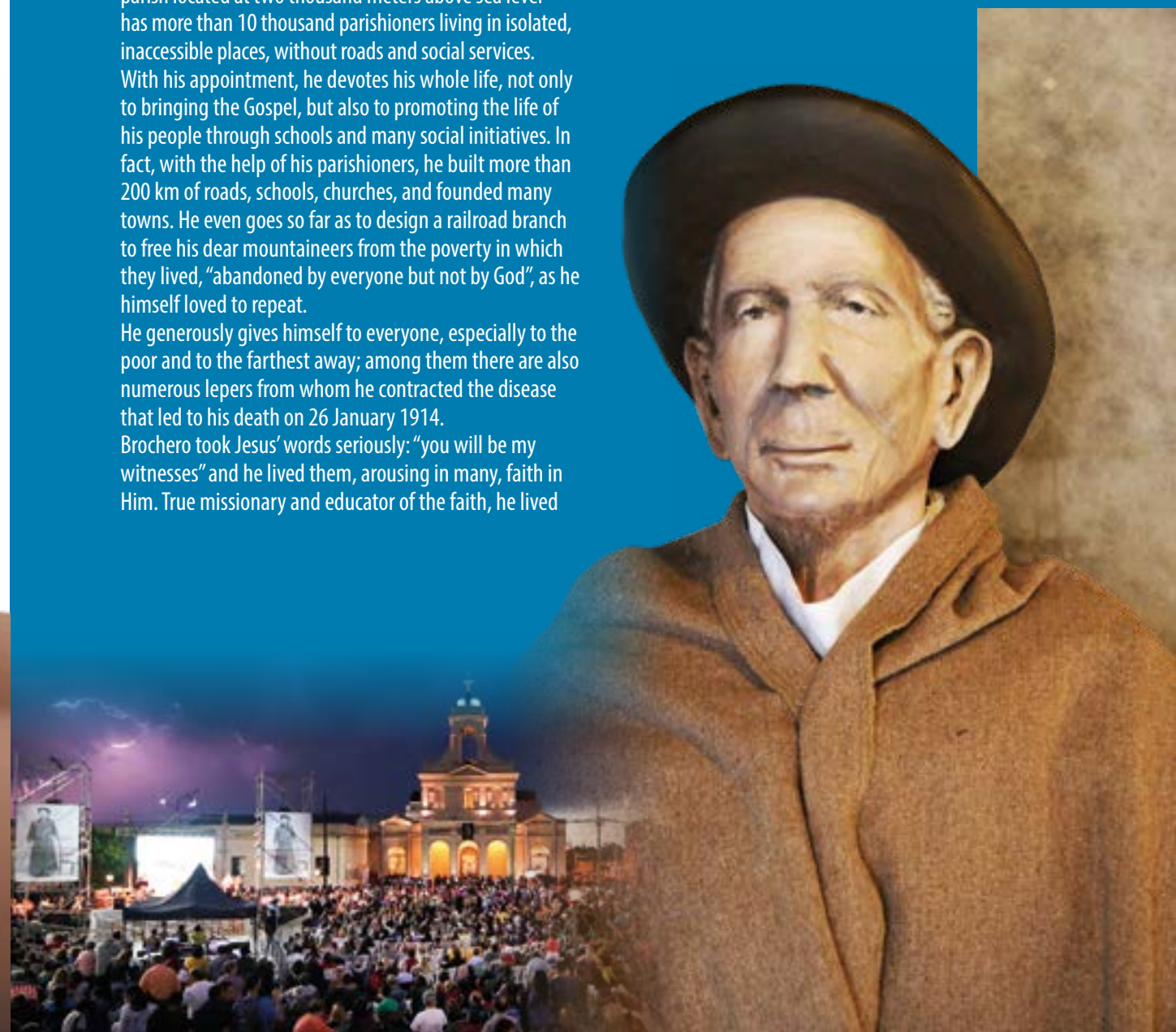
*Allí: here and now in this place*

In his own diocese, in his own parish, in his own reality.

*Allá: there, beyond*

Up to the ends of the earth that is entrusted to us. To know how to open doors and let in, to know how to go beyond traditional frontiers.

The path he has created and shared starts from within, continues in the here and now to open up and go beyond boundaries and barriers.





# Young people, the faith and vocational discernment

Giulia Paola Di Nicola – Attilio Danese

danesedinicola@prospettivapersona.it

“If it is true that Jesus presents himself as a model of obedience to His earthly parents, being subjected to them (cf. Lk 2:51), it is also certain that He shows that the choice of life of the child and the Christian vocation can demand a detachment to realize their own dedication to the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 10: 34-37; Lk 9: 59-62). Moreover, He himself at twelve, responds to Mary and Joseph that He has a higher mission to accomplish beyond His historical family (cf. Lk 2: 45-50). Therefore He exalts the need for other deeper bonds within family relationships: ‘My mother and my brothers are these: those who hear the word of God and put it into practice’ (Lk 8:21)” (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, No. 18).

In the language of young people, the word “vocation” is unused, relegated to the sacristy, priests and sisters. Some, if they have heard of it, have perhaps experienced excessive pressure towards the priestly and religious vocation and have withdrawn from it. In any case, they cannot bear the exploitation, the old proselytism, the goal of carrying out vocation roundups to increase the number of followers. The widespread and lively culture of a vocational Church has not always been breathed in Parishes and Movements.

## ■ Called to love

They understand the sense of vocation by linking it to the life stories of friends and acquaintances who tell of lived events, of those that come from

outside, that surprise and change their lives, and were welcomed in the way underlined by Pope Francis on 17 November 2017, at the University of Rome 3: “*The era is different, and we have to take things as they come. We are living not an era of change, but a change of era ... If we do not learn to take life as it comes, we will never learn to live it. This is the first step. Life looks a bit like the goalkeeper of the team, who takes the ball from where they throw it; life must be taken from where it comes!*”

There are also events that happen silently inside the soul through inspirations, illuminations of the conscience that shake habitual life, the behavior of the young accustomed perhaps to commute all day and to ‘navigate on sight’ and feel called to make a turn on the board, to change course thanks to someone who imposes self in the soul, to the point of not being able to do anything else but follow Him.

No one was created by chance, ‘thrown,’ as Sartre thought, into the cosmos. We have all been summoned to life and to live ‘*in the image of God*’, distancing ourselves from an individualistic way of life and learning *to live, to share, to compromise*. To know what it means to feel loved and summoned to something great, to sense that even without knowing how, or when it will happen, we will no longer be able to drag life on without purpose, to follow dubious ways of life. The vocation is always a call to love and to relationship with others, with everyone, no one excluded, although it is articulated in infinite ways, as infinite and unique are the creations of God. When a young person recognizes in an event a sign of the Holy Spirit who calls, he/she can decide whether or not to correspond to this call that can give a direction to life and feel in oneself the strength and the joy of detaching from the natural family, from the past, from friends to follow Him. Every young person realizes that by responding or not responding to the call, one plays out one’s own future and life.

## ■ Listening and discernment

The call of God takes into account the strengths and talents of each person. If the young person

does not respond to those talents, that vocation is ‘sad’ (cf. Mt 19: 16-22), and things cannot go well with them. After all, we give the best of ourselves if we do what we love, it convinces us and urges us towards a high goal, which we have not given to ourselves intentionally, but which values our way of being and directs us to goodness.

It would not be possible to speak to young people of a vocation without great respect for the many individual paths. One can only listen to their stories, their aspirations, to put ourselves at their service, to contribute to refine the soul, to value ideas and give time for inner maturation, until everyone clarifies to themselves how to interpret the events of their own life and orient it. Vocations are secret and unique; they are a question of ‘you for you’ between the soul and God. There is a shrine of conscience where no one can enter without fear of polluting, clouding, distorting it.

## ■ Which vocation?

The universal call to fulfill the will of God in its diversification generates calls to marriage, to single life, to consecration in the Church without family bonds, simply by making oneself available: “*Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; Then I said, Behold, I come to do your will, O God*” (Hebrews 10: 5-7).

Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church, confirms: “Perfection consists in doing the will of God, in being what He wants us to be”. The words of Father Claudel (1868-1955), contemporary of Little Theresa (*Prologue of Annunciation to Mary*, Rizzoli, 2001) come to mind: “*It is not for the stone to fix its place, but for the Master of the Work who chose it. Holiness is not to be stoned in the land of Paganism or to kiss a leper on the mouth, but to do the will of God readily, whether it is to stay in our place, or to climb higher*”. The field of vocations is undermined, difficult to cross without sinking or hurting and making people suffer. No young person should think of having been ‘discarded’, destined by God to a residual vocation with respect to the “excellent” ones. We think of the transformed vocations of those who make a choice to which they return later





by modifying it (Mary changes her vocation of single consecration into that of bride and mother); to failed or abandoned vocations (with the need to rebuild life and the pain of feeling 'traitors' or 'betrayed'); to the induced vocations (when the family directs it in a binding way, as happened in the past for the younger branches of a family); to the suffocated vocations (when the family imposes itself and provokes the abandonment of a vocation, with consequent suffering for the whole of life); to abortive vocations (when one is rejected by an institute, or invalidating diseases are discovered, or obstacles of various kinds take over ...).

