

#withtheyoung



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The second issue of the DMA Magazine brings a rich contribution on the reality of **intergenerational dialogue**. In the commitment to ***dialogare*** **#conigiovani**, targeting the verbs: *listen, dialogue, choose, take care*, we wish to promote the culture of dialogue.

Wisdom dwells at all ages of life. This certainty leads us to live in an attitude of welcome, of reciprocity and closeness, of Gospel hospitality that does not know barriers of any kind against others. We are all living parts of the world community, of the family community, of the school community, and of the parish community. Intergenerational dialogue creates a network of relationships that consolidates even more the value and the sense of community as a space for human and spiritual growth toward the stature of Christ. This reminds us of Jesus' accompaniment of the disciples, conferring on dialogue the status of interior journey, because it gives supremacy to the Spirit of God who opens us to His surprises. As we read in EG 88: "*The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction*", welcoming the diversity of thought, of age, of background, of vision, and of culture.

Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello entrusted us with a charism of holiness and traced out a synodal journey with the young, weaving intergenerational dialogue that made possible a prophetic present and future for the Salesian Congregation. From an infinity of dialogues with the young in their daily life, they taught discernment as a life style. Intergenerational dialogue requires humility and gratitude to learn from each other, to grasp the essence of each person, to give the best of oneself, and to seek God's will for each one. This is where the fruitfulness of the Preventive System is revealed.

The Working Document (nos. 14,15), *The Young, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, highlights the importance of an intergenerational dialogue based on personal maturity, the values of welcome, of friendship, of reciprocal support, and of accompaniment in vocational discernment. The young declared their joy at having been considered interlocutors in the synodal experience: "*It was exciting to feel taken seriously and we feel that the dialogue between the young Church and the mature Church is a process of vital and fruitful listening*" (RP 15). Listening is the essential condition of life. It is the air that allows us to know each other's reality and events in greater profundity. This is the time-space to mature reality and to be fruitful today.

**#conigiovani**, "*without ever getting tired of choosing fraternity, looking at the sacred greatness of our neighbor*" (EG 92) and becoming their traveling companions.

## Editorial

## In dialogue

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# Dialogue... to interpret

## DOSSIER

# The power of dialogue

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From communities to the community. *We are members of each other* (Eph. 4:25), is the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the 53<sup>rd</sup> World Day of Social Communications that is celebrated on June 2, 2019. We need to recuperate the dimension of reality without filters in which the person is at the center with their human, true, and authentic ties. It is fundamental to restore to communication a broad perspective, based on the person, valuing interaction always understood as dialogue and as the opportunity to encounter the other.

### ■ The art of dialogue is the real revolution

*"If there is a word that we must repeat to the point of tiredness, it is this one: dialogue. We are invited to promote a culture of dialogue looking for every means to open instances for this to be possible and to allow us to re-build the social fabric".*

The culture of dialogue implies an authentic apprenticeship, an asceticism that helps us to recognize the other as a valid interlocutor. It permits us to look at the other, the diverse, belonging to another culture and Country, as a considered and appreciated subject to listen to. Today it is urgent for us to involve all the social actors in promoting *"a culture that favors dialogue as a form of encounter"*, that carries ahead the search for consensus and agreement, for a just society, capable of memory and without exclusions. *"Peace will last in the measure in which we equip the young with the arms of dialogue, teaching them the good battle of encounter and of negotiation. Only in this way will we be able to leave the heritage of a culture that knows how to discern strategies, not of death but of life, not of exclusion but of integration"* (Pope Francis).

### ■ The joy of dialogue

God does not only listen to us when we speak to Him. He always listens to us even when we are speaking with others because He too is an interlocutor in this dialogue. When our dialogues with others are 'pleasing to God' then we experience the joy of dialogue. If you think about it, unless you talk, you remain completely foreign to each other, even if you are physically close, because there is no encounter. It is the shared word that brings encounter: I do not speak of you without you. I am not the one to define you, you





are. In this exchange of words is experienced the joy of dialogue, a very deep experience that goes to the very roots of the human person. In dialogue we discover not only the elements of truth in the positions of others, but we become aware that in a 'dialectic of authentic wisdom', we can re-think our truth, we can say it in another way. It is in this virtuous dynamic that we discover the joy of dialogue. Words can often pierce like a sword, they can destroy relationships rather than create them. Giving the word to another, wanting to listen before speaking, is the best way to act toward another. It is the only way we have to resolve conflicts peacefully. God has not given us any other weapons, only the word. This is the deep reason why the practice of dialogue is the source of joy.

#### ■ A dialogue between generations called *Life*

"The Church becomes word; the Church becomes message; the Church becomes colloquy" (*Ecclesiam suam*, n. 67). In a world marked by the diversity of peoples and the variety of cultures, 'walking together' is fundamental to give credibility and efficacy to the initiatives of solidarity, of integration, of promotion of rights and of justice, showing what creates a culture of encounter and gratuity. It is precisely the young, living in daily contact with their peers of other religions, convictions, and cultures who stimulate the entire community to live intergenerational dialogue. This calls for courage in speaking and humility in listening. Pope Francis says that age does not count for understanding the heart, and above all, for the heart of the youth because *"the young walk on two feet like the adults, but unlike adults who keep them parallel, they always have one in front of the other, ready to go, to burst forth. They are always launched ahead"*. Imagine life like this, a continuous, fruitful dialogue between the generations. *"Young and old must talk to each other and*

*they must do it more and more often: this is very urgent! And the old as much as the young must take the initiative. There is a passage from the Bible (Joel 3: 1) which says: 'Your elders will dream dreams, your young ones will have visions'"*.

In his vision of intergenerational dialogue, the Pope invites the young to look for ties with their grandparents, not because they live the faith with greater conviction, but to begin from the discards (young and old) to 'pull the adults' into this bond, inviting them not to feel dispensed from confrontation with the past and the urgency of the future. Both are full of experiences and expectations.

**Educate to respectful openness and to sincere dialogue with the other; acknowledging all their rights and basic freedoms constitutes the best way to build the future together, to be builders of a civilization of love.**

*"The young are focused on the future and they face life with energy and dynamism. But they are also tempted... to give little attention to the memory of the past from which they come, in particular the many gifts transmitted to them by their parents, their grandparents, and the cultural experience of the society in which they live. Helping the young to discover the living richness of the past, to treasure its memory, and to make use of it for their choices and opportunities, is a genuine act of love towards them, for the sake of their growth and the decisions they are called to make"* (Post Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* VI, 187).

***"Only if our grandparents have the courage to dream and our young people to prophesy big things, will our society continue"***

Pope Francis

#### ■ An intergenerational dialogue called *Communion*

The Apostolic Exhortation *Consecrated Life* highlights that *"in the Church and in the community, the elderly are considered transmitters of values and of charisms, and companions of the new generations"* (nos. 43, 66).

This clearly expresses the significance of Consecrated Life in the context of encounter and dialogue between diverse generations.





CL is, by its nature and vocation, the theological and human space for interchange for the reciprocal growth of the human subjects; of the sharing and involvement in the common mission of the most diverse identities and charisms; of the expression and experience of a living together built on people with diverse tasks, roles, capacities, and sensibilities; of prayer together, as a meaningful contribution to unity and communion; of acceptance and of a good relational atmosphere as the conditions to make positive and decisive choices, overcoming limitations, tiredness, and disappointments. By living this commitment every day, CL witnesses to the Church and to all of humanity, the ways in which they can transform into a valid journey of common growth, the inevitable crises and generational, multicultural, and multi-ethnic difficulties. Challenged with their pluralism, religious communities draw from the Institute's patrimony and charism to build true laboratories of communion, encounter, and multicultural, multigenerational dialogue. The multigenerational experience and the witness of building relationships of reciprocity and respect, the style of dialogue, of subsidiarity and co-responsibility, of collaboration and flexibility, of readiness to change and accept diversity, become a treasure that is increasingly essential for the Church and humanity.

### ■ A dialogue between generations called *Company*

Adults often transmit to the young what they deem important for their life. Today however, there is a call for freedom in the young that often clashes with the fatigue of the adults: dialogue needs time, and there is always less of it.

"The problem here is the dismissal of adult life, which is the true hallmark of the Western cultural universe. Not only is there a lack of adults in the faith. There is a lack of adults 'period'. There is not so much a generational conflict between young people and adults nowadays, but rather a 'mutual alienation': adults are not interested in conveying the founding values of

our existence to younger generations, who view them more as competitors than potential allies" (from the Working Document, *The Young, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment of the Bishops' Synod*, 1: 14).

Thus, the diverse generations often live in separate and alien worlds and this is not only a characteristic of our times. The dialogue between generations is complex by its very nature. It knows tiredness and suffering, it requires patience and waiting; it is an experience that sometimes closes itself in conflicts of no return.

### ■ Worlds in comparison

*How can diverse generations enter into conversation?* Belonging to different generations inevitably leads to differences of sensibilities, of experience, of culture. There is a past that would like to be held onto in the present, and a thrust toward the future that feels conditioned by the generation that preceded it. Adults transmit to the younger ones what they retain to be important for their life and do not always propose or transmit what appears important to the young, sometimes even due to the way adults live what they teach.

Comparison manifests the credibility of the adult world and its fatigue. It shows by example the kind of life that is worth living. The younger ones, through the natural experience of going beyond limits, fear to be trapped in the past, to be stopped from making their way that often feels different from that of their parents. Thus a conflict is generated that belongs to life and its growth, and that is an element of novelty and development.

In this tension, the young grow if there are adults who know how to recognize in it a resource that favors growth in freedom and the manifestation of an original plan of life. All this requires the maturity of adults to accept the dimension of detachment that education comports and the reality of a child who asks to be able to become her/himself.

In today's context, this process is made especially difficult by the characteristics of contemporary society. The acceleration of changes, the digital revolution taking place in society, make the distance between generations grow more rapidly than in the past, making the experience and the proposals of the adult generation seem outdated, considered strange

in its sensibilities, fashions, tastes, languages, and values. Two worlds that often become impenetrable, incommunicable. Thus, diffidence is generated in both: adults who judge the young and undervalue their thoughts and desires; the young who look at adults with disdain, closed in their world and, more often, in their solitude.

Today, however, there is a strong yearning for freedom in the young. The journey toward freedom passes through the capacity to dwell creatively in the confines of their identity and plan of life. Only the young who have beside them adults who live as fulfilled people, content with their life and with their condition, mature and responsible will they understand this. At this time, it is more difficult to keep the channels open of a meaningful communication between the generations. On the one side there is the proactivity of the young who tend to burn their bridges. On the other, there is the existential fatigue of an adult generation, tired out by the frenetic rhythm of life, which often leads to an inability to





build a mature dialogue that causes growth and generates innovation. Dialogue needs time and adults not only have little of it. They often do not know how to dedicate the time they do have to listening, to closeness to the youngest, to make the effort to understand what is passing in their consciousness. Moreover, at the end of a day of work that is not always gratifying, of relationships that are not always serene, of commitments that overlap in a continuous race, many parents and adults do not have the energy to listen to their children or young people and take an interest in their lives, to exercise the loving kindness that nurtures growth.

