

RIVISTA DELLE FIGLIE DI MARIA AUSILIATRICE

Da Mihi Animas
dmd

01
2020
YEAR LXVII
quarterly

Poste Italiane SpA - Spedizione in Abbonamento Postale - DL 353/2003 (conv. in L. 27/09/2004 n. 46) art.1, comma 2 - DCB Roma

in the heart of
Contemporaneity

Publisher

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

Extra-commercial Edition

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

Photos FMA Archive
Photos Shutterstock



Associata USPI
Unione Stampa
Periodica Italiana

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We gaze with pleasure and joy at 2020 as a new time full of possibilities because it has matured *from* an ecclesial and social past fruitful with events; trustful *in* a present of actions aimed at respect for human dignity; and oriented *to* a future full of hope.

The reality we are living and that we are building together, is a substantially complex reality. The Magazine of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians DMA 2020 broadens the horizon on the heart of the contemporary world that solicits opening up to the other in the different cultures that have in themselves the seeds of interculturality, the privileged way for the dialogue of peace, of justice, and of living together in solidarity.

To inhabit Contemporaneity means to accept the invitation to take on the *mentality of Change*: “this requires us somehow to leave our ways, our cultural cages, to share time and experiences with others in order to grasp the social dynamics, the way to relate, how to build and read ourselves and others to enter into a profound understanding that is greater than us” (cf Aime, Marco. In Augé, Colleyn, J.P. Anthropology of the Contemporary World, Elèuthera, 2019).

We need a lucid ability to interpret our time as a scenario of rapid mutations that opens up opportunities and *formation* challenges. The anthropological gaze on the world, on the person, inspired by Christian humanism, calls us to illumine the contemporary reality interwoven with complexity, with an optimistic vision of the human being, which expresses predilection for existence, welcoming life in its dimensions “of gratuity, of mercy, and of communion” (Scrutate n. 15).

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Editorial

In the heart of Contemporaneity

Aware of the challenges of Contemporaneity and urged by the theme of GCXXIV “*Do whatever He tells you*” (Jn 2:5) –*Communities that generate life in the heart of contemporaneity*,” with DMA 2020 we will follow the ways of generativity, missionary spirit, synodality, contemporaneity to grasp the deep meaning and the convergences that are highlighted in ontological relationships, the essential dimension of the Salesian Charism.

Gazing at Mary, *the woman of new wine*, we are called to generate *new times of good wine*, drawing from the source of **generativity** of Mother Mazzarello, taking care of the poorest young girls with a synodal style of animation and the daring of the Spirit. In an attitude of **missionary synodality** the FMA Institute in the Communities of many faces develops as a network of diverse peoples, cultures, origins, and sensibilities, generating symphonic educommunicative richness in the heart of **Contemporaneity**. It feels called to be a co-creator with the Creator, forming “*good Christians and honest citizens*,” in the “change of convictions and in the gaze that opens to encounter with the other and to acceptance of the gift of Creation that reflects the beauty and the wisdom of its Artificer” (53rd World Day of Peace 2020, 4).

At this time, we are called to witness as Educommunicators that the power of Communication is at the service of Life, of Truth, of Peace.

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Traveling in Contemporaneity

DOSSIER

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What is the meaning of ‘traveling’ in Contemporaneity if, as Chilean Roberto Bolaño writes, “*the world changes every hundred miles*”? Walls, barbed wire, migrations, generations, art, culture, natural beauty, suffering, and hopes animate the contemporary world and traveling is an opportunity to narrate it in its complexity.

“I travel not to go somewhere, but to go. Travel to travel. The great thing is to move, to feel more acutely the itch of our life, to get off this bed of civilization and to feel the granite of the globe under your feet” (Robert Louis Stevenson).

“*When traveling, the best thing is to get lost. When you get lost, the plans give way to surprises, and it is then, but only then, that the journey begins* (Nicolas Bouvier).

Traveling has always been a narration of human existence, of its propensity for the unexpected direction of the future, expressing its expectations and limitations according to the coordinates of time and space. Traveling is thought, war, commerce, art. Traveling is the glance on a landscape composed of many places, roads, and paths, each with its memories and stories, each with its images and its inhabitants, visible and invisible, its elapsed time and its relevance. It is its inhuman puzzles, the sting of deaths in the desert, in the Mediterranean, on the edges of the walls erected here and there in defense of the civilian and the democrat who, however, fatally feeds on their enmity against the other. It is the desire to live in its instability and deviance or reassurance and compensation. At a certain point in the journey, trying to understand if we really have arrived, if we have ever left, if there is a destination that awaits us or an origin to which we can return.

“Traveling does not only mean crossing the secret heart of the continents. Traveling is also the exit from childhood, the beginning of a friendship, the breakdown of a bond that we believed could never end. Because it is when you go elsewhere that important things begin to happen, when life tests us and reveals a part of us that we did not know before” (Federico Pace, *Against the Wind. Stories and journeys that change Life*. Einaudi Editore. Turin - 2017).