We need special delicacy and care to help someone react positively when they feel blocked in their sincere aspiration to want to live a certain vocation.

Then there is the vocation of having no vocation. The discovery of Theresa of Lisieux (*Story of a Soul*, Shalom 2015) is valid for all: *"Considering the mystical body of the Church, I did not find myself in any of the members that St. Paul had described, or rather, I wanted to see myself in all. Love offered me the cornerstone of my vocation. I understood that the Church has a heart, a heart burned by love. I understood that only love drives the members of the Church to action and that by turning off this love, the apostles would no longer proclaim the Gospel, the martyrs would no longer shed their blood. I understood and knew that love embraces all vocations in itself, that love is everything. Then with great joy and ecstasy of soul I cried out: O Jesus, my love, I finally found my vocation. My vocation is love. Yes, I found my place in the Church, and You gave me this place, O my God. In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love and, in this way, I will be everything and my desire will become reality"*.

It is essential to make sure that everyone feels grafted onto the love of Christ that makes every action precious: washing dishes, sweeping the streets, teaching, carrying out an ecclesial ministry as a priest or religious, as an educator/catechist. Von Balthasar, who transcribed the 'mystical' dictates of Adrienne von Speyer, stressed that Marian spirituality precedes

any differentiation of individual charisms and universal foundation: *"The Church in its core of perfection is to be considered feminine, which cannot amaze anyone who knows both the Old and the New Testaments. Already the Synagogue had been described before God as betrothed and bride. And likewise the Church of the new covenant in her relationship with Christ who arrives at the eschatological wedding between the lamb and the woman adorned for the feast. This femininity of the Church is the comprehension of everything, while the ministerial positions held by the apostles and their male successors are only functions within this understanding"* (HU von Balthasar in Coll.

J. Ratzinger, *Mary nascent Church*, Pauline, Rome 1981, pp. 55 and 68).





# Headlights and torches

Paolo Ondarza

paolo.ondarza@gmail.com

“Constantly urged by words, sounds, images, messages, busy schedules, and smartphones that make us available at every moment, our generation is likely to lose the dimension of silence. Perhaps because this is perceived as an absence of stimuli, rather than as a propitious dimension of listening. In fact, we are more used to filling posts with words than suspending a comment and leaving room for reflection”. And yet *‘in dialogs there are moments of silence’*, Pope Francis once said, emphasizing the importance of prayer: *‘To pray, like any true dialog, is also to know how to remain silent’*. Cloistered nuns witness to this: *‘beacons and torches’*, as the Holy Father defined them, capable of *‘recognizing the questions that God and humanity pose’*.

We are at Perugia, in *St. Agnes* Monastery. Here, behind the grill, lives a small community of *St. Clare* Sisters. Among them is **Sr. Chiara Speranza**, 49 years old and 22 years in the cloister. We give the word to this woman.

**Sr. Chiara Speranza, why choose silence today?**

*“Why not choose it? Can we do without it? Together with words, sounds, images, silence is part of human life, of its natural rhythm. It is one of the ways we have to communicate.*

It is a need we carry within ourselves, which especially today, is put aside because remaining silent means that a person has time to think, to listen to oneself, to others, and to God. In a few words, *‘it is not productive’*... A person who can think and therefore be *‘autonomous’*, make choices, is difficult to maneuver because he/she has stability. It is easier to let ourselves be overtaken by the speed of a touch, of sound, of the image, of words at the cost of silence, even if it is then indirectly sought in places of well-being, in immersion into nature, etc... Speed is made for machines not for humans who have other rhythms and are not a set of gears! It is necessary to learn to choose silence to rediscover a more human dimension. Silence goes against the current. In a day in which there is a succession of things to do, I must first remind myself that *I exist*, that *I am* and because of this I can think, speak, and act”.

***In the world of youth characterized by the image, by sharing on social media one’s spirituality and faith, do prayer and silence still have meaning?***

“Silence and prayer are part of the human religious need. The attraction of mystery always draws the human heart and it also urges comparing oneself with others, seeking someone with whom to share and this is done with the means at hand. Jesus in His preaching continually used images to indicate the path to follow, to help us discover the Father’s merciful love. There is need of images to speak, to communicate. It is beautiful to share on social media and it even permits praying together, reaching many people. This does not take away the personal journey that passes through a relationship between you and the Lord. Prayer is your dialog with Him. The space of silence is not simply the absence of noise. It is a gaze between two people who do not need words to speak.

We often risk *‘showing / sharing’* faith, because in reality, we need to *‘show’* ourselves to affirm and say, *‘I am! I need to be seen!’*. We need to be recognized. But it becomes *‘dangerous’* to stop

here. Faith always starts from where we are; it is a journey that leads us to witness someone who makes life beautiful, who tells us who we really are. Here then is the challenge of *‘how’* one lives and shares faith. As Pope Francis reminds us, *‘discernment is important’*.”

***Does silence have pedagogical value?***

“Silence has pedagogical value because it teaches us to enter into ourselves, to pass from a superficial level to a deeper one. Today, we need to learn again the grammar of silence, listen to it, *‘read it’*, taste it, see it in its beauty. If lived in truth silence helps us to learn to enter into empathy with ourselves and with others, otherwise it could become a barrier, a defense, a wall that isolates us and separates us”.

***What called you to the cloistered life?***

“More than *‘what’*, I would say *‘who’* called me. Life is a continual response to a Person who has loved us first and calls us to live in this love. It is a response that for each one assumes a form within which to give oneself. Cloistered life is within this dynamic. Every choice brings the experience of something that is left behind, that is lacking. The experience of a lack digs in the heart and makes it poor, more open and attentive to grasp what surrounds it, like a gift for which we cannot help but be always grateful for.

I must say that I do not miss particular things because during these years in the monastery I have learned to live with the essential that is never absent. In the course of time, to my surprise, I began to be aware that in regard to the many things, even lovely ones, that there are and that I had, it takes little to make one happy, to feel that life is full! I think that this is the secret Francis discovered in his time: his true wealth was the Word and the Lord Jesus. What I miss and that digs deep into my heart are the faces of the people I love ... a lack that becomes desire, waiting, welcoming space, prayer, joy for every encounter in which to fully enjoy the presence of the other”.





**What does it mean to be cloistered in an 'outgoing' Church?**

"I smile thinking of those who say: *'But how does a cloistered nun live in an outgoing Church within the walls of a monastery?'*. Being an 'outgoing' Church for me is not an outward form, but it is that interior attitude which Pope Francis is calling us back to. Being outgoing is part of being created in the image and likeness of God who in the Bible, is continually presented to us as the one who goes out to listen to the cry of His people, to help them choose to live among us, in Jesus. The life of faith is a journey of continuous 'exits', of exodus from our heart, from our idols/certainties, to go towards otherness. An encounter that takes shape either by physically aiding the other who is in need, or by listening heart to heart in a small parlor of a monastery, where the other confides in you and gives you their life to cherish, to love".

**Thinking about the mission of women in the Church and in society, how does the choice of a cloistered life fit?**

"I think it is important to remember the mission of the woman assigned directly by God in creation: being a help that is equal to the man who is in front of her. The mission of the woman in the Church and in every place is to be the one who

stands before the others and helps them to be themselves. The woman is custodian and guardian of human life and this mission can become explicit in various forms, including the cloistered one by embracing humanity in its entirety, in its deepest reality. I am reminded of a phrase by St. Clare in the third letter to St. Agnes of Prague: *'...I consider you a collaborator of God Himself and the one who holds up the falling limbs of His ineffable body'*".

**What can prayer do in the face of violence, wars, and terrorism?**

*"My prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers"* (Psalm 141: 5). We are powerless before evil if we want to face or fight against the 'greatest systems', but we are 'powerful' with prayer that helps us to keep our eyes towards the good, towards life. Prayer helps us to fight against the violence that is in our hearts and to firmly believe that, as John Paul II repeated many times, mercy is the insurmountable limit that God has placed on evil. And as Etty Hillesum a young Jewish woman who died in the Nazi camps left written: *'I think I can bear and accept everything in this life and this time. And when the storm is too strong, and I will not know how to get out of it, there will always be two hands clasped and one knee bent'*. Prayer helps us not to lose hope".





# The beauty of listening

Pham Thi Kim Ngan Maria, FMA  
nganphamfma@gmail.com

In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said: Whatever you ask I shall give you. Solomon answered: “[...] I your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?”. The Lord was pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom to govern. God said to him: “Because you asked for this - you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies - but you asked for discernment to know what is right - I now do as you request.” (1 Kings 3: 5-9).

King Solomon indicates the beauty of listening. Listening is the door that introduces Wisdom. The Church, in preparation of the Bishops' Synod on the Young, asks itself, *“how can we accompany the young to recognize and choose the call to love and to life in fullness, and also asks the young people themselves to collaborate in seeking the most efficacious models for proclaiming the Good News today”*. In harmony with the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr. Ángel Fernández Arttime, in Strenna 2018, invites us to cultivate *the art of listening and accompanying* characteristic of the Salesian charism. In addition, one of the desires of every person is precisely to be ‘listened to’.

## ■ A listening heart

On the journey of education and accompaniment of the young, listening is an indispensable element. Listening means paying attention, learning times of waiting, accepting words, silences, and gestures.