*"In some regions, the role of the elderly and reverence for ancestors are key elements for education and contribute strongly to the formation of personal identity. The extended family – which in some cultures is what the family really means – also plays an important role. Some young people, though, find family traditions oppressive and they flee from them under the impulse of a globalized culture that sometimes leaves them without points of reference. In other parts of the world, though, there is no actual generational conflict between young people and their elders, but rather a mutual estrangement. Sometimes older people do not try or do not succeed in transmitting the basic values of life or else they adopt 'youthful' styles, reversing the relationship between generations. In this way the relationship between young people and their elders risks remaining on the affective level, leaving the educative and cultural dimensions untouched"*

*(Final Document of the Bishops' Synod, III, 34).*

### ■ Is dialogue possible?

*Interrupted paths, those of the relationship between the generations? Or is dialogue still possible? On what conditions? It is a bit like asking ourselves if there is still room for education today. Choices are needed that give new quality to the life of adults, that lead them to overcome tiredness, to be reconciled with their life and age, able and available to 'be adults' for themselves and for the young who are growing, looking to them and leaning from them, even dialectically.*

We need to educate adults ready to take up the responsibilities of their condition as adults, able to put themselves into play, to continue to grow with the young entrusted to them by life and by responsibility. Humble adults, aware that this unique time cannot have teachers but rather companions on the journey, able to remain close to the young, taking to heart together the fatigue of growth. Companions of the journey who have already walked a part of the road and have learned from this to know its beauty and effort, recognizing that one and the other can be discovered and not taught, because the way of looking and being has changed. Adults who are ready to accompany the search for the meaning of life, to remain close in bewilderments, ready to listen to young

***Not teachers, but companions on the journey.***

### Reading, a strategy for intergenerational dialogue

Books have always transmitted knowledge, thoughts, emotions, which go beyond the barrier of people's life time. Older people, the 'elders' in his essay are those who know how to tell the stories they read to children and younger people. Even the child or young person has a world to relate to, made up of wonder, curiosity, contemporaneity, and innovative abilities, able to 'update', include, and motivate older people to understand the society in which we live.

Reading is always a 'reading together' that is experienced in most cases, first between reader and author, then the dialogue between people of different ages, sometimes even eras.

The advantages that reading brings to intergenerational dialogue are manifold: to relate the world of childhood with that of mature adulthood; to encourage contact and transmission of

experiences, knowledge, different ways of living among young and old, in a relationship of mutual growth, innovation, stimulation, and inspiration on the part of the younger generations towards the older.

More directly, 'reading together', represented by the intergenerational reading in which the protagonists are people of different ages and cultures, can contribute to overcoming situations of isolation and to improving living conditions.

For older people, 'reading together with younger people' can strongly contribute to improving reading skills, understanding oneself and the surrounding world, stimulating memory and imagination, generating healthy emotional relationships.

In this sense, reading can take on a real role in experiencing the richness of intergenerational dialogue.

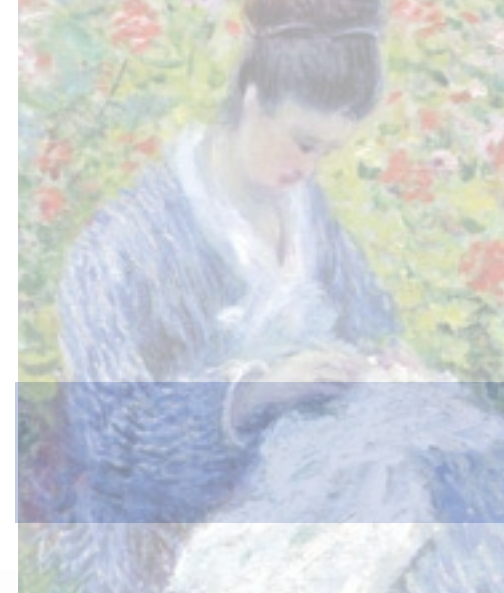




people to understand in them the questions and openings to the Spirit, and to read their life, the direction that society is taking. The subjects for a resumption of dialogue between generations can only be adults, aware of their responsibility and, at the same time, eager to share a path that demands solidarity, vigilance, willingness to 'be there', even through silence or a wordless closeness.

The Lebanese poet **Khalil Gibran**, in a poem speaking about parents and children, compares the first to the bow and the second to the arrows. The

bow serves to give direction and propulsive force, but it is the arrows that go fast and far. Without the bow, the trajectory of the arrows would be uncertain, the journey slower and shorter. And the bow, without arrows, serves no purpose. They are the arrows that must fly to hit the target; the bow must remain where it is, ready to direct and to relaunch other arrows. The metaphor indicates the path of a harmonious and collaborative coexistence, in which dialogue and understanding can be the winning cards for authentic relationships between different generations.



# Dialogue





# Reading from another perspective

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Is it possible to educate to *resilience*? Is it conceivable to build a help system that is resilient in the various educational environments? Resilience, known and studied in international cultural debates between the scholars of Social Sciences and Educational Sciences, introduces a particular point of view with which to observe the phenomena and management of complex situations. They spread a work method useful to the management of individual and collective situations of particular difficulty, that can produce fatigue, frustration, suffering, with the risk of blocking the positive growth and development of the person or of a group, of a community, of a people. Working with resilience means placing oneself within an evolutionary and non-deterministic perspective. It expresses a process; it is not a finished condition that endures over time. It requires cultivating and hypothesizing paths of help and of self-help.

## ■ The thread of the story

The term resilience appears for the first time in the studies conducted by *Emmy Werner* in 1955. This researcher draws the attention of the international scientific community to a new paradigm: it is not certain if a deprived child, victim of tremendous sufferings, who lives in a state of abandonment, and in an environment poor in stimuli will become a delinquent and be destined to an unsatisfying life at the margins of society. At the same time, this does not mean that extreme conditions are not to

be considered as risk factors that can negatively influence subsequent development. Werner's research and that of her collaborators evidence, contrary to expectations, that in spite of suffering it is possible to undertake a road capable of positive reorganization. Re-tracing the trail left us by the scholars of resilience, we find many testimonies of children who, having lived extreme situations, became resilient adults. The many testimonies of people who survived the concentration camps during

Is resilience education possible? Or is this also just one of the many pedagogical fashions that occasionally move on the landscape of educational reflection? Resilience before being an educational approach is a bet on life. People who have suffered traumas in their own existence (abandonment, abuse, war) and have been able to re-elaborate their suffering and vulnerability in a positive way, highlight the importance of some individual and collective behaviors as antidotes to the folding in and disintegration of oneself.

World War II and more, urge studying and looking for factors and indicators that can help personal reconstruction. Toward the 80's of the twentieth century, *Stanislaw Tomkiewicz* proposes a description of factors that can help an individual become a resilient adult, the same ones that served him to integrate life in the Varsavia Ghetto and in the concentration camp. Tomkiewicz sub-divides the factors into three groups, following the path of the subject first, during, and after the traumatic event. The ability

to give a positive response is tied to biological and personal powers inherent in everyone and in the context in which we find ourselves. Certainly, the traumatic event cannot be canceled out and neither can it be thought that, given the reactions that can be developed, indelible signs do not remain. The signs are an integral part of a person's history, they represent the passing of time, experiences matured, and in some way, narrate a part of life. It could be a part that the person may be tempted to reject because it is too painful to accept and that however, can be transformed and reorganized in a new way.

The traumatic event risks blocking growth, inducing the person to withdraw into the condition of





victim, turning exclusively to the past and not finding ways to reorganize the future.

### ■ Efficacious help and long times

The path of reconstruction requires much time and a relationship in a function of help. It deals with discreet, delicate help that is able to listen, know, create a rapport, a relationship of trust, and discover, starting from the point where the other is, the conditions of strength and of weakness.

The need is to re-tie the threads between past, present, and future, thanks to the skills of the person and of those close to them: family, friends, professionals. Mental and physical suffering persist and reconstruction does not necessarily occur. An indispensable condition is the presence of a context capable of welcoming and taking on the condition of vulnerability.

Taking charge of a person is not only for

the professional, the expert delegated for diagnosis and treatment, but involves the community of life, society, the values it expresses and the system around which it is organized. Resilience rather than being a concept is a prerequisite and a cultural perspective towards which to strive. In this present historical time crossed by the dynamics of powerful changes due to the economic crisis, to globalization, and to the presence of complex critical issues in which the future of the person is continually re-defined, it becomes fundamental to set up contexts for growth capable of enabling people to cope with difficulties and challenges. This is what justifies educating to resilience today.

### True stories of those who make it

"I was born into a simple family. Growing up, the struggles were increasingly difficult: Dad's pathologies; and when I was eighteen years old, my mother flew to Heaven with an aggressive cancer. After three years, Multiple Sclerosis arrived. It entered and devastated everything. I lost my sight, the use of my limbs. It threw me into a wheelchair. In the beginning, it was very difficult to get used to having to ask for everything. The greatest difficulty? Going back to University. Those who knew me as the agile girl, on her feet, was now seated. They look at you with different, sorrowful eyes. I understood that people are different, not because of 'physical problems', but because each of us is special in something. I used to go for entire days to the University

because I liked the company of 'Laboratory H', the area of the University to which children with disabilities refer. The laboratory staff helps you with travel, study, and socialization. You feel part of a family.

I understood right away that it was a safe place where you were the protagonist of your life. During that time, the illness had violently struck my memory. I could not even remember my name. They assigned two tutors to me, two guardian angels. They helped me to accept my new life, but above all, Me, bringing me to my Degree, my great dream" (Alessia D. F.).

"Dear Prof, so begins the letter you gave me a few days ago, after meeting you in the renowned restaurant where you work as an executive chef. I told you about this competition and you wanted to meet me, delighting my palate with your dishes. The restaurant manager told me that you are a special person and you immediately replied

that the person who welcomes the fears of others and turns them into courage is special. You referred to me and to some other profs whom you met in the three and a half years of imprisonment in Petrusa.

You begin the story by saying that at the time of the arrest you felt "a destroyed man", that you were enrolled in school because it was the only activity proposed by the prison. You already knew how to cook, but from this path you drew on the theoretical knowledge you lacked and the "tools to analyze the past, face the present, and dream of the future".

You ask me the meaning of 'resilience'; I explain to you that this term concerns the properties that some materials have to resume their shape after being compressed and deformed. In your letter, you tell me that "resilience is therefore not only the ability to resist, but also to reconstruct one's life path, finding a new key to reading oneself, society, the State, moral values. Therefore, resilient are those who are willing to change, those who are willing to think they have somehow been wrong and are given the opportunity to correct their course and generate new possibilities, for themselves, their children, their loved ones, and the social fabric in which they are immersed."

"In jail, I learned the importance of instruction and formation. I learned patience, I learned to count to 10. To you, dear Prof, I dedicate the feeling that I am a new person and my proximate goals: a state diploma and the chef star" (Wilma G.).

"Eighteen years is a beautiful age, the world seems made of foam and you are the master of the world

you walk, tread, recreate. I was 18 and left my home behind, turning to the University: a brilliant student in one of the most prestigious high schools in my region, never a problem, just the desire to study, because studying has always been my dream. In one of the areas where early school leaving is among the highest, having a winning story is medicine. It fills your pockets with hopes and a future that seems to be certain. I had won a scholarship to a boarding school of excellence, I had a faculty that I loved already in name, so many dreams to realize, panoramas to see. In the first two years of university I held up; I struggled in the university with books that never ended and grueling exams. The third year, the collapse: in one session, the longest one, I could not even take home an exam.

For the first time in my life, my race stopped. I spent the summer determined to give up, because I had a suffering to which I could not give words.

I had only one card left to play: the Erasmus scholarship, already won. I headed to Valencia. I left without great hopes. I had returned home. After being crushed for years by the weight of responsibility and perfection, Spain cured me and gave me back my youth, my time, my smile. Valencia was my year 0: from there I left again, and now nobody stops me" (Chiara C.).

(from *Stories of Resilience*, <http://rolemodel.erasmusplus.it/#storie>)





# Invest in bonds

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As Jesus recommends to us in the parable of the talents, all of us, taking into account our possibilities and the talents we have received, can find the best way to render fruitful the gifts that have been entrusted to us and for which we must give an account as good administrators. To make them bear fruit you need to invest: we suggest investing in bonds.

If we ask ourselves who the people are that seem happy, removing our gaze from the irenic publicity images, we are forced to become aware of the decisive role that good relationships have in regard to personal happiness in our family, with friends, and colleagues. In the environment that surrounds us, we see the opposite: the spread of unhappiness and the multiplication of relational suffering. There are conflicts, physical and economic traumas, separations, divorces, feminicides, children running away from home, attempted or accomplished suicides, violence, bullying...