■ Infinite traveling

Traveling by bicycle means first of all embracing a lifestyle. The awareness that every day is different, full of unexpected events, and also of satisfaction means not knowing where you will sleep in the evening or if you will find food and water along the way. Traveling by bicycle means living in a limbo of uncertainty, of continuous amazement and adrenaline, of going towards a day about which nothing is known, is life. "The idea was to try to cross the *Kurdistan* region that includes three nations: *Iran*, *Iraq* and *Turkey* with pedal strokes. There is not much information about it and going through it in winter made the project ambitious and adventurous, especially the part of Iraqi Kurdistan. A journey that brought us to know the heart of these forgotten regions where millenary cities, tribal

traditions, and turbans are mixed in an exciting travel and life experience. It is to see thousands of people living in refugee camps along the borders with Syria, the joy of children when cycling, and the long lines of tents that are lost on the horizon. Today, between Turkey and Syria there is a wall hundreds of kilometers long. It seems like a serpent that slips menacingly across the plains of Mesopotamia. Yet the meeting with the people of the places on the journey changes our life. Among the many encounters, I met Khalil, an Iraqi forced to flee his city. He hosted us and told us his story, of his normal life before the war, and then of his escape in search of a new future. It is easy to communicate despite language barriers and I recount this episode. In Turkey one day, there was a lot of rain. We seek shelter because

pedaling is impossible, and we find a mosque on the roadside so we decide to stop for a short while. Suddenly one, two, three, ten children jump out and observe us curiously. One of them speaks some English and invites us to his house. The evening is fantastic and within a few hours we feel part of this great family, grandchildren, grandmothers, uncles, and cousins, all living in the same house. Only the boy knows a few words of English, however the linguistic difference is not important. The warmth and smiles in the air do not need to be translated."

This is the story of Edward who travels on bicycle, with little luggage, and tells his unique experience. The suitcase fills up with indelible memories. His is an incredible story of humanity that helps us understand we are all brothers and sisters.

Open to me brother!

by **Rene Philombe**
Cameroonian poet and writer

I knocked on your door
I knocked on your heart
To have a bed
To have a fire
Why on earth reject me?

Open to me brother!
Why ask me
If I'm from Africa
If I'm from America
If I'm from Asia
If I'm from Europe?

Open to me brother!
Why ask me
How long my nose is
How thick my mouth is
What color my skin is
What names my gods have?

Open to me brother!
I am not black
I am not red
I am not yellow
I am not white
I am nothing but a human being.

Open to me brother!
Open the door for me
Open your heart to me
Because I'm human
The human of all times
The human of all the heavens
The human who looks like you!

How actual is this poem! A request for help that we often ignore or, worse still, we despise. A human being who begs another human being, a brother/sister who cries on the threshold of their house, pushed away by an invisible force. There is no interview, no entrance test. There is only one heart that must and wants to free itself from the icy chains of fear and ignorance (in a broad sense). A heart, but what am I saying, a thousand hearts that can't wait to be welcomed gratuitously, to discover or rediscover a warm and sincerely grateful smile, which does not need any label.

Open to me Brother! Let's open up, brothers!





■ When traveling becomes an art

An art that reproduces itself through its death, its extinction, and through the recycling of its remains, immediately explains the advanced modernization processes that continue to find in the aesthetic sphere the most exemplary life form for each social field. The exhibition “Escape from the museum” by photographers **Dario Assisi** and **Riccardo Maria Cipolla** is a creative journey to tell the story of the museum and the city. A journey into contemporaneity through photography.

“Our project was born from the desire to give life to the statues of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, making them real creatures that interact with reality. The sculptures become people who roam the cities, eager to discover their mysteries, beauties, and fears,” affirm the authors.

It is a real circuit between yesterday and today, jumping from century to century to discover the city in its places. With irony, it speaks of the museum as a space in the city that opens up to the city, invading it, traveling through it, inhabiting it. There are forty photomontages that represent part of the Neapolitan spirit and the atmosphere of the city. It is done with irony, sympathy, sweetness, and romance to try to bring the public closer to art by making it popular, understandable, and readable by everyone. It is a way to imagine, without having to dream, what the daily ‘life’ of goddesses and warriors, matrons and historical personages would be if with a time-machine they found themselves catapulted among alleys and paths, in the streets, squares, and in the most characteristic corners of contemporary Naples.

Between yesterday and today, between the whiteness of the marbles, the brightness of the bronzes of Farnese and Canova, and the liveliness of the metropolitan horizon, it is possible to meet **Atlas** with the world on his shoulders that circulates by motorbike between the narrow streets of the neighborhoods and the **Athlete**; look at the **statues of the Kings** on the facade of the Royal Palace of Naples who abandoned their niches to get a group photo taken by a passing tourist in the middle of Piazza Plebiscito; the **Aphrodite** of Capua who looks out to hang clothes and a Roman nobleman who waits together with a matron for the bus in via Caracciolo; and still see a **cheerful marble family** dart by in a car.