Listening is an active process that requires taking care of the other, concentration, and the creation within oneself of a space of serenity so that others can share their desires, doubts, feelings, emotions, worries, and expectations. Listening implies the ability to enter into a deep relationship with others and get to know them better. Thus, it needs us to listen not only with our ears, but also with our mind and heart. Listening allows us to improve reciprocal knowledge and understanding, to prevent tension in the relationship, and to identify with great accuracy eventual educative objectives.

Daily experience demonstrate that educators and/or parents often encounter difficulties in understanding the children or the ones entrusted to them. One of the reasons is precisely the lack of the ability to listen. Children often perceive when the educator and/or parent who is speaking with them, is not listening to what the child is thinking. I often listen to girls who express difficulty in their relationship with their parents, and sometimes with the teachers, because the dialog is finalized to giving answers: “you must study

well, do not go out at night, you must do this and not that, etc.” They think they are right and have all the answers, but they do not listen with their heart.

## ■ Listening-dialog

In dialog, listening counts more than the word. An authentic dialog rests on the availability to listen to the other and on the perception of feeling listened to. Listening means to give signals of verbal and nonverbal reception, showing understanding and sharing. First of all, the ability to listen regards knowing how to receive words, verbal messages with respect and without interrupting. This

attention is not only to the content of what is said, but also to the feelings and experiences that the words imply will encourage the young person or child to speak freely. However, listening is not reduced to a simple physiological experience regarding the ear and that is

verified beyond one's intentions, because hearing and listening are not the same thing. Hearing is a physiological phenomenon that can be had independently of the individual's will and is relative to passivity. Listening instead is a psychic action that does not simply mean remaining to listen and trying to understand what is heard. Rather, it is entering into emotive communication with someone. If hearing regards the ear, listening involves the heart. The word can express a specific message; the timbre, the breath, the sound, and the modulation of the voice, however, can present something different from the word itself. As any language needs to be deciphered to be understood so through listening to the voice characterized by tone, volume, and rhythm, one can understand the emotions and the mood of the other: the agreements or dissonances, contentment or dissatisfaction, certainty or uncertainty.

## ■ The need to be listened to

The need to be listened to contains an expectation of recognition, of acceptance. When the educator or the parent shows willingness to





accept the thoughts and feelings of the other, then the other will also open their heart to listening to the mediation to build together a life path. Empathic listening fosters a greater understanding of oneself. Those who are capable of listening will be able to approach the emotional folds of others, the experiences of others as if they were their own. Empathic listening allows the educator and/or parents to 'put themselves in the shoes of the other' to understand thoughts and desires, feelings of joy, sadness, loneliness, worry, anger, and discontent. This will help the other to embark on the journey with trust and hope.

### ■ Listening-discernment

The ability to listen requires, therefore, accepting the profound emotional messages that the young person wants to transmit. This is perceptible on the face where the emotions of joy, sadness, frustration, and doubt are sculpted. The face is the most significant part of the body of non-verbal communication. It is therefore necessary to have emotional sensitivity to listen to the face of the person, to what lies behind a smile, a cry, a blush or an intense gaze. In particular, the eyes are particularly important in listening to the

an important value. The human body is a living body, a lived body; bodies speak, communicate, and possess their own language. Listening to the body, therefore, means knowing how to observe it in all its physical expressions: its non-verbal behavior, its movements, its gestures, its posture, and its gaze.

Listening is effective if the listener detaches from his/her own points of view; the educator and/or the parents, in order to make listening more positive, should distance themselves from their own preconceptions, from prejudices, from their own judgment, overcoming their own mental schemes and their own personal convictions in order not to impose them on the other. At the same time it should open the mind and the heart to 'meet' the other in his/her uniqueness and individuality, to enter into an interchange with them.

Active listening is basically the willingness to listen to the other physically and inwardly, to be able to accept what he/she wants to say, to know and understand their inner world, vision of reality, resources, goals, and problems.

Listening is an indispensable element for effective education and true discernment. Good listening can help young persons to discern,

because it encourages them to think with their own head, to give a name to what they live, to choose what is right and to choose what is Good, together with the educator.

Authentic listening, therefore, makes young people feel welcomed, loved and, therefore, more confident in the educator and in themselves. A listening heart helps children

and young people to discern and choose, to grow fully, and to discover God's plan for their life. Listening is capable of raising, healing, and transforming life.

### To know more

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face. It is obvious that there is no deep listening that is not regulated by the eyes. Listening with the eyes means knowing the other through the visual experience. Even listening to the body has

# Young people and vocation

Gabriella Imperatore, FMA

gimperatore@cgfma.org

**From the culture of the now and of the not yet. "How can we locate in a non-project culture as that of today, the meaning and the courage of a 'life project'?" This is the ambitious challenge which Pope Francis calls us to reflect and question ourselves on: the fascinating theme, and at the same time, challenging one of 'vocation'.**

A vocational journey cannot do without the patient building of a plan of life at 360 degrees (in professional choices, in affective relationships, in social and ecclesial commitments) and that requires laborious, coherent choices that often go against the current in respect to the provisional nature and disengagement of the current *limited responsibility of our actual society*. A project of life that knows how to place itself at the crossroads between "desire and call, research and encounter, response and testimony".

### ■ On the way

Vocation is that marvelous "exploration" that one lives by keeping one's gaze fixed on high, from whence everything comes, and taking concrete steps on earth, the place we are given to incarnate our identity. *Lord, what do you want from me?* To seek God's will means to desire to tune into what is in one's heart, that is, a desire for the fullness of love. What does God really want? We know that we are His children, unconditionally loved by Him. Everything that fosters this awareness allows us to mature the possibility of living the concrete choices of our existence as a "vocation". Here lies the heart of the vocation, not deciding what to do, but understanding what the Mystery wants from me, how I with my humanity can serve His presence in the world, how I can do the Good He calls me to do.

*But what does it mean today to speak to young people of vocation? How can the young feel themselves*

*concretely provoked by the theme of vocation in the here and now of their human and ecclesial experience? Let's listen to them.*

"Vocation is a style of life. Whatever the choice: religious life, matrimony, doctor, or musician, vocation means doing things with love. Whatever is done in this way responds to God's call. Thus, the vocation, more than an end, is the means for living our life, a way of accomplishing our mission to build God's Kingdom. And thinking further, it is also a gift because those who live in this way, live well and are always happy" (*Francisco, 20 Brazil*).

"Called to freedom. Yes, it is true, but freedom does not mean doing whatever you want. Being free means being honest, free of lies and delusions.





I am free because I know who I am. I know my strengths and my weaknesses. I am free because I know what is possible for me. If I am not good in math, I cannot be an accountant, and this is not a problem. Freedom means giving oneself to others, and this is the aim of any vocation. If one is not free in love, it means that it is not love” (Annarosaria, 22 Italia).

“Vocation is like a seed that God places in our hands and that must be sown so that it can germinate and bring fruit. We do not know what seed it is and what fruit it will bring; we must discover this. In order to do this, we need someone to help us to discover our vocation. This someone is Jesus. Vocation is a call from God, but it is also the response of each one of us. It is an agreement with God. He calls us to accomplish something and we respond in our own way” (Eduardo, 20 Guinea).

“Our aim is that of giving ourselves: give to our sisters and brothers what we know and what

we know how to do. This is what is asked of everyone, to be servants of each other. However, I believe that vocation means something greater. It is an invitation to be something more and to do something more. To surpass the limits of our possibilities, thanks to God’s help, by responding to His call. Vocation is undertaking a journey that God has traced out for us and for the others” (Grace, 17 Tunisia).

“Vocation is a call that produces a change in our life and in our way of living it, a change that is always positive. While before we walk blindly, finding the proper vocation is finding the map that not only indicates where to go, but also the best path to arrive there. And even if in some cases this journey leads us to put other people’s happiness before our own, in the end, following that call means always arriving at being happy” (Natalie, 22, Angola).

(cf. Questionnaire in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on young people)

*“How can we reawaken the greatness and the courage of wide-ranging choices, of the impulses of the heart to face educational and affective challenges? I’ve said the word so many times: Risk it! Risk it! Those who do not risk do not walk. “But if I’m wrong?”. Blessed be the Lord! You will be more mistaken if you stay still” (Pope Francis, Discourse at Villa Nazareth, 18 June 2016).*

*Four verbs for the journey*

**Search.** Do not be afraid of not finding. Sooner or later you will find what you are looking for. Maybe this will happen right away, maybe it will take a long time. And then there will be a meeting, an opportunity or even a stumbling block that will seem to take you away from your goals. Instead, it will open your eyes to what you are looking for in your lives.

**Dwell.** Where do you live, what are the places in which you live? That’s where the best opportunities come out. You are at an age where everything is still possible, where everything is achievable. But to become great means to realize the universal dream of life in the fragment of practical choice. Here and now. Find the way not to lose your dream, but to realize it concretely in relationships, in situations, in the big and small daily choices that you choose to do: this is the gift of your age.

**Come.** The imperative! Attention: it is not “going”, but “coming”. It has the form of the Lord’s invitation. It is a request, whose strength is underlined by the form, which presupposes an answer, the choice to abandon our comforts, our certainties. Remember the Pope’s words when asking us not to remain seated on the sofa. We must move away from our comforts.