## Human relationships

It would be possible to say that human relationships are the source of unhappiness or even, as Sartre thought, 'hell'. If this is how it is, investing in bonds is a risk that would be better to avoid. A diffused suspicion accompanies the experience of a friend who betrays, of a falling in love that turns out to be a blunder, of work colleagues, friends, in solidarity with struggles and ideals that disappear or betray over time. But for the exceptions that last a lifetime, all relationships over time are corroded by quarrels, indifference, and malice. Even if we live in continuous communication with everyone, constantly with the TV on and cell phones in hand, we often find ourselves immersed in a 'lonely crowd'.

Let's return to the sentence of the actor I. Bergman: "The truth is that we were not taught to love at university". Perhaps they have not taught us this simply because the attitude of keeping bonds that are both stable and flexible cannot be learned at the school desk, from books, or by studying various

*Should we conclude that the fate of any good relationship is inevitable? Should we surrender to the impossibility of calibrating the modalities of relationships favoring the changes that inevitably accompany the development of each person, the situations, the unexpected events?*

philosophical and moral theories. Too often good rules and rational behaviors are not useful. What counts rather is having internalized the beauty and importance of enduring bonds, having considered them in regard to one's own happiness and that of others, thus deeming it necessary to learn their secrets, nourish them, and re-kindle them when they tend to go out. We learn to love by loving, through imitating credible witnesses, and with the exercise of good will. We know that the first witnesses of the possibility of keeping bonds and the whole family alive are the parents, especially those who over time, renew their love 'despite'. There are always the 'despites', that is, the obstacles to overcome such as differences of character, predispositions, goals, languages, habits, not to speak of greater difficulties such as possible addictions, deviations, morbid attachments, ruinous events. Parents who are incapable of taking care of their bonds, weaving and re-weaving the canvas of mutual understanding, and lack compasses that they can transmit to their children, end up by producing perverse effects. Bishops who govern without a fraternal community risk the heavy judgment of Haemon to his father Creon in the 'Antigone' of Sophocles: "You would be king in the desert". In fact, learning a satisfying relationship is a valid good independently of a

specific vocational choice. One could decide to marry, or to remain single cultivating specific relationships, to consecrate oneself in religious life, but in order for the various vocations to last, it will be necessary in every situation to have learned to cultivate bonds, that is, to love.

## Taking care of bonds

Unfortunately, the prevailing contemporary culture seems to row in the opposite direction, due to the emphasis placed on the individual, on rights, on the need to be realized as individuals in the professions, in passions, and in the soul. When one is centered on the care of one's self, the other is seen as functional to oneself and subordinated to one's gratification. It is not by chance that we are faced with young people and adults with unstable ties, at the mercy of affections dictated by attraction, at the mercy of temporary needs, in love with the myths of the 'beautiful and impossible' social media, exposed to marriages destined to die even as they are about to be born. The care of bonds is based on the fundamental rule of mutual recognition, known as





the golden rule, which can be expressed in the negative “Do not do to others what you would not want done to you” (formerly of Confucius) or, better, in the positive “Do to others what you would like done to you” (a famously evangelical rule). However, before ‘doing’, we must look at each human being with care, wonder, respect, and love. It is the conversion of the gaze that can value the other as a creature loved by God.

The defense of the bond requires that all do their part to build good relationships with their life, care for them, preserve them, prevent breakages, mend the tears. Young people today learn early to identify themselves with the warriors of star wars, in the super-heroes of struggles against the villains of the moment, against prehistoric animals, and a thousand fantastic beings reproduced in the games of the PlayStation and mobile phones. We must take up the challenge of being fighters who combat to defend their own joy and that of their loved ones, which

is never automatic. It deals with fighting against indifference, selfishness, calculated interests, in a word, against evil. The reality of human relationships teaches us that the explosion of conflicts

is inevitable and vital for many reasons. We quarrel because we love each other and we cannot be indifferent to the ones dearest to us who have the power to wound us. A misunderstanding

is enough for the daily explosions of little or big arguments, the ones that make fly heavy words and objects, slam the door, leaving the contenders prostrate, provoking a whirlwind of accusations and wounds endured and provoked that grow like avalanches and reach the black hole of communication.

When an electric and unbreathable atmosphere is set up, one tends to give in to discouragement and let the relationship die. It is up to each one to assume the responsibility of truncating or re-composing the fragments. This does not regard obeying a categorical moral imperative, but the awareness that one’s life will be invaded by sadness, by dissatisfaction, by remorse, by the alteration of the will, that weakens and dwells on the past, by the loss of enterprising vigor and of beginning again. These are all the consequences of the traumatic interruption of relationships.

J. Bouchhold affirms, “The offense attaches itself to our memory like a tic. It nourishes itself on our blood and our energy, impedes us from forgetting, and infects our wound with hatred and rancor.” (J. BOUCHHOLD, *Le pardon et l’oubli*, éd. Sartor, Méry-sur-Vise 1989, pp. 1-2). N. Astelli Regarding the healing of traumas says: “In the majority of cases, at the origins of the wound there is a problem of forgiveness” (ASTELLI-HIDALGO - A. SMETS, *Sauver ce qui était perdu. La guérison intérieure*, Ed. Saint. Paul, Paris/ Fribourg 1986, p. 30).

#### ■ Love that regenerates

Love cannot limit itself to being insipid, romantic, visceral; it is always dynamic, regenerating, intelligent. Love can also require the

ability to cease improper behavior: mothers who want to give everything to their children, not only in terms of objects but also in terms of understanding and closeness risk losing the relationship with their own psychic balance, they decentralize in a dangerous way and cause perverse effects. Wives who endure the violence of their husbands, renouncing to defend their own dignity end up in the abyss of the loss of self-esteem leading to self-disdain, made the object of the other; young people who embark on adventures of volunteering that are beyond their strength and then end by giving up entirely on pro-social actions; young people used to obeying without any dialogue, are all examples of foolish love. Pope Francis gives us pills of wisdom and experience when he invites us to prevent ruptures by avoiding to ask others for what they cannot give us. “Far

from ingenuously claiming not to see the problems and weaknesses of others, it sees those weaknesses and faults in a wider context. It recognizes that these failings

are a part of a bigger picture. We have to realize that all of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows. The other person is much more than the sum of the little things that annoy me. Love does not have to be perfect for us to value it. The other person loves me as best they can, with all their limits, but the fact that love is imperfect does not mean that it is untrue or unreal. It is real, albeit limited and earthly. If I expect too much, the other person will let me know, for he or she can neither play God nor serve all my needs. Love coexists with imperfection. It “bears all things” and can hold its peace before the limitations of the loved one”. (AL, 113).





# Intergenerational dialogue: a bridge between past and future

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*“Everything that has blossomed on the tree lives from what lies buried”.* This phrase of the Argentinian poet Francisco Luis Bernárdez well expresses the value and importance of communication between young people, adults, and the elderly. The theme of intergenerational dialogue is an open question to those who face it from the social, political, and educational point of view because interdependence between the generations based on support, sharing, and reciprocal gift is increasingly considered a resource for the growth of the human person and of society today.

The improvement of the quality of life, scientific progress in the cure of illnesses, and the low birthrate has produced a growing number of people over 80 years old and of centenarians in almost all the countries of the world. According to demographic studies and projections, in the span of a century, 1950-2050, the percentage of those over 60 will increase from 8% to 22% with different distributions according to the socioeconomic development of every continent. This determines the need to renew the model of

educational, formative, and social interventions aimed at valuing intergenerational resources existing in the various territorial contexts and promoting through active citizenship inclusion and co-responsibility in the *covenant between generations*, going beyond the stereotypes and the prejudices of the generation gap both in the family and in the Church.

## ■ In the family: grandparents, co-responsible figures in the educational process

In today's socio-political scenario, the intertwining of the generations has undergone radical changes that have given it a new intergenerational configuration. On the one hand, we witness abandonment or neglect of the older generations on the part of those younger, principally caused by migratory movement for political or economic reasons, and on the other, reciprocal support in which the 'middle generation', those over 40, help the elderly through companionship, accompaniment, hospitality. At the same time, the grandparent generation supports the adult through economic help and above all, the assistance and care of grandchildren. The relationship between grandparents-grandchildren carries out a very important function in maintaining the network of family relationships. Comparing these two periods of the life cycle - adolescence and old age - we note that, although they are temporally distant, they are very similar because both ages are characterized by intense experiences and themes, changes of roles, physical and mental metamorphosis, symbolic or real death. This affinity makes the meeting between the two generations agree on a profound educational pact in which the grandparents hold together the past and the future through the transmission of the cultural heritage and the family emotional heritage, made up of values, myths, and family mandates that are transmitted from one generation to another.

## ■ In the Church: the covenant between the young and the elderly

“Dreaming and taking the dreams of the elderly to carry them forward” is the secret of the intergenerational pact according to Pope Francis who in his Magisterium frequently insists on the





importance of dialogue between young and old for the transmission of the ethical and cultural heritage and, in particular, of the Christian faith. *"In the most difficult moments of history, it is the grandparents who transmitted the faith, as during the religious persecutions of the last century"* said the Pope in the dialogue with young and old on October 23, 2018 at the Augustinian Patristic Institute in Rome. According to Francis, prophecy is of the young, but there will be no visions of the future if the young do not know how to listen to the dreams of the elderly who represent the roots. The elderly, in fact, thanks to their experience, can give an orientation map for the great questions of existence to the young people. The young need to have wise experience backing them in order to plan the future and live the present with responsibility. Those who have preceded them on the journey of life can provide this and thus be able to imagine and build a better world together.

This is what the Pope hopes: *"For some time I have a thought in my heart. I feel that this is what the Lord wants me to say: that there is an alliance between young and old. This is the time when grandparents have to dream, so young people can have visions. I was assured of this during meditation on the book of the prophet Joel, where he says: 'I will pour out my spirit upon every person and your sons and daughters will become prophets; your elders will have dreams, your young people will have visions'."* (Preface to the book *"The wisdom of time. In dialogue with Pope Francis on the great questions of life"* by Francesco Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Author, A. Spadaro, ed. 2018).

From the point of view of education and the transmission of the faith and the charism, it is of fundamental importance to cultivate the covenant between the generations within the **religious communities** in which the generation gap, due to age differences, to pre and post council formation received, and to life experiences can make the community atmosphere heavy if each one does not daily commit to taking some basic steps toward communion, cultivating *'the culture of hospitality'*, in order to welcome the brothers

and sisters belonging to a generation different from one's own. This is characterized by some attitudes. Daily remember the sense of being convoked by the Father and sent in the name of His Son to bring the proclamation of salvation to the world, each with one's own age, history, and formation. Welcome the diversity of characters, of thought, and of sensitivities as a richness to share rather than as an obstacle that divides. Center on Gospel and charismatic values of communion, of fraternity, and of the mission to live beyond individual opinions. Avoid comparisons of better/worse, ahead/behind, etc. preferring to face limitations and problems, sometimes left unresolved or created by previous generations, through presence, counsel, sharing, comparing to plan together in creative fidelity. The dialogue between the generations could help



the young to build their human and spiritual equilibrium; the elderly to actuate relationships of greater affective harmony; both one and the other to accomplish prophetic choices, share Gospel life, and center their life more on the love of Christ. Religious communities, by drawing strength from the Eucharist and cultivating 'the culture of hospitality' between generations, can thus become real *workshops of communion* in which intergenerational and intercultural dialogue reveals itself to be a Gospel witness increasingly more essential for the Church and for humanity.