**You will see.** To the future! We are in the era of “video”, the image seems to be more important than anything, especially the audio. In the Gospel, on the other hand, it is seeing to hear. And feeling to hear the Lord speak to us.

The vocation is a call that allows us to fulfill ourselves, give meaning to our life. God works in our human condition. Vocation is not a miraculous sign. Our vocation is the objective that God has for us. The only thing we need to do is to discover it.

# Fall in love with life

Anna Rita Cristaino, FMA

acristaino@cgmfa.org

**The relationships of our daily life and the whole of life, need to be nourished again, shaking off those things that are no longer needed. Often young people feel the need at some point in their lives, to get rid of the dust that has accumulated, and which makes them lose the opportunity to clearly see the good and the beautiful.**

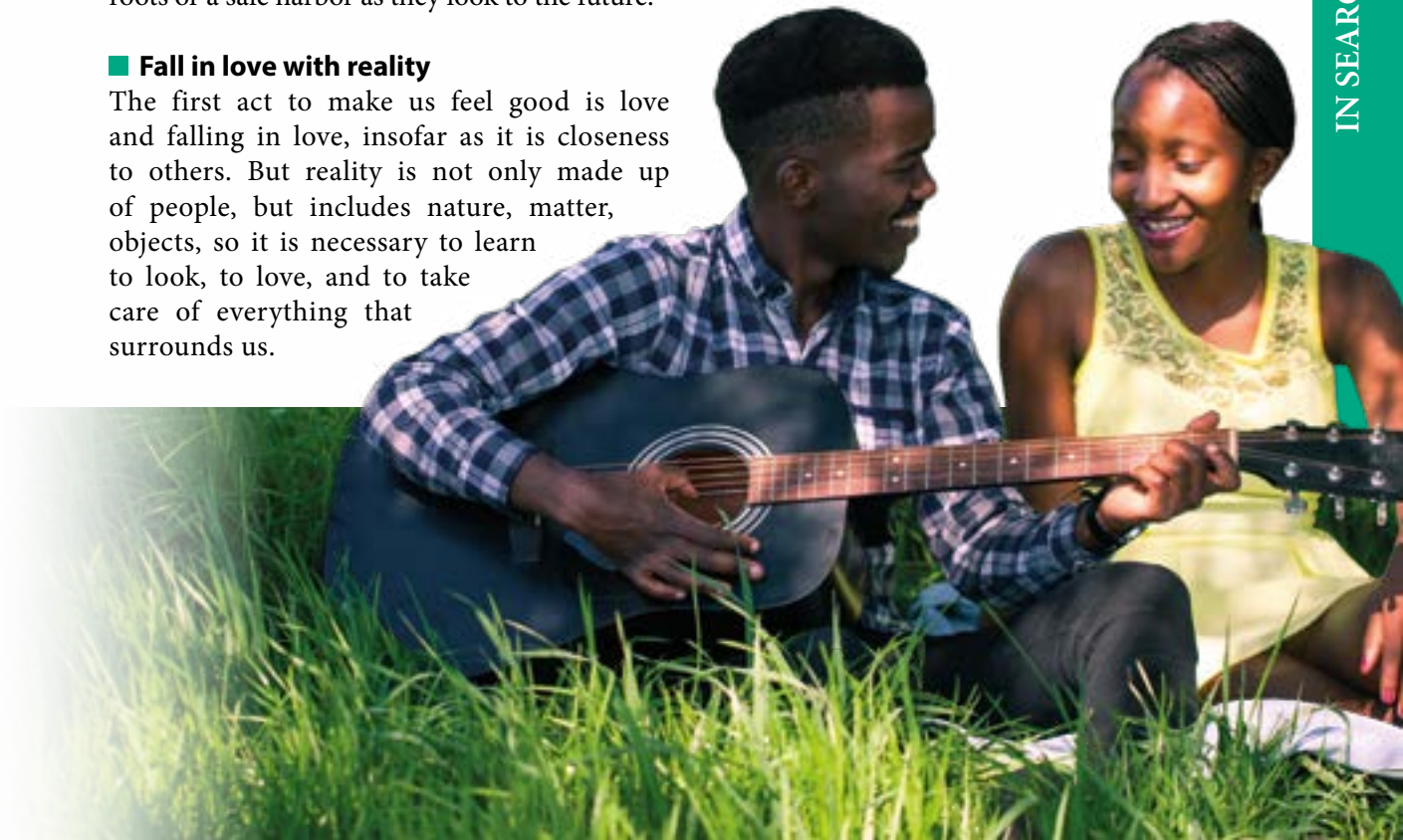
Young people are always in love. They look at knowledge, at meetings, at other people and they fall in love. They learn to love what they observe and in what surrounds them they see part of themselves. They love because they feel a strong need to feel loved. Their being in the world sometimes has almost dramatic tones. The young people I know fear boredom and loneliness. Being alone in the world makes them feel suspended in the void. Nothing strong couples them with their roots or a safe harbor as they look to the future.

## Fall in love with reality

The first act to make us feel good is love and falling in love, insofar as it is closeness to others. But reality is not only made up of people, but includes nature, matter, objects, so it is necessary to learn to look, to love, and to take care of everything that surrounds us.

In order to live their own reality well young people must leave space for their love, for their unconditional and innocent ability to fall in love. Falling in love, when it is not just a thirst for selfish or narcissistic fulfillment, leads them out of themselves.

Roberta is preparing for the final state exams of High School. There have been several sad, difficult moments in her life in which she has doubted herself, her possibility of being loved





## Testimony

Life is an opportunity, grasp it;  
Life is beautiful, admire it;  
Life is a challenge, face it;  
Life is precious; take care of it;  
Life is wealth, preserve it...

How many times has it happened that as a teacher I observed young people on the street or engaged in extracurricular activities, such as outings or field trips, and noticed their great lack of attention towards everything around them (a beautiful landscape, nature, the people they meet, the greatness of human works, etc. ...). I think that in our society defined as "postmodern", it is necessary to re-educate children and young people to appreciate the extraordinary nature of their life, starting from its simplest aspects, from small common things.

The French author **André Frossard** told a group of young people who were discussing with him the meaning of life: "Attention, young people, the gaze that remains too long on oneself can definitively fixate on the abyss of the nothingness from which we have been removed by a mysterious goodness". Therefore, it is necessary to teach young people to raise their eyes and to look around! Life is rich in mystery and has unmeasurable value. Science and technology certainly offer us the capacity to discover the secrets of our natural life, but we must not forget that our interior gaze extends beyond the horizon of our experience and of our aspirations. **The young must be guided to discover and fall in love with life**, even in the awareness that it is not easy to understand the best way to have them grasp the taste for life and to make life desirable, just as it is not easy to teach them to accept life, ready to carry its burden.

and of loving. Falling in love for her was an awakening: *"I found myself again, I felt more 'radiant', I looked at myself through the eyes of my boyfriend and his love for me gave me back the affection that I owed to myself; to take care of me and my life, and by doing this I discovered how beautiful and good my days can be"*.

### ■ Awakened to life

Every awakening is moving from areas of darkness to areas of light. Upon awakening all life is given back to us: creation,

people, objects, the piece of the world we are living in. When a boy/a girl experiences this feeling of being called by life to love, they inevitably feel a different dimension of their own depth within themselves. They experience their own soul that yearns for the infinite, for the eternal.

That depth, that dimension of the heart that pulses is good ground "to provoke" the encounter with God. Place the thought that there is a greater, infinite, eternal love. Provoke the search for God that leads to touch life with all that it contains.

## Testimony

I discovered life. ...  
It is the journey, **the way**, not the object!

In its simplicity and in its greatness,  
now I am amazed at how I reached this awareness.  
It is **the value that we give** to each single moment, to make sure that the following moment will always be even more terrific.

Let's not be preoccupied with after, **but that the present be fantastic!**

Let us act so that any daily activity serves **to better our way**, to arouse **joy in ourselves and happiness in the people** close to us.

Sports, music, dance, whatever gesture and exercise can always serve to make our path better and by doing this, we also improve the pleasantness of our life and of the people dear to us.

You will find yourself **in love**... with your life!

**Fall in love with life**, search for joy again, feel joy again. For Ermanno Olmi, it is life in itself that merits being the object of love. "It is not enough to fall in love with him or her" – even though Love is one of the fundamental things and when there really is that Him or that Her who shares everything with you, dreaming together is madly fantastic – we must fall in love with every little thing that amazes us, that pleases us, that surprises us, because *"if we are in love with life, and life merits being the object of love, joy appears by itself"*.





# Creativity as a resource

Redazione DMA

editor@rivistadma.org

Young people anticipate changes and are the main protagonists. By questioning the new generations and their expressive modalities, we can read our times and interpret the most relevant processes. In particular, the technological innovations of communication and digital media have contributed to the transformation of traditional categories of knowledge but are also generating new social and cultural forms that are reflected in their turn in languages, attitudes, aspirations, imagination, and in the values of the new generations. It is the creativity of the new generations, which is expressed not only in art, but also generates innovation in all social, economic, and cultural spheres.

I must confess that as a girl I hurried to go to the newsstand to get a copy of *'The Morning'*. Well, one of the visible signs of a generational change is the relationship with the printed page. Just get on the metro in the morning and check how many students have a newspaper along with school books. In fact, there has been a generational leap and it is immediately registered at the level of communication. Young people are digital natives and their communication has adopted the simplification of *twitter*, the pictograph of the graphic signs of the cell phone; to dialog made of direct visual contacts, the olfactory replaced by the virtual *chat* through the screen. Their walk through the streets with their ears clogged by the headphones of their music signals that they are 'disconnected' from social, political, and religious complexity. However, this diversity of young people contains surprising seeds of creativity, innovation, and fruitfulness.

## ■ The Movement Maker

The maker movement is based on *do-it-yourself* technology, a philosophy that emerged in the United States in the 1950s and refers to a form of production that anyone can produce, distribute or promote. As *Chris Anderson* explains, what distinguishes contemporary producers from inventors and *do-it-yourselfers* from other eras is the incredible power that modern technologies and a globalized economy offer, both to connect and to learn about the use of new means of production and distribution. The maker's culture is characterized by horizontality and action in synergy to generate changes, to change the traditional models of production and consumption through collaborative learning and collective creation. The movement is based on the exchange of knowledge through the Internet and the acquisition of material for the construction of a



product or working together on the same project. The first examples of workshops on creators are the **FabLabs**, where different people, especially young people, combine efforts and resources to work together on the same project. This is why the movement of the makers has moved from *DIY* to do it *with others*.

## ■ The maker culture education

The makers' culture has reached the field of educational innovation. The educational environments that are inspired by the culture of the makers are based on learning by applying the contents of the disciplines present in the curriculum. Therefore, technology is used as a pedagogical tool, as Susana Tesconi emphasizes: "*Students learn to live in a world where technology is part of the center of life. It is no longer possible to give them papers to memorize, because now the reality is changing, and today's image does not work for tomorrow. We need to teach them to look for information for themselves and to awaken their creativity and critical spirit*". Susanna Tesconi contributed to the development of the *Aulab* program, with the *LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial* (Center of artistic and industrial creation, Asturias, Spain). A program that, in Spain, introduced digital production in the formal education field, making the *FabLab* schools, so that educators integrate their teaching with available equipment, generating innovative and creative teaching materials. Digital production and learning methods based on the culture of the maker, is now a visible reality. An example is the introduction into the curriculum of the subject "Technology, programming, and robotics" of the schools of the Madrid Community. To help teachers teach this subject, the **BQ Company** has developed a portal (<http://diwo.bq.com>) with practical experiences and educational resources, also aimed at families and educators of many

other places that are interested in incorporating the culture of the makers into their classes or their homes.

In the field of non-formal education, an initiative that uses the culture maker to promote participation and social inclusion of young people is the *Breakers Program* in Spain of the **Orange Foundation**, where young people in vulnerable situations learn design techniques of collaborative environments, or digital production, but also other transversal skills such as teamwork, communication, respect, etc.

The maker's culture has also spread to Iberian-American countries, such as Mexico. In 2017 a

group of young people, led by Antonio Quirarte and Gustavo Merckel, launched the project *Los Hacedores*, inaugurating the first makerspace in Mexico City and a web portal (<http://hacedores.com>) to spread this culture in the country. In the field of education, in particular the *Jacaranda Education* organization, has promoted various actions of collaboration, innovation, and

pedagogical management in technical secondary schools in Mexico City. In fact with the *Tinker* program, a series of practical and theoretical workshops are held for teachers and students in *Maker Education* with a focus on desktop production (3D printing).

Another example is that of the *Escola do Projeto Âncora*, in Cotia in São Paulo (Brazil), where a teacher, after seeing the students joke about wasting water, decided to organize his class to investigate the water crisis in São Paulo. In eight months, they had created a rainwater collector. Throughout the project, they studied the concepts of physics, water geography, chemistry, mathematics, and history to understand drought. The architect *Heloisa Neves*, one of the promoters of the movement in Brazil, stresses that attention must not be placed on machines, but on people. "*Technology only facilitates creation. The maker's culture overturns what we learn at school. You are the agent who causes*".





Founded by 6 students in 2010, **BQ** belongs to the technology holding company Mundo Reader, a conglomerate of companies involved in the design and production of electronic devices and accessories, with the primary objective of helping people understand technology, encouraging them to use it, and inspire them to create it. BQ is a company engaged in training in technology, in the development of products related to the **Open Source** universe and in the promotion of the philosophy of **Do It Yourself** (DIY). It is a Philosophy that the company applies to its products and software solutions in order to make technology an instrument inserted in a process of democratization to promote improvements in the world and in the life of users.

**Maker A-Z.** *Arduino, 3D printers, FabLab: the revolution of digital artisans for a democratic technology.*

The makers are among us. But they come in peace. This book explains who the makers are, what they do, and why their movement - open source and collaborative - is 'revolutionary'. The protagonists tell the story: interviews with Massimo Banzi, Enrico Bassi, Costantino Bongiorno, Francesco Bombardi, Stefano Maffei, Bertram Niessen, Alessandro Ranellucci, Massimo Temporelli, edited by the journalists of the magazine *Altreconomia*. 'Maker A-Z' addresses the most popular aspects of the world of digital artisans. What is Arduino and why was it born in Ivrea? What happens in a FabLab? What are the secrets of digital fabrication and the tools of every good maker? But above all, it tells why the maker movement - unlike traditional artisans and those who use proprietary technologies - always shares the results of projects and their 'instructions', and how this can profoundly change the world of production. A book built as open hardware: everyone can use it with simplicity and discover a new planet of solidarity economy.

# Melodies

by Rachid Hami

Palma Lionetti, FMA

palmalionetti@gmail.com

**Melody... the most beautiful part of music. It is the expression of ideas, moods, and situations, pleasant to listen to and goes straight to people's hearts. It is like a line that moves our emotions, bringing them from one side of our soul to the other. Musical theory combines the pitch of notes with rhythm. In a piece of music, the melody is the most identifiable and singable musical structure.**

The melody is then, a polyphonic experience that is a sentimental media that manages to exalt individuality. The single voice. Thus the film **The Melody** knows how to deal frankly with many of the social and 'political' issues that are crossing Europe in recent years. The film is a lesson in civilization, an educational paradigm in which lightness, intelligence, and irony are combined with the social paternity of those who believe in teaching as a service for the formation of new generations.

Simon Daoud is a middle-aged man, a talented but disillusioned musician, perhaps depressed, who finds himself teaching a difficult instrument like the violin while overcoming misunderstandings and prejudices.

The class in which he finds himself giving lessons is composed of a band of twelve-year-old multi-ethnic Parisians, children of immigrants and thus second or third generation French. His sullen and disillusioned animosity collides with that of the young students. Paradoxically, it is precisely the children who regenerate in him the passion for music and the benefits it can give in an environment of integration, formation, and personal identity. Students understand that playing together in an orchestra can represent an emblematic victory over themselves, while Simon reacquires the meaning of affection and life.

The subject takes us back to stories of youthful redemption already seen ("La classe - Entre les murs" by Laurent Cantet of 2008 is perhaps the most quoted source of inspiration) and has a level of predictability, but the Franco-Algerian director Rachid Hami knows how to find a strong but never banal voice, demonstrating an unconditional trust in music (and in cinema ...) as an engine of integration and as a possible social synthesis.





### ■ The formative value of music

The great protagonist in the film is really the music, also becoming the important glue in difficult situations and the best antidote against fear of whatever kind.

A film, considering the theme, which has exceeded the temptation to slip into the rhetoric and that gifts us with a beautiful and surprising vision on children and on music. “*They do not focus for more than 30 seconds!*”, explains Professor Brahmini to the famous violinist Simon Daoud who accepted the challenge of preparing average students from the peripheries to play in concert at the Paris Philharmonic.

From the first scenes of the film we can glimpse a difficult world, that of the school, a point of meeting-clashing between generations and different cultures. What language is there to start a dialog amid the bullying and prejudices that are always lurking. Music is the language that allows the sharing of feelings and emotions, bringing out the beauty of each of the children.

These foul-mouthed, dispersive, chaotic, rude adolescents will be able to involve the professor in their world to such an extent that he will say that in working with them he feels happier despite their being ‘rascals’. It is a film that is very witty in psychological observations, careful to ‘record’ only the authentic, to interact with the viciousness and the ease of the children always, and for this, *La mélodie* involves and excites, unleashes joy, and knows how to amiably disengage the possible cynical slag from the soul of the spectators.