### ■ Intergenerational learning as an educational strategy

The interruption of knowledge communication between the elderly and children in the last decades has caused the problem of a deep division between the generations, which the agencies of education are committed to manage

and resolve by drawing, above all, from the idea of *life long learning*, that learning is possible at any age of life. Education during the entire arc of life from an intergenerational perspective especially, is characterized by the promotion of active citizenship and of empowerment, that is, the acquisition of positive power in one's life and the capacity to value one's points of strength and weakness through dialogue as a means of knowledge and of reciprocal enrichment with the aim of promoting solidarity between the generations. The psychologist **Eric Erikson** affirms: *"To give meaning to our life when we grow old, we must build bridges between the beginning and the end, between the first stage in which the basic virtue is hope and the last in which the risk is isolation"*.

Building this bridge in the course of the life of a person and among children, adults, and the elderly is today one of the principle tasks of education to preserve and transmit the affective, cultural, and religious patrimony from generation to generation.

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# Toward a humanism in solidarity

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Starting from the stimuli offered by the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE): *Educating to humanism in solidarity* and in line with the section on responsible citizenship, the invitation is to rediscover the anthropological value of solidarity, in order to cultivate and promote a culture of dialogue to globalize solidarity and humanize education.



## ■ Human beings in the current world scenarios

The world is open to unprecedented challenges that generate both positive and negative effects in all areas of human existence. On the one hand, great scientific advances are observed with amazement, the digital revolution in a hyper-connected globalized world has led to excellent results for the improvement of the quality of life, real-time communication, exchange, and sharing. On the other hand, we are assisting at, sometimes powerlessly, the progressive impoverishment of peoples, not only in economic resources and basic necessities, but above all in the ability to establish and live relationships of peace, tolerance, mutual listening: a few people have the wealth of the whole planet in their hands, while the great mass tries to survive in poverty. Never before has there been so much talk of human dignity, and we can affirm that ours is the era of the exaltation of anthropologies. And yet, paradoxically, one of the crucial points of the multi-form crisis of today consists precisely in this anthropological question. It is enough to think about the humanitarian emergency provoked by the “complex phenomena of migrations throughout the world, which generate encounters and clashes of civilization, solidarity, and intolerant, intransigent populism” (CCE, *Educate to humanism in solidarity* n. 4).

How can we deal with these challenges lucidly as responsible citizens? Which path should we take to recover the lost human being in the so-called post-human or transhuman society? One of the first ways can be precisely the rediscovery of solidarity as an anthropological principle.

## ■ Rediscover the value of solidarity

Research at the anthropological level confirms the person as a being in relationship. Thus, becoming humanly significant cannot be accomplished outside of interpersonal relationships, guided and sustained by the values of reciprocity, solidarity, and fraternity. Along the same lines, the Social Doctrine of the Church reiterates solidarity as a social principle and moral virtue. As a consequence, the person is essentially called to live with others and for others in a relationship of interdependence. This does not deal with “a feeling of vague compassion or of superficial tenderness because of the suffering of so many people near and far. On the contrary, it is the firm and persevering determination to be committed to the common good: that is, for the good of everyone and of each one, because we are all truly responsible for everyone” (SDC 197). How can we direct this journey so that it is really meaningful? According to CCE, the vocation to solidarity calls the people of the XXI century to measure themselves with the challenges of multicultural coexistence, building networks for a culture of dialogue and true inclusion.

## ■ For a culture of dialogue

It is necessary to specify that when we talk about culture, we evoke the humanist perspective of *Gaudium et Spes* that takes into consideration, “the word ‘culture’ in its general sense indicates everything whereby humans develop and perfect their many bodily and spiritual qualities; they strive by their knowledge and labor, to bring the world itself under their control. They render social life more human both in the family and the civic community,



through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time they express, communicate, and conserve their works, great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family” (GS 53). From this perspective, dialogue becomes a habitual style to relate to otherness seen as wealth. The culture of dialogue therefore facilitates the harmonious encounter between cultures, religions, different generations, and has the strength to mitigate the inevitable situations of conflict. As Pope Francis suggests, we need the ‘grammar of dialogue’ to foster encounter and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity at the service of the common good.

In this process, educational accompaniment is fundamental to form social, ethical, and evangelical values for believers as the soul of an active and responsible citizenship. Thus “the framework of values in which the citizen lives, thinks, and acts in dialogue is supported by relational principles (gratuitousness, freedom, equality, coherence, peace, and the common good) which enter positively and decisively into the educational and formation programs of the institutions and agencies that have humanism in solidarity at heart” (CEC, *Educate on the solidarity strata* n. 14). Thus understood, the culture of dialogue is an invitation to promote collaborative networks capable of globalizing solidarity.

### ■ Globalize solidarity

It is often stated that the Third Millennium of the Christian era will be human if it is in solidarity. It is recognized that solidarity is a typically human trait and is crucial for the survival of life on Planet Earth: “Everything is connected”. From this vision derives the urgency of overcoming globalization centered on the individualistic logic of the market, of homologation, of discrimination, and of indifference whereby the human being is reduced to a passive consumer, in favor of a globalization of solidarity, of fraternity, and of the hope that brings us back to our source: God the Father of all and consequently children in the Son and, therefore, brothers and sisters. CEC states that “the citizens of today, in fact, must be in solidarity with their contemporaries wherever they are, but also with the future citizens of the planet” (n. 21). The *Fridays for Future* movement, started by the Swedish sixteen year old Greta Thunberg in August 2018, is a concrete example of the globalization of solidarity according to responsible citizenship. Her going on strike from school every Friday has become a phenomenon of international scope and wide civil participation that brings together young people and adults from different countries to ask the world’s ruling class for a concrete commitment to contain the rise in temperatures. The mobilization of March 15,

2019 confirms once again that “young people demand a change from us. They wonder how it is possible to expect to build a better future without thinking about the environmental crisis” (*Laudato si* 13). Their question requires the accompaniment of wise educators, experts in humanity.

### ■ Educators experts in humanity

It seems paradoxical that one of the first issues developed by the CEC in the document is the need to humanize education. This perspective raises some questions: Can there be an education that is not human? Why should education be humanized? What are the requirements to succeed in this task? One of the first requisites is to form educators who are experts in humanity, because education must “be at the service of a new humanism, in which the social person was willing to dialogue and work for the realization of the common good” (No. 8). To humanize education is to privilege the centrality of the *person in relationship*, where everyone has the opportunity to develop their talents, their attitudes, their vocation in a living, interdependent community, linked to a common destiny. Furthermore, it is necessary to form an educational alliance between the different generations, recognizing that the family has a decisive function on the vertebral column of humanism.

The educators, experts in humanity, not only aim at teaching moments, but create processes where everyone can “live, study, and act, in relation to the reasons for humanism in solidarity; they do not design spaces for division and contrast but, on the contrary, propose places of encounter and sharing to realize valid educational projects; it is an education that is both solid and open, which breaks the walls of exclusivity, promoting the richness and diversity of individual talents and extending the perimeter of one’s classroom to every corner of social life in which education can generate solidarity, sharing, communion” (n.10). In this way humanism in solidarity is qualified to respond to the challenges of today’s societies.





# For a culture of dialogue

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Today the world is not only changing, it is moving! Every year 1 billion people leave their homes and move within their own Countries. And 300 million also leave their Country and their Continent. People are on the move today. And the changing world is not far from us, but close.

The world approached us with more than 5 million, 500 thousand people of different nationalities. Various places change with this encounter. There is a family that changes and there is a family on the move: family reunions, mixed marriages. There is a world of work that changes and there is a world of work that is on the move: workers of different languages, immigrant and delocalized companies. There is a world of school and culture that changes and is in movement: students of different nationalities and languages, of different religions and rituals ... In this world that both changes and moves, there no longer exists the distinction between the sedentary and the nomadic, because in this changing world, belonging has changed. We no longer belong to a Country, a city, a region, the State. We really belong to the world. It is global.

## ■ A new culture of relationships

Mobility and change require a new culture, a culture of relationships, of listening in order to learn before speaking, of encounter open to the surprises of people, of dialogue open to sharing, of knowledge open to love. One's identity is saved only by putting one's own and others' dignity at the center. Michel de Certeau affirms: "Our salvation is always foreign to us; it dwells elsewhere". It cannot remain in us because it asks for research and encounter. The other is your project, your future. The other is you in a new situation. The other is different from you, but shares the same human nature, the same dignity, the same rights.

At Assisi, Zygmunt Bauman died at 91 years of age, while at the event of an inter-religious and intercultural encounter for peace promoted by St. Egidio Community 'Thirst for Peace'. He had highlighted, among the various aspects raised by the Magisterium of Pope Bergoglio, the urgency of *dialogue and sharing among diverse cultures*. "A culture of dialogue", he affirmed that has as

its goal that of "Rebuilding the fabric of society". This means, "learning to respect the Other, the stranger, the migrant, people worth listening to". He added, "War is defeated only if we give our children a culture able to create strategies for life, for inclusion".

## ■ The Resource of dialogue

Dialogue does not mean giving in to relativism or losing one's identity. Pierre Claviere, a Dominican man killed in an attack in Algeria, recounts in one of his testimonies: "With poor means, we met to find meeting places and platforms to get to know each other and understand each other better, with our differences and the heavy legacy of our past and present conflicts. Today there is nothing more

necessary and more urgent than creating these human places, in which one learns to look each other in the face, to accept oneself, to collaborate, and to share the cultural heritages that are the greatness of everyone. The keyword of my faith is therefore **DIALOGUE**".

Dialogue is at the basis of our rapport with God and with others, and between humans themselves. Dialogue is born from interest - *the Care* of Fr. Milani, the *Da mihi animas* of Don Bosco, and the *I entrust them to you* of Mother Mazzarello - from passion, sharing, and compassion. Dialogue values diverse human and spiritual experiences, with four attentions: *the dialogue of life*, when each one strives to live reciprocity by becoming close, sharing their joys and concerns, their problems; *the*





*dialogue of action*, in which everyone collaborates for integral development and for the freedom of peoples; *the dialogue of sharing*, in which we try to understand the richness of spiritual and cultural heritages, to value them and make them fruitful; *the dialogue of experience*, in which we share our human and charismatic wealth.

Pope Francis says that this dialogue must be the center of education in the school with the aim of providing instruments to resolve conflicts in a different way than we are used to doing. *"The acquisition of a culture of dialogue is not an easy path to follow, nor is there a shortcut. Education to dialogue is a very lengthy process that requires patience, coherence, long range plans"*.

It regards a *cultural revolution* that requires using all the educational resources capable of stimulating and accompanying people towards the acquisition of a new *"grammar of communication"* that is above all respectful of people. The challenge therefore is to train and form oneself, to learn to look at the Other as a resource, valuing the contribution, encouraging encounter and dialogue to build together a world open to all. Only in this way can the Other become for everyone an opportunity for human and spiritual growth.



**ENCOUNTER THE MIGRANT. *The now for next: knowing the Other again.*** It is an experience of serious and qualified formation, aimed at educators, social workers, psychologists, and all those who come into contact with the world of migrants. The course aims to offer participants a container within which to find clear direction in welcoming, dialoging, and taking care of migrant foreigners, with an itinerary that takes into account the current historical, legislative, and social landscape. *"Today we need to recuperate the human condition. Humanity as the only reason to remain together is a challenge for contemporaneity. Here returns the need for growth in human maturity, in the capacity to recognize the other as a human person, beyond categories, even that of 'poor'."* (G. Salonia).

*"The 'now for next: re-knowing the other'"* refers to the present moment and the present encounter (*the now*) which if lived in a full contact, recalls the new of the relationship that is being prepared, the next is precisely the new moment, a new encounter and an opportunity for growth, and it is precisely the next in this case, that the wonder of listening-dialogue between educator and migrant is gathered, taking each other as a 'beyond', someone who can deeply enrich us, because it allows us to know parts of ourselves that we still did not know, as in any relationship, and even more when we are confronted with profoundly different languages, cultures, and worlds. Here we are dealing with the courage to propose a formation that educates to otherness, since the other is the horizon that saves us. *"Relationships in postmodernity challenge us to find both new ways of listening, dialoging, and communicating with each other, and new paths of understanding, inclusive of what for us is so distant and incomprehensible, precisely because the different from us represents our ability to grow and change"* (Valeria Conte, Director of the Gestalt Therapy Kairòs Institute).

## A Dialogue for Life

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34 years of activities in support of difficult maternity and parenthood with personalized, immediate, and concrete aid projects. This is the story of the Cav Mangiagalli Life Help Center in Milan, founded in a public hospital in 1984, only six years after the entry into force of Law 194, which in 1978 introduced voluntary termination of pregnancy in

Italy. In the common understanding, that provision has always been called the 'abortion law', but its original purpose, as expressly stated in the text, was the definition of "norms for the social protection of motherhood and voluntary interruption of pregnancy". So not a law for abortion, but a law for the protection of motherhood.

This was always known at Cav Mangiagalli. The Founder and first volunteer, **Paola Marozzi Bonzi**, is still the soul of the Center who in fact, immediately grasped the need to actively listen to women having difficulty in completing

their pregnancy and in just over three decades 21,945 children were helped to be born.

*"How can an act that suppresses innocent and helpless life in its blossoming be therapeutic, civil, or simply human?"* asked Pope Francis in the General Audience on 10 October 2018, highlighting the "contradictory approach that also allows the suppression of human life in the mother's womb in the name of safeguarding other rights".

Protecting life at 360 degrees has been a constant objective for Paola Bonzi, mother of two children and grandmother of 4 grandchildren, who has been blind since the age of 23 years. A total commitment carried out also outside Italy. In 2016, for example, at the invitation





of the Moscow Patriarchate, she spoke of her pro-life activity in front of health workers from various Russian regions and from there, the idea was born to open a Life Aid Center in Moscow. “Today a mother was born”, is the title of one of her best known books: avoiding an abortion, in fact according to the author, means allowing a motherhood to blossom. Never ideological in her approach, the Founder of Cav Mangiagalli is appreciated internationally and in a transversal way. Just think that to support her name in the competition at the ‘Ambrogino d’Oro’, the highest honor granted by the city of Milan, bestowed on her in 2013, there were also personalities from the radical and pro-choice world. The women who after meeting her decided to be open to life, all say they never felt judged in their initial motivation to abort. “My passion for supporting newborn life - explains Paola Bonzi - comes from my personal experience of a difficult pregnancy, during which I experienced the loneliness of the mother who has only her child as a direct interlocutor, and the socio-political climate of those years, ‘Solidarnosc’ in Warsaw, where the women who had given birth to their child offered themselves to help the others who came to the hospital to have an abortion. From their experience I imagined I could also enter a hospital, the Mangiagalli Clinic in Milan, to listen to women in need due to a difficult and unwanted pregnancy. From listening-dialogue a help project is born in which we try to respond to their problems, so that they can accept the life of their child”.

***At Cav Mangiagalli she helped women ‘to see’, recognize, and grasp what others do not see: a human life, a ‘person’, beyond what for some is only a ‘lump of cells’. How is it possible to live this ‘conversion’ of a point of view?***

“At the Life Aid Center we have a ‘magic’ booklet that shows photographs of the various stages of the child’s growth. From these photographs it is immediately clear that a small child at 5/6 weeks of gestation already has the features of a member of the human species. But it’s not just this. What is most important is to welcome the mother, to

help her to become aware of her own internal resources, in order to realize that within herself there is a life, which has not asked to come into the world, and for which she is responsible. Discovering their resources makes them feel capable of carrying on the pregnancy, naturally with our help”.

***You are blind. How has this difficulty accompanied you and still accompanies you during your activity in supporting life?***

“I do not think that this has caused any particular obstacle. I cannot see, but I am aware of the postures and above all, I hear the breaths, the sobs, the tiny noise of the tears of the women I listen to. Then I exercise my professionalism, imbued with an affection that they perceive”.

***How do you relate to the women in difficulty who knock on your door?***

“I am a family consultant, an expert in family relationships. With the people who arrive, I use a professional ‘setting’ to establish a ‘relationship of help’, made of listening and planning”.

***What do you say instead to those who choose abortion? In this context how important is the dimension of acceptance and dialogue, of confrontation?***

“Usually, especially at the beginning of the conversation, I ask very few questions. In fact, I let the women speak. My not talking leaves a lot of space for the woman who feels that this time and this place are entirely for her, who knows very well that she has life inside of her. Sermons and negative judgments are useless. The woman who is welcomed may in turn, be able to welcome”.

***In your activity, you come into contact with young women who perhaps because of the generational distance could feel a certain alienation or refuse a model considered ‘conservative’. How can one be authoritative in the matter of promoting the culture of life in a world that changes quickly and seems increasingly conditioned by what the Pope calls “the culture of waste”?***

“For people having difficulty in deciding to

proceed with the gestation or not, it is helpful to meet a person who shows understanding and affection. Perhaps no longer being young is an added value because the idea of abortion usually comes from a negative relationship with the mother. Meeting a maternal figure who is available and affectionate, although a professional, can only be lived as a positive moment of the encounter. I am ‘elderly’, but I do not bring into the relationship traditional motives and even less, religious ones”.

***How much is a pregnant woman who is having difficulty in going ahead with her pregnancy accompanied by society, by the Church today?***

“Unfortunately, I have to say very little. Society does nothing and the Church attends above all to the women in difficulty with children already born. Pregnancy, especially in the first trimester, is not taken into consideration and the small child raises no questions because it is not seen, not heard, and not touched. Thus, in the current mentality, it is as though it does not exist”.

***Can a renewed culture based on the reciprocity of man-woman, contribute to seeing with different eyes the theme of the defense of life?***

“Often the men abscond. Since the institution of matrimony as a condition of the social contract no longer exists, many men when faced with the difficulties that the birth of a child brings, refuse to assume their responsibility.

Man-woman reciprocity can only be positive if it is lived with love and respect. A couple can live together without being concerned for the good of the other. The road is long, and also impervious. It must be taken into consideration that the other is a person with their own characteristics and rights. Today the tendency is to subject. The way of living together well is learned in the family. In these years however, the family rarely meets to be together, to share opinions, to dialogue. Individualism is a loose cannon and certainly does not help to build a common path in which each component can voice opinions, aspirations, difficulties so that they can overcome together the difficult times that life inevitably poses”.





# Dialogue is an art

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The practice of interpretation presupposes a code that helps to decode various elements; a shared code, written or transmitted from one generation to another. For example, all non-verbal communication rests on codes based on the traditions, usages, and customs of a people or an area. Gestures, looks, winks that want to say determined things, that convey a very precise message that all recognize.

Immersed in contemporary reality, in which information flows are varied, the new generations find themselves using changing codes and therefore, do not have certain instruments to interpret reality and, in the last analysis, life itself. Interpreting to understand the experiences that one lives or the encounters one has, gives the possibility of ‘cataloging’ the various events that happen to us, the circumstances that arise, according to which we consider them something that has done us good, that has us made happy, that made us grow, or something to put in the drawer of bad memories of things we never wanted to experience. Understanding helps us to discern. However, the word discernment sounds strange to the ears of the young. It is an obsolete word, difficult to understand and even more, to apply. The word is derived from the Latin word ‘cernere’ (see clearly, distinguish) preceded by ‘dis’ (among), it means to ‘see clearly among’, observe with great attention, choose.

## ■ To see clearly

Contemporary society finds itself ‘bombarded’ by millions of information, sometimes true, others false, others built to measure. It is not easy to see clearly. We live in a complex society that often is more a tangle of news in which it is not always easy to find the clue. To see clearly when the stories of human events and the narrations of the stories of peoples are full of emotional impulses, of phrases for effect, of concern to receive consent, is much more

complicated than imagined. This is why young people should invest their energies in culture, in knowledge, in deepening. Ignorance creates slavery.

## ■ Observe attentively

For *Simon Weill* attention is the road that leads to holiness. To be attentive to all the facets of life, to know how to notice in every event a Beyond, the transcendent, the Other par excellence is what gives meaning to every fragment. Paying attention means *remaining* in situations without escape routes, without alienations, and staying there firm trying to get life through them. It is paying attention to details in order to more efficaciously interpret the general picture. The frame that cuts out the detail, making the context unimportant, can be dangerous. Every detail receives meaning from the context it is immersed in. And every context is made up of details.

## ■ To choose

The options to choose from multiply infinitely. It becomes complicated even for the simplest of things. I will give a perhaps banal example. Until not too long ago in Italy, if a person wanted a coffee, when entering a coffee shop it was enough to say, ‘a coffee’ and the server would ask at the most, ‘with or without sugar’. Now going into a coffee shop there at least 6 or 7 options to choose from: ‘short, long, with milk, with hazelnut, with Nutella, with cream, with ginseng, with foam, with caramel, with cacao, etc. All those options that could be opportunities to better choose what is best suited to your tastes, the most particular, disorient. Ask for an espresso and your friend asks for a hazelnut coffee and, while you drink yours, you think that maybe you have the wrong option, that of your friend is better. Then the desire to want them all begins to creep in. Why choose only one? And so it is for many young people. In the end,





every choice also has the side of renunciation. Choosing a boy or a girl involves renouncing all others, but it is difficult, the choice is never definitive. Choosing a course of study and leaving the other options becomes more and more complicated, and thus hybrid faculties are born that allow you to do a little of everything. If we think about it, we realize that the need to photograph and tell every choice made: holidays, places, walks, the girl or the boy, the bike, clothes, shoes; it seems to be something to convince oneself that the choice made is the best, the one that receives the most support, but then deep down, the doubt persists.

This is not the case for everyone, and the search for options among a sea of information creates anxiety! It's like when you bring the children to the bakery and you tell them: "Choose a dessert", "But how to do this? They are all good", and the desire to taste them all is 'born' in them.

And this is exactly how many young people, but also many adults, approach life. They taste

different experiences, hoping sooner or later to understand what their place is in the world, but in the meantime they move from place to place waiting for "life" to begin.

### ■ The art of dialogue

Entering into dialogue with life, with people, asking questions, listening, all this provides tools and resources to build a code that helps to interpret life. Those who read and meditate on the Word of God with a profound attitude of listening, can read in the light of those words what life is allowing them to experience. Understanding yourself, without the fear of not being able to do it immediately, and without the impatience to give yourself hasty definitions, helps us to remain in situations, and to calmly seek learning slowly, to pay attention to see the next step to take.

Dialogue, opening to another, entering into communication with the other, provides the possibility of understanding each other. Dialogue is an act that helps to build, and in building there is always a choice to make.

*The Young, Faith, and Vocational Discernment.*

#### **Working Document (n. 55)**

Young people are particularly exposed to this climate, because of their communication habits, and of their need to be accompanied to ultimately find their way. In the world of post-truth, the sentence "Christ is the Truth which makes the Church different from any other worldly group with which we may identify" (PM 11), that the *PM* uses, inevitably ends up having a different significance compared to earlier ages. It is not a matter of giving up the most precious hallmark of Christianity to conform to the spirit of the world, nor is this what young people are asking for, but we do need to find a way to convey the Christian message in changed cultural circumstances. In line with biblical tradition, the recognition that truth has a relational basis is a good thing: human beings discover truth once they experience it from God, the only one who is truly reliable and trustworthy. This truth must be testified to and practiced and not just corroborated and demonstrated, something the young people of the *PM* realize: "The personal stories of Church members are effective ways of evangelizing, as personal experiences cannot be placed in question" (PM 15).