### ■ History of a ransom

*The Melody*, presented out of competition at the 74th Venice Film Festival, although belonging to the most classic canon of musical films

*The melody is never given; it is a process, a path, a ‘feeling’ to tend toward.*

*“No one should be left behind because everyone is fundamental”.*

*I know you can do it!  
I am counting on you.*

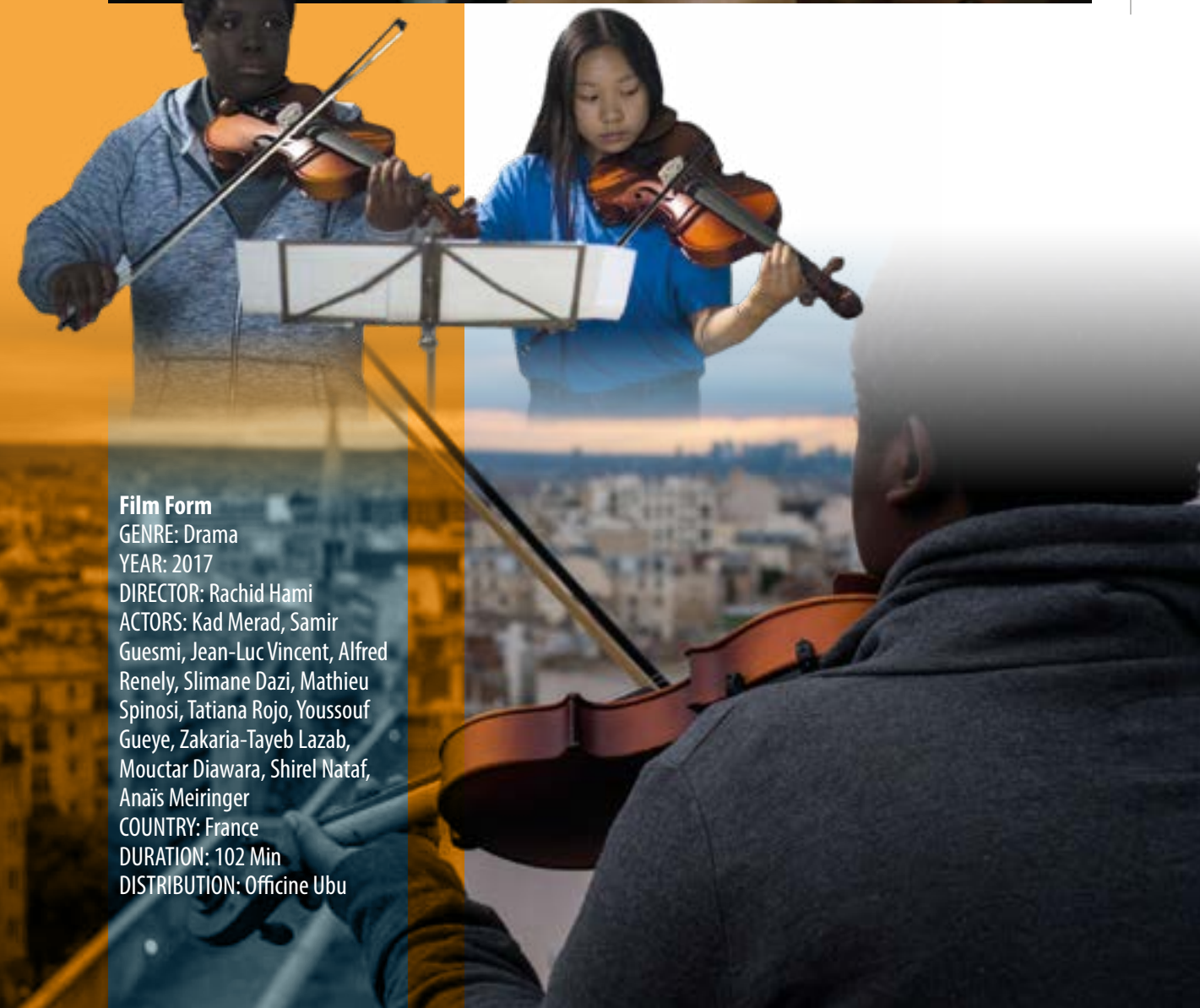
set in a school, is a fully successful work through its sure and technically flawless direction.

Director Rachid Hami found important elements of variation within the genre. The film, in fact, does not stand on the classic moment of the concert but, shortly before, on a small moment of union between the characters. The tense silence before execution becomes a sign of the triumph of the professor

over a class governed by noise.

Marginalization is finely told and manages to reduce the generational challenge that every nation faces to a single, very powerful image. A boy without a father who finds, in music, in art, and in who teaches it, a reason for living. That image of Arnold, a shy and silent boy of African descent, who is immediately kidnapped by the passion for an instrument so ‘distant’ from his daily horizons and who climbs on the roofs of Paris and learns to play a melody, becomes a more beautiful icon than a conquered identity, within a group where each element, in the logic of the orchestra, follows its path and the right note to create a joyous harmonic ensemble. **The violin is the door to other worlds.** Arnold plays on the roofs, not to be seen, not to make noise, in order to broaden horizons, to dream of a distant future, perhaps of the beautiful neighborhoods or the buildings at the center that can be seen in the distance. His melody is gradually refined, and his determination even scrapes away Simon’s depression.

It is one of those films that are good for the soul, where simplicity and lightness is an added value and, let’s say it, essential. An intergenerational dialog that is the true goal of a society that wants to respond to the crisis, with an enthusiasm that conquers the viewer thanks to the eternal therapeutic value of music, a master in making different worlds communicate without words.



#### Film Form

GENRE: Drama

YEAR: 2017

DIRECTOR: Rachid Hami

ACTORS: Kad Merad, Samir Guesmi, Jean-Luc Vincent, Alfred Renely, Slimane Dazi, Mathieu Spinosi, Tatiana Rojo, Youssouf Gueye, Zakaria-Tayeb Lazab, Mouctar Diawara, Shirel Nataf, Anaïs Meiringer

COUNTRY: France

DURATION: 102 Min

DISTRIBUTION: Officine Ubu



# The Angels of Daraya's books

of Delphine Minoui

Emilia di Massimo, FMA  
emiliadimassimo@libero.it

*The angels of Daraya's books, by Delphine Minoui, tells the story of a group of young Syrian revolutionaries who saved the books of the city of Daraya by bringing them underground and creating a secret underground library.*

On Facebook, on the page of Human of Syria, there is an image that captures it. "The image is strange. An enigmatic photo, without a trace of blood or bullets, escaped from the Syrian hell. Two men in profile, surrounded by walls of books. The first bends over a half-open volume. The second scans a shelf. They are young, about twenty; one has a sports jacket thrown over his shoulders, the other a well-worn cap on his head. In the room without windows, the artificial light that laps their face accentuates the incongruity of the scene. Like a fragile breath in the interstices of war".

## ■ There is no prison that can lock in the word

The book, 'The angels of the books of Daraya', is the story of the lengthy correspondence that Delphine Minoui manages to exchange for long months with the youth of the library of the rebel city. As the city is slowly razed to the ground by the barrage of bombs dropped by army helicopters, the journalist is at work in her house in Istanbul. In front of the



screen of her computer she learns of the existence in that besieged place from where they succeed with mounting difficulty to get news, of a secret library created and kept alive amid enormous risks, by a group of local youths.

Amid the various dangers, the thread of reading holds together the young besieged people in the world never to recede, making Daraya, a city eight kilometers from Damascus, a symbolic city of the Syrian Revolution. Since March 2011, the inhabitants have risen against the raid of Bashar al Assad, constantly demanding rights and democracy, so the city had become one of the centers and engines of dissidence in Syria. Following the violent repression of the regime on the demonstrators, part of the population is armed to defend the city; the young people who were studying at university, for the first time take a rifle in their hands and form combat brigades against Assad's army. For this reason, in November 2012, the regime decides to bind the city in a fierce siege that will last four long years, until August 25, 2016, when the exhausted martyred city will surrender to loyalist troops. Daraya becomes during the years of its siege, the symbol of the resilience and resistance of the Syrian people. Daraya as a unique model of government, in which civilians, despite the war, maintain control over the military. In the televisions and in the regime media, the city continues to be depicted as a stronghold of terrorists, a den which must be eradicated by all means.

## ■ The living memory of Daraya

Among the bombardments with explosive barrels, the gas attacks, the hunger pangs that

squeeze the isolated inhabitants, to react to the regime's violence and emotional mortification, the sense of defeat and terror that pervades the population, forty young volunteers decide to devote themselves to searching and securing thousands of finished books under the rubble of homes and schools. They clean them, divide them,

*"Books are life, they allow us to recover the last crumbs of our culture while the regime suffocates us".*

and classify them by collecting them in the basement of a bomb-disemboweled building; this is how, in the darkest heart of the Syrian war, a secret library blooms, a "paper fortress". Over 10,000

volumes of Arabic and foreign fiction, philosophy, theology, science, are available to the population every day, free of charge. In precarious conditions, almost without electricity, telephones, and internet connection, the books become for the inhabitants of Daraya the only means of escape and hope, a clandestine treasure to be defended through courageous and vital resistance. The story of *The angels of Daraya's books* and of the library, where everything can heal and be thought possible, is a testimony document that brings to light a heroic page of the violent conflict that has torn the Syrian territory and population. A story that becomes a universal metaphor of the struggle for the defense of the freedom of humankind besieged by tyranny, which "finds comfort only by reading testimonies from people who have lived similar experiences, as narrated in the volumes on the siege of Sarajevo, a mirror of their own history, of their tragedy, of their pain; of their courage and their struggle for freedom. It means feeling less alone and rediscovering an inner strength that moves you forward". Ahmad,



Shadi, Hussam, Omar, bring to safety the books they find in the bombed and abandoned houses of Daraya.

They dig into the rubble and save those libraries disfigured by a too violent story and give the words covered by the debris of the explosions a new home and a new life in the mind and in the eyes of the people who can still read them.

The *paper agora* is located in the basement of one of the city's buildings, where the

*"A hymn to liberty and to tolerance, the inestimable symbol of a power that chooses to oppose the violent oppression of war with the beauty of literature, of life".*

boys decide to create a space that can house the saved books and that can become a haven for all the besieged people of Daraya. Without running water, electricity, food, basic necessities, without

medicines and without any shelter, they will always be able to enter those dark and cold rooms, illuminated by the warmth of words, a beacon in the long night of the siege. They see their friends dying, families dispersing, homes crumbling, life drifting away as they run through the rubble to save themselves from yet another explosion. Yet in books they find the peace and the certainty that their dream, the image of a freer and more democratic country, can become reality. They

resist horror with courage and firmness, with dignity. February 27, 2016: the city wakes up to a surprising silence. The sensation that living the present has a new meaning. "Even the walls come back to sing. The street artist travels through the city to paint hope in color. On a facade gutted by the movement of air, he drew a little girl; with her little hand she writes: *Hope*. Despite the bruises, Daraya continues to celebrate life".

Hope



## Called to choose

Mariano Diotto, SDB

m.diotto@iusve.it

Life always puts us in front of a crossroads. The call to choose is the kind of vocation that we all have. Sometimes the choices are easy, while at other times they are very complicated. Teenagers who are called to make choices in this age are very convinced of this, which of itself is not difficult but becomes so because there are millions of choices, all attractive and all possible. Even choosing how to live in this society is not easy for today's young people.

### ■ The story of Evan Hansen is one of these!

His adolescence is told in a moving Broadway musical that has won numerous awards: **Dear Evan Hansen**. Everything starts with a letter from Evan, a high school student suffering from social phobia, who finds himself caught up in the suicide of a classmate. To bring together the family of the deceased boy, always considered a bad person, he pretends to have been a great friend of his, inventing stories and non-existent situations that however had the merit of telling an ideal dream life, which is difficult to achieve. His story may be that of any teenager who is very often unfortunately even in our day, facing the difficulties of life alone, with companions who do not seem to see him or parents who are busier working than taking care of the children.

But the situation calls Evan to make a choice: a good choice. He will thus be able to bring to life in that family destroyed by pain for the loss of a child, the true values of life, conquering even the girl of his dreams and launching a strong message on adolescent depression. The main song is called: *For forever*

and says: "Let's walk a bit and talk / Would it not be nice? / There is nothing we cannot discuss / Let's talk about and take into account everything we see / it's the sky / now and forever / Let's let the world to go on forever / It looks like we could go on and on like this infinitely / All we see is the light / forever / Because the sun shines bright forever / We'll be fine forever like this / Two friends on a perfect day".

*Every human being has been given a great virtue: the ability to choose. Who does not use it, turns it into a curse and others will choose for him (Paulo Coelho).*





### ■ The secret of the call to choose

So the call to choose in your life will always be individual and be simple if there is a friend by your side, or your companion or your family.

**Laura Pausini** in her song of 1994, now fallen into oblivion, is entitled *A friend* is thus sings: “It’s easy to get away you know / He too like you, has his troubles / But when you need it, he will be here / A friend is like this / You do not need words ever / With a look you alone you will understand / That after a no he will tell you yes / A friend is like this / And remember that as long as you live / If a friend is with you, you will not get lost / In the mistaken roads taken by whom / Does not have a friend like this in life?”.

But the call to choose also comes when we reach the end of life. Death has become the taboo of our times. But even at that moment the choice of how to live that experience requires courage. This is what **Slimane** masterfully tells, a singer who became famous in France for winning

*The Voice* talent show with his song entitled: *Je serai là*: “When the time will pass on my life and my loves / When my son’s laughter will have resounded during the day / When the wrinkles on the forehead will have decided to stay / When there will be more memories than moments to pass / I will be there mom / I will be there / Be tranquil / your child will be there / Mom I will be there / When there will be more candles than cake for your birthday / When you will be my mother but also grandma / When your beauty will be closed in a trunk and leave your place to your charm / When in the street they will ask you: Do you need help, madam? / I’ll be there mom / Sleep tranquilly because your son will be there.”

Because the call to choose takes place every day, in different ways, by different people and, as St. Matthew says: “Watch, therefore, because you do not know either the day or the hour”.

*Tomorrow I will be what I  
have chosen to be today*  
(James Joyce).



## A short video on the metaphors of community life

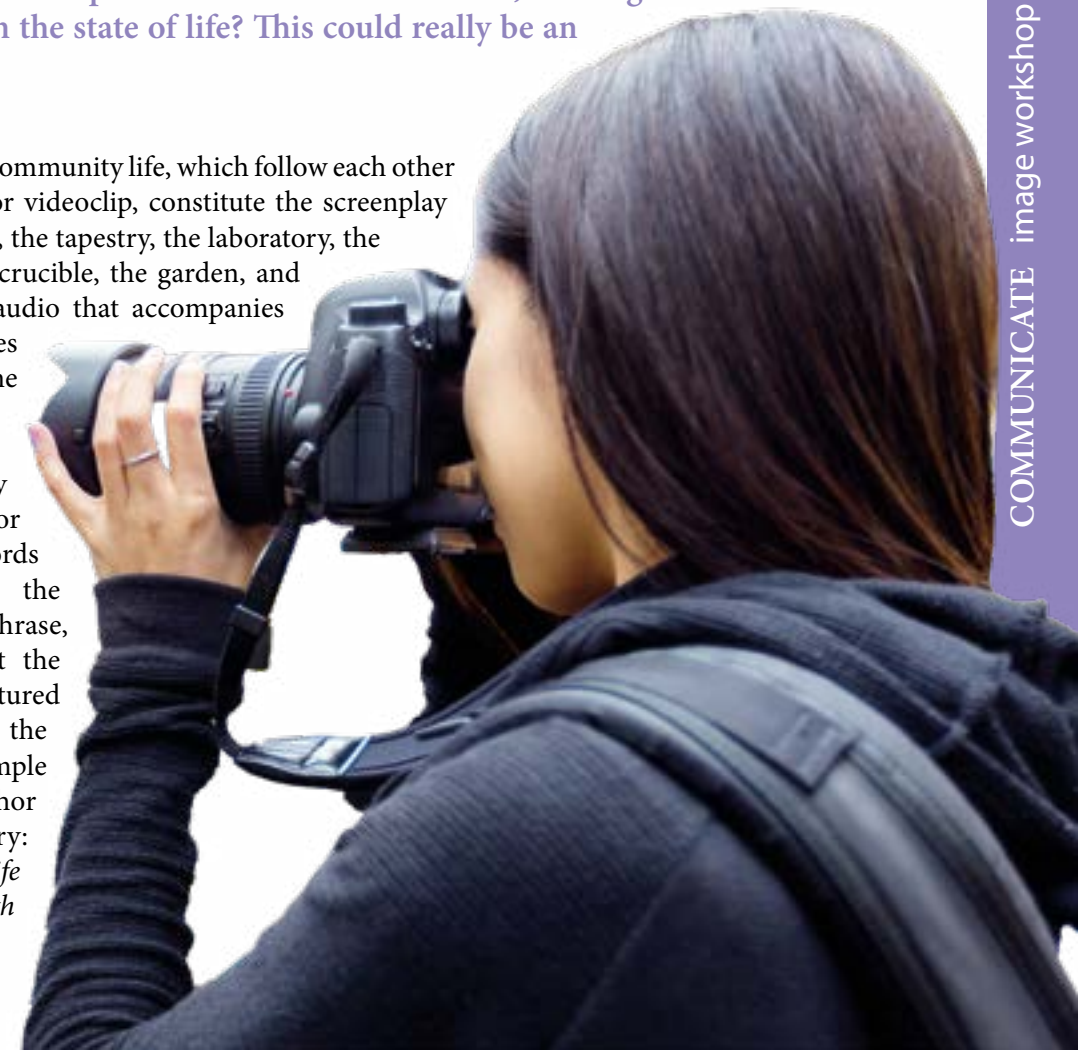
**Caterina Cangià, FMA**

sisternet@thesisternet.it

At the heart of Christian life is the call to joy that God addresses to everyone, especially to young people. This call is “God’s plan for men and women of all times” because no one is immersed by chance, but every life and every presence in the world is the result of a divine vocation. How to mediate this profound and extraordinary reality to young people? Could the creation of a video on the community dimension of consecrated life be a concrete opportunity to invite dialog with the Lord Jesus, listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit to move steps on the paths of fundamental choices, starting from the one on the state of life? This could really be an opportunity.

### ■ A sober script

The metaphors of community life, which follow each other in the short film or videoclip, constitute the screenplay and are: the family, the tapestry, the laboratory, the net, the shell, the crucible, the garden, and the Church. The audio that accompanies the short sequences that unwind, one after the other, is resumed here and there through very short sentences or even through words superimposed on the shots. A short phrase, because you want the attention to be captured by the flow of the video. As an example we take the metaphor of the tapestry: “Community life is woven with





*different threads. They are different ages, different sensitivities, different people. Different, but all committed to achieving the same charismatic design, because each thread contributes to the beauty of the whole, the gray as well as the gold. The tapestry emerges from the diversity of the threads and the design of God*". This is the spoken word. The only two phrases superimposed are: "unique for the One" and "different, but One". Each of the eight metaphors is built this way.