# Courageous young people

**Veronica Petrocchi**

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**Greta Thunberg, a Swedish fourteen year old, has Asperger Syndrome and skips school every Friday morning. She has been doing this since last August, the hottest month in Swedish history, to protest against climate change. At first she was alone, supported only by her parents, then things became serious. Greta continued her protest on the social media, coining the slogan #fridayforfuture and launching it on a global scale. The result?**

The Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, officially intervened because the protest had gone viral, asking from the students more academic commitment and less activism. The same happened in Germany, Holland, and Finland, though to a lesser degree, and more generally in the Countries in which the people have a greater awareness of climate change.

Greta participated at Cop24, the 24th Conference on climate that was held at Katowice, Poland. During the same days, the yellow vests set Paris on fire because of the increased tax on gas. In Italy the government discussed tax relief in favor of those who bought electric





cars. Trump reiterated that America would use every available energy source to support its economic growth. The governments of half the world, developed or not, reiterated that the fight against climate change should have started elsewhere, certainly not by their Country.

### ■ Rage or responsibility

Greta says that “we must be more responsible for the chaos we have created” and to “get angrier”. And when she says this with her voice of a fifteen year old, you want to believe that she is the real change in the face of conservative anger and the response supported by the elites, who look down on any form of dissent, and then make it

an excuse not to change anything.

Greta’s anger is also ours, of those who see their future threatened, crushed by a fear that paralyzes the present. It is the anger of those who are aware of the risks of a development model that makes reports like the one of the “International Panel on Climate Change”, which enumerates with all possible scientific evaluations the devastating risks of the road that has been taken and that reminds us of how increasingly difficult it is to change it.

We demand from the politicians an assumption of responsibility towards young people, its voters of tomorrow, not only in the environmental sphere that reminds politicians all over the world how much they are systematically violating the generational pact on which every organized society is based.

“For this reason, perhaps, it would be worth dealing more with Greta Thunberg than with the yellow vests, even if her protest does not fill the streets and does not put anything on fire,” wrote a newspaper on 8 December 2018 .

### ■ Never say never. 19 April 2019, Rome

“Our future has been sold because only a few people can make a lot of money. When they tell us that the sky is the only limit, they are lying. The only thing we really need is the future. Many of us will understand this only when it is too late. We are at a crossroads for humanity”. In the Plaza of the People, in the center of Rome, thousands of students met to listen to Greta’s discourse and to discuss their future. Her

determination even brings her to the Senate, where she tells the politicians without any half terms “you look at but do not understand young people”. That is

precisely the point: *you look at us, judge us from the height of your wisdom*

*and what do you give back to us? A world adrift, wars, hatred, pollution. We want to be with Greta, because she has in mind the common good,*

*“We are the young, the precarious generation par excellence, and we are here to take back the future”.*

hers, her family’s, and our children’s, everywhere in the world. She is the real challenge to the status quo, a young girl capable of mobilizing millions of young people in an unprecedented world event.

Transports, incinerators, capitalism, and infrastructures in general are attacked. But it is politics that the young express their disagreement with. The *climate*, of course, is just one of the problems. The interventions of high school students, junior high school

students, university students from every region of Italy and other countries, alternate at a beating pace, in a few seconds, in the Plaza of the Capital: “We are young, but this does not stop us from understanding what is happening” .

We are facing one of the greatest global crisis that questions our lifestyle and ourselves. We need a change of mentality, a more equal society, politics freed from self-interests. “The world is divided into two parts, one that hates and one that loves”, shouts a student from Milan. “Enough of egoism”.

Another student echoes her, “This is a society that is becoming more and more alone. The only thing that we are asked is to keep the economy going. *And for those who are suffering the lack of affection?* At the bottom of the square there is a gazebo with people hugging each other for free, to learn to trust each other, to feel more loved, and to love the planet more ”.

Each of us should reflect and really listen to young people. Information, politics, the whole society is crushed by the obsession with the economy and with finance. Day after day these obscure the values that are the foundation of any Nation: solidarity, the possibility for every person to feel loved and considered, and not a discard of society. The young people, also thanks to the courage of Greta Thunberg, have come out of their silence and are rebelling against those who are stealing their future. They have understood that the problem is more that of climate because it regards humanity, which is much more important than some percentage point of GDP (Gross domestic product).

**We are with Greta, we are with the Planet. And you?**





# Everything under control!

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In a wonderful passage from the film “The Tiger and the Snow”. Roberto Benigni, while addressing his students, exclaims: “Beauty began when someone started to choose, from Adam and Eve”. Are we really sure that we make our daily choices or are we not delegating the management of our days to those who think for us, more quickly, accurately, rationally, in practice more efficiently, than we do?

Reach an unknown address by car according to the shortest route and without traffic, search for interesting content on the Web, purchase an item that is not found in any store in our city, in our favorite color, and at the most affordable price. Pack your suitcase knowing the weather conditions of your holiday destination before time. Now ubiquitous in many of our everyday decisions, they influence our lives and have changed our existence over the last 60 years or so: they are **algorithms** and part of the ‘difficult words’ that come from mathematics and engineering. Precisely for this reason, they enjoy our unconditional trust and, unless we are ‘experts in the field’, we are not very interested in knowing the difficult mechanisms underlying them. In reality we have always used them: in the calculation of operations at school, in solving geometry

problems ... or simply in the preparation of a cake following the recipe! However, the real development of the algorithms we see came with the first construction of machines dedicated to data processing and problem solving through procedures, starting from the Turing Machine, surname of the English mathematician considered the Father of *Artificial Intelligence*. The algorithms have been and still are a powerful engine in the innovation and development of automation, facilitated by accessibility to the Web and by the evolution of devices that make complex procedures accessible to everyone, such as consulting the weather as soon as you wake up or carrying out a banking transaction from home.

■ **What is an algorithm?**  
Technically it is an ordered sequence of operations that, beginning with a series of information, leads to a specific result in a finite time. Therefore, there is a point of departure and a point of arrival, and thanks to the technological development that allows for increasingly rapid re-elaboration of a series of rather consistent data, it is possible to adjust along the road, taking into consideration the unforeseeable in daily life. Take as an example the route re-calculation that our navigator uses when, while going along a street that it advised, we find ourselves before an obstacle, or we decide to follow our instinct for once (taking the wrong way). The GPS through an algorithm, instantly re-elaborates the new





coordinates, drawn from a dedicated network of artificial satellites in orbit, to give us a new road. Nothing extraordinary in this if we consider that this has become ordinary for us. **Derrick de Kerckhove**, a famous linguist and anthropologist, student of McLuhan, in his work *Brainframes*, sustains that our brain in contact with technology has the same adaptive behavior that we just illustrated. Every new means of communication configures our cerebral hemispheres, delineating substantial neurological modifications, creating a kind of 'frames' (brainframes) that synthesize the way we understand the world and react to it. This means that some processes that we routinely carry out with our 'technological prostheses' have now changed the way we decide, act, and even think.

### ■ Real and apparent benefits of algorithms

**Certainty.** In an increasingly complex and disordered reality, algorithms are certainly a great help that allow us to 'put our life in order', elaborating for us an excessive amount of information that would crowd our mind. They relieve us of the anxiety of indecision and uncertainty, proposing the best alternative and strengthening our action. In short, by holding our smartphone we can finally say: **'Everything's under control!'** **But is it really so?** Delegating our choices leads us to rely blindly on a system that combines information whose real origin we do not know and that can hide a logic with which we may not agree. For example, **EdgeRank**, the Facebook algorithm, determines what must appear - and in what order - in the flow of news for each user. In practice, it establishes for us which connections are most important and, therefore, appear more frequently based on the affinities we have with other members and with some contents. This certainly precludes openness to what is different from me, to issues that I might disagree with, but that can constitute a source of richness and an exchange of views.

**Efficiency.** Doubtlessly, this is one of the sensitivities that has increased in the course of recent years. The word algorithm immediately

leads to efficiency that is translated into saving time and money. Getting to the office faster, saving on purchases with Amazon, optimizing the time for various commissions. The algorithms are really simplifying life, only to make us totally unable to solve a problem without the help of technology. Truthfully, being without connection confuses us. In the name of speed and efficiency, we risk letting the instruction sequences on their terms decide **what is best for us** and even **who we are**, progressively taking away our responsibility.

**Information.** In Information Technology, the most correct term is **data**. As the word itself reminds us, 'data' comes, furnished by someone, and in the quantity and modality that we can understand. The algorithm of a search engine allows us to skim and to decode an infinity of data to reach the information we are looking for. This information in turn is chosen according to the priorities established by another algorithm, **Page Rank**, that evaluates the pages or the sites of greater relevance in relation to the terms searched for. On the basis of which criteria? **Can packets of information packaged partially and arbitrarily lead to a full knowledge of a fact or a topic?**

Conversely, we consider the data that we are asked for in the various steps that we carry out during our navigation: 'data' that is donated by us at the risk of a homologation and an instrumentalization of what can be most intimate and reserved, that is our person. Of course, life changes to meet any request and receive assistance wherever we are, directly from our device, but the real knowledge of a person and his/her culture cannot be reduced to a simple fact.

**Neutrality.** Being mathematical processes, we tend to think that the choices made by algorithms are not affected by personal or overly human factors such as prejudices: a machine can make a 'neutral' and fair choice based on objective data. This increasingly involves the use of algorithms in the procedures concerning fields such as politics,

### Anthropological challenges

A new frontier with respect to these reflections is the **algor-ethics**, proposed by Father **Paolo Benanti**, a Franciscan, who deals with the ethics of technology. It is an ethic that in the human-machine relationship protects human values, to avoid algocracy, that is the domination of algorithms and to ensure that machines are truly at the service of man. The ethical theme is increasingly taken into consideration in the field of Artificial Intelligence, in which we are faced with real dilemmas.

*The massive use that is made of algorithms in all areas of human life today, and that will increasingly be done in the future, does not allow us to completely exclude the possibility that algorithms are used to make choices or to face problems with deep moral and value implications. It can happen, for example, that a Google Car will one day be faced with the choice of having to run over a pedestrian or risk the lives of its passengers. The choice will obviously be left to the car and to the algorithms that govern it.*

*By entrusting them with choices and decisions that up until now have always been made by human beings, the frontier between technology and humanism is shifted into a territory where it has never found itself before and in fact the relationship is changed, perhaps irreversibly, between ethics and science, between humans and machines, between automatic rationality and life (D. Talia - The calculable society and big data: Algorithms and people in the digital world).*



finance, the world of work, in which there are delicate passages in human terms as for example: the evaluation of personnel, the determination of reliability of a loan, the progress of an election campaign or a company, the hiring of workers, to name a few. In reality, precisely because they are designed by human beings, **algorithms are not neutral at all**, as they reflect the opinion and intentionality of those who conceive them, capturing only a part of the truth, often to the detriment of values and potentials that do not emerge directly from the variables through which a certain result is sought.

**Can algorithms explain everything?** The answer is 'no', because there is not only the existence of rational numbers, there is also irrationality, as in the poems mentioned by Benigni, made up of emotions, creativity, fantasy, love at first sight or the touch of God, of dreams with eyes closed or eyes open... Perhaps this is the challenge, that of **remaining human**, remembering everything that makes humanity unique and unrepeatable, reaffirming its value and its supremacy over Creation, according to Genesis: "guarding what has been given to us and dominating the creatures... even those that are the fruit of our intelligence".



# Teach and learn 'drama' for growth

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The term 'drama' means both "adapt for the theater" and 'exaggerate the importance or gravity of a fact or situation'. This article intends to reflect on this practice. Drama is a real school of communication. It is an opportunity for harmony and coexistence because it gives the possibility to be together in the practice of listening to each other, to learn to listen, to control gestures, to reduce tensions, and to intervene on one's emotions.

Drama is a reference point in all educational situations because it makes its own the general aims of education. By practicing drama, children use all their cognitive, affective, and action resources, and they feel part of a reality that they are building. At the same time, communicating with another, always using all their own resources until they involve the other in their reality under construction. Everything can become an opportunity for drama: a bible

story, a piece of news, or an episode in a saint's life. In the educational sector, drama exalts imagination, creative expression, and is carried out in the context of a game. Imagination and creativity in the first arc of development are closely connected to the game, a vital component of growth, connoted by gratuity, freedom of expression, joy, vitality, and cooperation. Imagination, creativity, and the game are usually located in the time of infancy, but they are important in all phases of life, above all in pre-adolescence and adolescence, seasons during which young people experiment with diverse aspects of their personality under construction, or with various personalities.

When a partial situation has succeeded, when you see or perceive that the children have appropriated their character, perhaps built from a well-defined biography, when they have really fallen into the part, it is necessary to propose repeating the improvisation, providing further cues to improvise in such a way that everything is additionally enriched and constitutes a piece that will be added, gradually, to other pieces, to become finally the plot of the show and its narrative grid. While building the 'piece', the participants in the drama course will also work on the set design that they will have decided on together with the animator. Whatever element is used, it must be

one with improvisations. Only in this way can the dramatic action avoid being a series of detached elements that are added to each other, but instead will form a single body.

## ■ A curtain opened on the social

To teach drama in an effective way, it is necessary that the choice of theme or personage be very close to the life of the young people who animate it, the youngest and the children who follow our educational theater course. An example? Shows that regard the importance of motherhood and fatherhood, that deal with the tasks of parents, of the value of their presence alongside their children. Reflection on the relationships between the generations, on the need for caregiving on the part of adults has traces present in classical and common heritage theater scripts. For the youngest, there is *Peter Pan* (Mr. and Mrs. Darling with their three children, Wendy, John, and Michael); and *Mary Poppins* (the Banks parents with their children Jane and Michael). Attention to one's own and others' culture, to precious traditions to be respected and transmitted, as stated in chapter 3 of the Final Document of the Synod on Youth, could inspire theatrical scripts to be taken and dramatized, also thanks to the most recent cinematography. For example *Coco* (2017) of Disney-Pixar, in the unforgettable plot

summarized by Miguel's phrase: "My family and I will also remain a bit strange, but we remain united ... nothing is more important than those you love".

Remaining close to the consumption of today's children and teenagers by embroidering reflections on them and making them discover values hidden from their eyes, can be an very feasible path with theatrical drama.

What can we say about the problems to be explored with the older ones, connected with the changing society, with friendship, with the practice of moral teachings, and with all forms of vulnerability? From living on the edge of mental frailties, up to social unease and the conscious experience of suffering. Help may come from robust scripts of international literature such as *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, *Joan of Arc* by Darrah Cloud. With adolescents and young people, it is possible to pursue broader and deeper reflections such as the condition of women with Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or, with the necessary critical capacity, use the eleven plays by Natalia Ginzburg.

In the fullest sense, drama develops the full potential of children. It is a research process that uses mind and heart through direct action. Whoever enters the role approaches a new way of seeing a problem.







Drama is interested in direct experience and in the process, rather than in the product. Drama consists in the creation of situations, in the delineation of the problems, and in their active solution through the assumption of roles. There are two indispensable conditions for carrying out this process: genuinely *entering into the role* and a serious commitment on the part of the participants. In short, it is a great opportunity to educate children while making them grow.

Péter Szondi, author of *Theory of Modern Drama*, says that theater is a reproduction of interpersonal relationships and is therefore based on dialogue. Thus, those who write for the theater carefully choose words, producing exhaustive and at the same time economic, dry, and convincing texts that lead to action.

We find theater scripts for children at these Internet addresses:



In Italian: <http://www.gttempo.it/CopioniRagazzi.htm>



In French: <https://www.dramaction.qc.ca/fr/textes-a-jouer-avec-vos-eleves/textes-a-jouer/>



In Spanish: <https://www.titerenet.com/2007/04/09/cuentos-y-obras-de-teatro-para-representar/>



<http://lapiceromagico.blogspot.com/p/teatro-infantil.html>



# Music: between interiority and affirmation of identity

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From St. Augustine to today, philosophy has unceasingly proposed the idea that our true self is not the social, external one, rather it is the intimate and individual one whose profile can be represented only through an inner gaze.

Music seems to accomplish precisely this movement in the human being: from external to internal. In fact, the composer and orchestra Director from the United States, Leonard Bernstein said: *"Music can name the unmentionable and communicate the unknowable"*.

It has happened to every one of us! Listening to music or the lyrics of a song can seem that it is written especially for us and that those words are recounting our story, our feelings, our inner life.

Music creates this mysterious magic: it recounts our identity.

*"Music has the ability to affect the human soul more than any other art. Music draws us, touches our soul and heart, brings us into another world. Like a plucked violin chord resonates with the whole instrument and the other strings, so also does music enter into resonance with our way of existing"*.

## ■ Young people and music

Often, the adult world is not able to understand the musical tastes of the young because it interprets these 'new sounds' with its own knowledge and preconceptions. This always happens. It happened and will continue to happen from generation to generation.

The new *sounds* of contemporary music correspond to what the young are feeling at this time: electronic sounds in contrast to classical sounds; the rhyme spoken by the rappers that tell of the world today. Certainly, *Rap* is a musical genre in which there is a variety of themes. However, they have musical mechanisms that warrant respect, that represent a limit, because they do not allow one to tell of oneself completely. In fact, young people are always searching for how to shape and build an inner space in

which to recollect themselves and ask themselves about their identity and about the deepest truths.

As Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart said: "The real music is between the notes", and not only the melody we listen to. Thus, the search for self of a young person can come even in the musical world, in the words of a rapper that to us may seem dry and senseless.





### ■ Music and growth

From always, music represents a place of growth and introspection.

Already in 2000, **Bon Jovi** sang of this interior journey in *It's my life*. This song became the hymn for a generation of young people. He himself said, "While I was writing *It's my life* I was really thinking about composing something regarding my life and my role in it. Instead, I was not aware how the very phrase 'It's my life' could be taken as a model by diverse people, by adolescents, by men, by women, by the elderly, by anyone. I believe the verse '*It's My Life and it's now or never*' truly represents a hymn to live life day by day, without thinking of the past or the future, but living for the moment".

*that the emperor wears no clothes but bowing to them is better than being alone. Now I am ready to begin. I am not sure if you will open the door, To take a step into darkness*". This is the darkness of the world that surrounds us, which according to them, does not let individuals be free. Johann Sebastian Bach said that: "*Music helps to not hear inside, the silence outside*".

The recent success of the film *Bohemian Rhapsody*, brought back the **Queen** that has always represented for young people the desire to live life fully and without rules, even with all its inconsistency. One of their most famous songs is entitled *Don't stop me now* where it seems that estrangement from the earthly world is the only way to find oneself. "*I will really enjoy myself tonight, I feel alive and I will turn the world upside down. Yes and floating around here in*



*ecstasy, so don't stop now, don't stop because I'm having fun, I'm having fun. If you want to have fun you just have to call me*".

### ■ The search within oneself

The psychotherapist Carlo Gustav Jung said: "*Your vision will appear clearer only when you look into your heart. Those who look outside, dream. Those who look inside, wake up*".

It is this search for truth that still guides humanity in finding itself again. The movie *The Greatest Showman* released in 2017 tells the story of Barnum, the famous circus master, who gathered all the people around him who were considered different and took them around the United States, exhibiting them.

The singer **Keala Settle** plays the role of Lettie Lutz in this film, the bearded woman, who because of this diversity had been marginalized until then. The words contained in the song she

The Canadian Rock Group **Arcade Fire** in their hit entitled *Ready to Start*, speaks of contemporary society and how we all have to surrender and submit to stronger powers. "*All the children have always known*

interpreted, entitled *This is me*, tell us precisely the need for redemption that each of us has when we feel misunderstood by the outside world: "*The darkness is not new for me. Hide yourself, they said: because we do not want your broken pieces. I learned to be ashamed of all my scars. Run away, they said: no one will love you because of what you are. But I will not allow them to reduce me to dust, I know there is a place for us. We who are glorious. When the most cutting words want to wound me. I will send a flood, I will drown them. I am courageous, I am wounded. I am what I must be, this is me*".

In life, each of us has had to fight with our own limitations or with the judgment of others, but the important thing is to find the strength to fight. This strength can also come from a song that represents your mood at that moment. Thus, we can affirm that music is a powerful means to know our inner life and to affirm our identity, perhaps by shouting the lyrics of a song, or by singing loudly or simply playing the passage that makes us vibrate within the most. Because what the philosopher *Charles Sanders Peirce* said is still true: "The identity of a person consists in the coherence between action and thought".





# Lady Bird

of Greta Gerwig

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A generational and universal work, able to communicate beyond cultural barriers. Lady Bird is an intimate work that traces the passage from adolescence to adulthood with intelligence and tenderness, tells the power of dreams and disappointments, the importance of relationships, of places, people, and things that make us what we are.

We are in 2002, in Sacramento, California, the birthplace of the writer, who sees herself on the big screen in *Christine McPherson*, a 16-year-old student from a Catholic school. Christine is a teenager in the delicate moment of difficult choices for the future (University, the city where to attend it), of the definition of her own identity. Her rebellious nature led her to reject her first name and take on the nickname of **Lady Bird**, because “it was given to me by me”.

## The girl who wanted to fly

Lady Bird comes from the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ and wants a more active, more stimulating life, richer in opportunities, but finds nothing of the kind either at home or at school. During the last year of high school, Lady Bird finds herself living her first love story, facing her participation in the school play, and, above all, choosing which college to continue her studies. Lady Bird refuses Sacramento, refuses her school and the religion imposed on her, refuses the modest neighborhood in which she lives... Her father is about to lose his job and fights gently for years with depression. Her older brother struggles to construct a hypothesis of the future for himself and



his companion. Her mother-nurse, never smiles, never an affectionate yielding, never a word of comfort, manages everything with a hard face, not being able to allow herself the sweetness that would be expected from her in her role.

## Call Me by My Name

At her birth, the name given to her was Christine McPherson, but she chose the one of **Lady Bird** and wants her whole family to call her by that name. “It is an act of paternity and authorship



and a way to find one’s true identity by creating a new one. It is a lie in the service of truth”, explains the director.

Our name is not an insignificant detail; it is the first thing of ourselves we tell others and from which Lady Bird draws the strength to look beyond, towards that irrepressible dream of moving to New York, on the east coast, where the environment pulsates and where she feels she really belongs. And where perhaps, in the end, she will find her true identity, baptismal name included. And the phone call at the end, after Sunday Mass, is precisely there to remind us of this: “Hi mum, I’m Christine”. Simply moving. Our self-respect, the measure of our worth, love for our uniqueness, and acceptance of the potential and responsibilities this brings, are what gives character to us. This is the meaning of the flight of Lady Bird who must flee in order to know herself.

She must flee from the **torpor and banality of her city**, from its rigid and humiliating social divisions, from the **awkwardness of her peers**, and from the **fear of adults**. In the end, who

of us do not leave ‘our Sacramento’ behind: the suffocating primordial soup that kept us **children, marginal, incomplete**, unable to measure ourselves against the outside world. In the story of Lady Bird we recognize the most authentic meaning of our growth.

If Gerwig romanticizes, she does it sporadically and in an unpredictable way, **stripping away instead all the false charm from a teen movie** the necessary stages, but not necessarily pleasant ones, stages of an adolescence that consumes itself. The rest, the **delicate touch of the director** of the magnificent semi-newcomer lets the **sacred fire of desire shine, the pain of detachment, the joy of self-determination**.



### ■ The other Me

"I want you to be a better version of yourself", says her mother, Marion, perpetually disappointed and critical. "And if this is already my best version?" replies Lady Bird.