### ■ The young people resume

Some meetings with young people precede the filming phase, because it is necessary to create a draft for each scene of the short film, deciding in advance how to make each shot. These meetings, full of dialog, decisions to be taken, and intense reflections because the shots must reflect the content and values that are to be transmitted, are valuable opportunities for formation. Then we move on to the distribution

of roles: cameraman, director of photography (which will also act as a lighting technician), sound engineer, and editorial secretary. These are the indispensable roles, in addition to the role of director covered by the animator of the group, FMA or lay/secular. During filming two forms must be completed: The **Check Form** and the **Editing Form**.

You do not need expensive equipment, even a Reflex digital camera is enough. The main skill to be exercised when shooting a video is to keep the camera stable. In the absence of the tripod, the shoulders and the arms must be kept very firm with the elbows well close to the body. With the easel it's easier. It is better to think of your video as a sequence of moving photographic shots, which are then the same frame. The sequence of these very short clips will make our short film on the metaphors of the community pleasant, if it is done by taking care of the

composition. Here then, for the metaphor of the family, there will be a fixed view of a lit fireplace where the movement is inside the frame, with superimposed "giving and receiving love"; the framing of two people from behind, sitting by the fireplace, with superimposed "get company"; the framing of the silhouette of a person peeking out from behind a juxtaposed door, from which one sees a hand holding the stem of a rose, with superimposed "to apologize"; the framing of two young hands holding the hand of an elderly person, with superimposed "taking care"; to conclude with the framing of the face of an out-of-focus person who has hands in front of her and takes care of a flower, with superimposed "to have at heart".

Filming from the third to the last shot, will be done with a very slight zoom in front. If we prefer not to zoom, we can apply an animation effect when editing. This effect is called the "Ken Burns effect" with iMovie and gives the

impression that the camera moves around the photo (panoramic) or approaches and moves away (zoomed in).

During filming, our formative action towards young people is facilitated because we are constantly at their side. Discussing the mode of shooting, paying attention to detail, the angle to use, and the composition of the frame are opportunities to be grasped to reflect on the strength of the chosen metaphor and its deep meaning. For example, discerning the meaning of the reciprocal "to have at heart" will lead us to express our daily being attentive to those who need our attention and to cherish every single person in our community. To do so is to live the Word: "The multitude of those who had come to the faith had one heart and one soul" (Acts 4, 32). The sensitization of young people to the choice of life can be masterly stimulated by the filming carried out for the creation of a video. Try it to believe it.



### The Check Form

Data written during shooting provides important information that are:

- production notes, to remind the editor of some specifications
- the date on which the filming is made
- the digital cassette or form on which the scene is recorded and the scene number
- the take, or an indication of how many times the scene has been taken
- the title
- the name of the director
- the production company that finances the work
- the type of audio recorded during filming

### The editing Form

On it are reported, by the secretary of the edition, information related to the scenes, such as:

- the name of the secretary of the edition
- the title of the film
- the name of the director
- the date of filling in the form
- the numbers of digital cassettes or forms
- scene and shooting numbers
- a double input matrix to enter the time code at the beginning and end of the shot and the shooting duration code as well as the boxes to record the success of the audio and video filming



# Vocation liquid or solid?

Dearest Friends!

We are on the way to the Synod on Youth, and I want to convey to you an anxiety that almost leaves me breathless: a sister met a young woman to make a vocational proposal and in dialog, the young woman spoke about the 'liquid society'.

The young woman asked her what the sisters think about this reality that makes it difficult to believe in religious life as a choice forever.

I've heard of a 'liquid society', but I did not imagine it could have such a big influence on young people. The young woman recalled that the creator of this concept died last year: Zygmunt Bauman. You know him, do you not?

In order not to increase my ignorance, I immediately went to ask Mr. Google who said: "In his latest works, Bauman intended to explain postmodernity using the metaphors of liquid and solid modernity. In his books he maintains that the uncertainty that grips modern society derives from the transformation of its protagonists from producers to consumers. In particular, he links concepts such as consumerism and the creation of human waste, globalization and the industry of fear, the dismantling of securities and an increasingly frenetic liquid life forced to adapt to the group's attitudes in order not to feel excluded, and so on".

Chapter XXIII, the Capitulars had spoken about it. Perhaps the young girl is right to ask the question. Perhaps sometimes, we see this 'liquidity' in our community life, in the response to live the vows.

Come on! *Do you happen to be more a 'consumer' of community life, than a 'producer' of life in communion, which is more attractive to young people? What do young people of today think?*

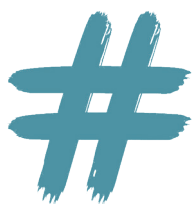
Let's go! The Synod begins, and we cannot lose such a strategic event for the growth of 'solid' Salesian vocations. See you later!

*Words of Camilla!*

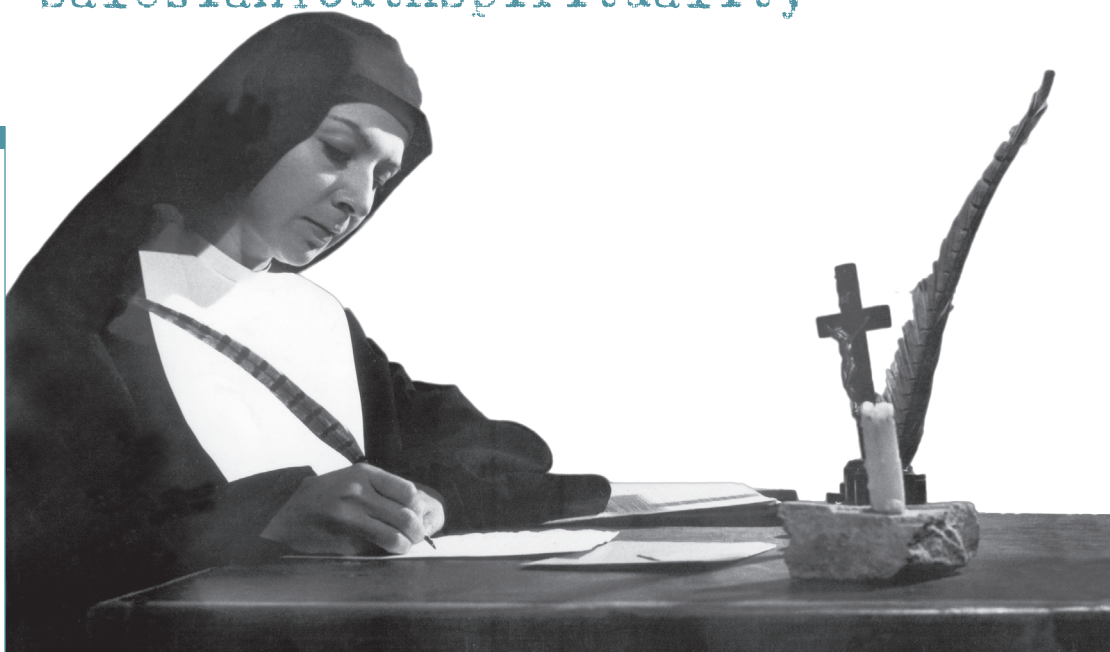
Mamma Mia! So many things are true, but I want to understand it well. Let's ask ourselves if our communities suffer the consequences of the 'liquid society'. Now I remember that in the Acts of General







# SalesianYouthSpirituality



## *✍ write to you...*

*“Do freely all that charity requires”* (L 35, 3)

Freedom in writing, freedom in being. Therefore, freedom to act.

This expression states a precious teaching of Salesian Youth Spirituality: *freedom* opens horizons and *charity* seals a life rooted in the love of Christ, whose mystery Mother Mazzarello knew through personal experience and that of others, “the breadth, length, height, and depth [...] that surpasses all knowledge” (Eph 3: 18-19).

## The spirituality of encouragement

*Mother Mazzarello always distinguished herself for her great ability to encourage the young entrusted to her, so much so that her style of communication was defined as the “pedagogy of encouragement”*

The reason for the courage of Mother Mazzarello is the strength of a clear and robust faith, which is incarnated in the wisdom of a “yes” to life, renewed daily with enthusiasm and generosity. To live every day in Charity and for Truth, responding to the call of Christ, mysterious and demanding: it is the courage of the young Main who surpasses the laborers in strength and skill, working in the fields with her father; it is the courage of solidarity that assists the relatives affected by disease during the typhus epidemic, from which she will be infected; it is the courage of the educator, without culture and without means, full of love and wisdom, which makes Don Bosco dream of an Institute of religious dedicated to the education of girls and young people of the working class, the most abandoned, the poorest.



Living in a  
Salesian way  
the digital DMA  
Magazine...  
[www.rivistadma.org](http://www.rivistadma.org)





“Dear young people...  
do not be afraid  
to listen to the Holy Spirit  
who suggests daring choices to you.  
Make Him hear your cry:  
let it resound  
in your communities”.

(Pope Francis)