Of all the arguments and farewells of Lady Bird's flight, the most important and suffered is that with her mother: the origin and the double, the person who feeds us and mortifies us, fills us with irritation and admiration; the one from whom we desperately try to distance ourselves and distinguish ourselves, because we are inexorably her and we will still be her even three thousand miles away from her recriminations, her inadequacy, her failures.

Christine and Marion are two sides of the same coin, the alpha and omega around which everything revolves: one, perpetually intent on grasping the future, using everything she can get her hands on to create elsewhere her own novel of formation. The other, unwilling to support her daughter's utopian dreams, committed to bringing her back through a series of bitter and meticulous squabbles, to more realistic landings, even though they are linked to their modest but dignified home, even though they are on the wrong side of the tracks, or towards the prospect of an education in the city college.

"The mother-daughter relationship is the love story of the film... I wanted to tell a story that would place

this at the center and in which at every moment, empathy would be felt for both persons. I did not want one to be right and the other to be wrong. I wanted each one to painfully and unsuccessfully enter into contact with each other and I wanted to compensate their great love... The one between a mother and daughter is one of the richest relationships that I know", the Director recounts.

It is a seesaw of desire for challenge and a desire for tenderness, in the context of the tormenting and volatile everyday life of adolescence.

In her simplicity, in her delicacy, with a clear direction that has the sole purpose of making characters and dialogues shine, Lady Bird has managed to restore the anger and illusions of adolescence. Exalting the contradictions, because if a strong desire to leave forever is absolute, once having arrived in the much dreamed of New York, alone in the city, the first thing that Lady Bird does is to find a piece of home.

Lady Bird is an unsettling and painful, idealistic and hypocritical film diary; self-centered and generous. She is rebellious and conformist; passionate and skeptical. A unique set of contradictory and confused impulses, as is the affirmation of one's individuality, even when one is not sure what it means.



## We look at the stars tonight of Ali Ehsani

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Ali Ehsani, Author and protagonist of the book *We look at the stars tonight*, an autobiographical story, presented in the form of a monologue and addressed to his brother Mohammed, who drowned during the sea crossing to reach Europe. Although it may seem a paradox, the book is designed to instill hope, especially in children born in countries at war and for those living in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, 1990s. Ali is a boy who spends his days kicking a ball with his friend Ahmed, in a Kabul devastated by the factional struggle, but not yet in the Taliban's hands. The city has not always been this way, his father tells him: once there were cinemas, theaters, and entertainment, but to Ali, who has never seen anything else, the war frightens him less than a scolding from the teacher or the reproaches of his mother.

Ali decided to tell his story in a book, "Tonight we look at the stars", written with Francesco Casolo and published by Feltrinelli. It is a monologue addressed to his brother Mohammed, to instill hope. A story that children born in countries at war know well but that in Europe is still hard to understand. Ali writes: "Those who speak of emigrants often use the word 'desperate', but what I think today, in Rome in my Italian life, is that there is nothing more like hope in deciding to emigrate: hope





to arrive somewhere better, hope of making it, hope of surviving, of holding on, hope of a happy ending like at the cinema. I think it is normal that every human being desperately tries to improve his condition and, in some cases, moving is the only way to do it.”

### ■ Hope to go further

One day, returning home from school, Ali finds a pile of rubble instead of his house. Thinking that he is on the wrong street, he sits on a low wall and waits for his elder brother Mohammed, 17, who explains that their home is destroyed and that their parents have been killed. From this event the daring voyage begins. Ali and Mohammed flee; they are two lonely little boys, hidden among their luggage, on the luggage rack of a van headed for Pakistan. Mohammed becomes Ali’s father, brother, and friend and is willing to do anything to keep the promise made at the time of his departure. He wants Ali to return to being free to look at the stars, as he did as a child when his father explained the constellations to them from the roof at home on summer evenings. Passing through Pakistan and Iran, the two boys cross deserts and mountains, hide on the roofs of vans and in the bins of trucks, are robbed by smugglers, threatened by the Taliban but eventually embark. An epic that lasted five years, at the end of which they manage to embark and arrive in Turkey and finally in Italy; Ali manages to reach Rome by clinging to a truck from Greece.

After having lived in various reception centers, he managed to get a room in a university residence that was assigned to him by the *Sapienza* University of Rome because of his grade average. “It is difficult for me to explain it - says Ali - and perhaps also for people with a life different from mine to understand but, despite my conditions having improved immediately since I set foot in Italy, during the journey I never felt as bad as after arriving at the destination. The hope of going

further, of getting somewhere, gave me strength, gave me the feeling of being able to change my destiny every morning. Maybe they were

stories we told each other but we believed in these stories. I told myself that I would have had to use all of myself but then I would be able to realize

the dreams that you, Mohammed, had for us: falling in love, finding a home to live in, having children, and being able to walk tall without being constantly humiliated “.

Today, Ali Ehsani is 26 years old, degreed in Law at the *Sapienza* and presently attending school to gain a Masters in European Law “to know my rights and to defend those of others”, he states. In 2007, on Easter night, Ali was baptized in the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

### ■ A new life

Ali recounts, “In this city, I met with many difficulties, above all, injustices on the part of people who want to make money on poor people. But in prayer, I found the strength to get up at every time of despair, even when it seemed that all my efforts would come to nothing. I was the first in my class to obtain the degree. I studied day and night, while in the evenings I delivered pizzas, on weekends I was a steward at the stadium, and in the summer,

the waiter and the dishwasher. No one believed I would ever graduate, but the Lord is great!”

Ali is angry with God when he finds himself alone at night, in the middle of the Aegean, as his eyes close due to fatigue.

He dreams that Jesus embraces him and opens a yellow umbrella above him: around him, some people shoot arrows at them, but the umbrella repels them. Jesus repeats to him: “I protect you”. “I survived the years of travel to Italy thanks to the help of many people,” he recalls, “because God loves us in the right time and in the right place.” His family was Christian in a country where there are no churches. His father

*“We are like birds and we fly far” (Mohammed).*

*“Sounds childish but sometimes I think it would need someone to tell us from a near future: don’t worry, it will get better”.*

had explained it to him one day when Ali, urged by the curiosity of his classmates who had asked him why he never went to the Mosque. A faith lived by his parents in a completely private way, “probably because they feared that, by explaining too much, I would have told everything to my friends, putting our life in serious danger. Perhaps, my destiny was to arrive in Rome to discover faith in Jesus through a group of boys from *Communion and Liberation*, known through the science

*“There was a great silence, everyone was asleep and I thought that maybe what I had never believed was true, we could fly and we were free.”*

teacher. He had invited me to a Via Crucis in Rimini. Along the way, I wondered what all those people were looking for and at the same time I felt a great emptiness inside me. I continued to attend the group and every time, I returned home different, more serene. I understood then what all those people were looking for, what I was looking for”. Today

Ali has found what he was looking for and can realize his dream: “Defend the weak”, *without ever ceasing to look at the stars!*

That of Ali and Mohammed is a wonderful story of courage, determination, and optimism. Ali, left alone, is determined to realize the dreams of all those he met along the way and who, unlike him, did not make it:

“We’re leaving, Ali” - you told me that day in Kabul.

“I don’t want to leave, Mohammed. I’m just a child” - I whined.

“We are like birds” - you said.

“Why?”

“Because birds fly free and we will fly far.”





# Among the young

Dear friends, I really feel happy because I was able to study the Final Document of the Bishops Synod on the Young. Fantastic! Don't you think?

Pope Francis had a magnificent idea that marks the history of the Church. Now it is up to us, sisters and laity, to make this an 'historical charismatic event'.

What do the young people we accompany say about us? I think now is the time to speak with them to understand the language of their heart, just as Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello did.

Do you remember? Last time I was with a boy at the Oratory? This time I approached Catherine, a girl from the school who comes to greet me every day. I thanked her for being attentive to the elderly. I asked her for her thoughts about what we older people say to the young.

Dialogue is basic for creating an intergenerational network and thus reach many young people, as stated in the Final Document. Our encounter was thus an opportunity to understand each other and to raise questions in the young in order to help them discover their vocation.

I think that by returning each day to our First Love, to Jesus, can infect the young with enthusiasm and help them to make life choices!

Some days ago, I received a message and I understood better how encounters really transform us.

"Ciao, dear Sr. Camilla. I think that many people with more experience of life, think that we young people are lazy, without any desire to do or to work. Even if some of us usually show the opposite, not everyone is able to open their eyes and look at us in depth. Sometimes we are over-rated or treated disrespectfully. There are many young people who want to work and to study. What can we do to change this prejudice?"

Courage, Catherine! I believe that there are many beautiful things in your life and in the life of many young people. We can learn together to see as God sees us today. However, times have changed!

Lets leave aside our expectations and try to build a dialogue with those we meet, those who help us in our daily discernment, and lead us to discover the things God is accomplishing in your life and in mine.

"I am only fourteen years old and maybe my way of thinking, of looking at life, of dressing, are not pleasing to others and I am judged on this. I think what is important is what is felt inside, that each of us always desires to improve our journey. I really need someone to talk to and who can help me to find the right paths, those of God for me".

Ok, I am going...Let us open our hearts wide to hold the dreams of many young people! Shall we try? May Mary Help of Christians accompany us with her motherly heart. See you later!

*Camilla's words!*





# “NEXT DOOR SAINTS”

*“It is the hand of God that works in you”*  
(MM. L. 66,2)

Holiness knows no age, is present on all continents, and speaks all the languages of the world. In fact, the Gospel is good news for everyone. It is the next door holiness of those who live close to us and are a reflection of the presence of God.

Still today there are innumerable testimonies of young people who in their short life lived the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity in a heroic way. They invite you to be proud of your baptism, to be consistent with your Christian identity. These young people are people full of divine grace and overflowing human examples.

## A life given for the Gospel

**Floribert Bwana Chui** - young Congolese customs officer in Goma - is murdered for not succumbing to corruption.

His story is short and full of faith. Floribert was born on 13 June 1981 in Goma, in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the border with Rwanda, and grew up in a time that did not know peace due to two recent bloody wars.

Like many other young people, he is an idealist, a dreamer, convinced of changing the world, and for this he throws himself into politics, more than ever convinced that the Congo needs him to renew itself. He focuses on jurisprudence, studying law with passion, so that right can guarantee social justice without which there is no freedom.

He becomes part of the Community of Saint Egidio, helps the marginalized, takes care of the ‘maibobo’, the street children everyone fears and nobody wants to approach. He becomes a friend to some, to others an older brother, traveling in the most infamous and dangerous neighborhoods. “As soon as he had some money in his pocket, he used it for them,” recalls his father.

With the Degree in hand, he immediately found work as Director of the

Customs Office for the verification of the quality of goods: an important place in a border city like Goma, but not exempt from corruption. He was killed in Goma, on 7 July 2007, for having blocked the passage of deteriorated foodstuffs, harmful to the health of the population. He died at the age of 26.

On 26 November 2016, the Bishop of Goma, **Théophile Kaboy**, officially opened the Cause of Beatification of the young martyr of corruption.

## “People’s health is worth more than money”

Floribert’s story is a new form of martyrdom: it is a silent sacrifice and far from the interests of the media, which however shakes the social and political life of those nations where corruption has become customary. The courage of the young is found in faith. In his Bible, a passage is highlighted which provokes him: “To the soldiers who question him – ‘And we, what should we do?’ - Jesus replied: “Do not mistreat or extort anything from anyone; be content with your wages” (Lk 3:12-14). For Floribert this is a moral imperative: not to demand anything more than what has been fixed. He is convinced, not by force but by faith. Floribert’s life teaches that if someone does not begin to rise up against corruption, common history will not be saved in Africa, or even in many other corners of the world.





“In a world marked by the diversity of peoples  
and by the variety of cultures,  
it is fundamental to walk together  
in order to give credibility and efficacy to initiatives  
of solidarity, integration, promotion of justice,  
and show in what constitutes  
a culture of encounter and gratuity”.

(Final Document, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*. I,126)



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