Technological innovation is the product of this imposing assumption of the past into the present, the way in which it changes it, making it possible and practicable, not according to the ways of learning and historical knowledge, but according to experiential dimensions. Huge stores of words, speeches, and images that have accumulated in the past are now flowing - together with the memories of individuals - into the network of relationships made available by information technology. They are spilling into space-time universes that go far beyond the human, humanly understandable and manageable and which, however, are available to the individual. Art is not dead, it lives and is a stimulus to contemporaneity.



Migration through the eyes of Syrian children

The forced exodus of Syrian children, the difficulty of their journey to Italy, the drama of the war, and the beauty of the welcome and solidarity received, without forgetting the dreams for a better future; all this is told in an exhibition that collects the drawings of many Syrian children who have passed through in recent years. The exhibition, entitled “Journey towards the future”, is hosted by the **St. Paul Cultural Center** in Vicenza (Italy).

The exhibition is offered by the **Tree of Life Foundation** (<https://www.alberodellavita.org/>), that operates in favor of the Syrian refugees. The Foundation, in collaboration with the Resilience Research Unit of the Catholic University of Milan, paid tribute to their stories with an exhibition able to ‘speak’ about their experiences in an immediate, simple, and exciting way through the eyes of children and through one direct and sincere tool like their designs. The path within the exhibition follows the idea of an **imaginary journey**. There are four thematic areas, four colors: **home, war, voyage, hospitality**. A final look is turned to the future: the hope of children to grow up and go home to improve their Country and make sure that war is only a distant memory.



■ Traveling towards inclusion

“The wheel is synonymous with ‘going’ and I, who have been on wheels all day, live by this transposition: I never stand still, I love to travel. So I take my wheelchair and go.” **Valentina Tomirotti**, journalist, digital storyteller and blogger, made many trips, so much so that she decided to transform her passion into an ambitious project of tourist and social accessibility. In art it is called *Pepitosa in Carrozza* (Nugget in a Wheelchair) and has created the drafting of tourist guides designed for wheelchair users. She visits the places aboard her car in total autonomy, evaluating elements such as the presence of architectural barriers, public pavement, accessibility of transport, hotels, and restaurants. *Pepitosa* is also the appellation with which the 36-year-old from Mantua - a graduate in Communication Sciences - as a journalist deals with the creation of content for the Web, works as an employee in a service company in her municipality, Porto Mantovano (Italy) and is known on the Net, thanks to the Blog www.valentinatomirotti.it and to her presence on the Social Networks. “Before communicating, I designed and produced jewels in an artisanal way. *Pepitosa* was the name of my costume jewelry brand. A ‘pepitose’ woman, just like nuggets, is full of light, colorful, exuberant. The Blog was born in 2013 as a support for the brand” which over time has become a window in which Valentina tackles topics that are part of everyday life, from lifestyle to fashion, to travel of course. “After visiting a location, I report a series of useful information, so that those who are in my condition and want to go there will be prepared.”

Valentina Tomirotti is affected by Diastrophic Dysplasia, a rare genetic disease characterized by a defect in the growth of the cartilage and this prevented her from walking. The book *Another (d) Year*, Mondadori, 2019, is the story of her 36 years of life, told in a different way from what you are used to when you hear about disability. “There are no tears, not because there have never been any, but because they are not the fundamental element of the existence of those in a wheelchair.”



■ The return voyage

“We must start every journey again. Always. The journey never ends. Only travelers end. And they too can extend in memory, in recalling, in narration. The end of a journey is only the beginning of another. You have to see what you haven’t seen, see again what you have already seen, see in spring what you have seen in summer, see by day what you have seen at night, with the sun where it rained the first time, see the green crops, the ripe fruit, the stone that has changed places, the shadow that was not there. We must go back on the steps already taken, to repeat them, and to trace new paths alongside you. The traveler always returns to look at the world and life (cf. José Saramago *Journey to Portugal*, Einaudi Editore - 2003).

“*The return voyage*” is the photograph 2000 of society taken by four 20-year-old young men who prefer to display it in a musical showcase instead of posting it in the stories with *hashtags* and *gifs*. It talks about people we tend to reject and to whom we all inevitably belong, of the intolerance of individuals in search of an identity, but for whom the need to belong is stronger, to recognize themselves in a group without a real ‘creed’ and without feeling their presumed ideals and values weigh on them. “*The piece is a figurative journey in search of a profound change of life - say the Réclame. The stream of individuals who make it, made of vices and contradictions, is the mirror of a society that does not always leave room for values, standardized; a society from which, even if you want to, you often don’t have the strength to escape.*”

The **Réclame** is a Roman band. The group was born from the meeting and friendship between Marco Fiore and the brothers Edoardo Roia (drums), Gabriele Roia (bass), Riccardo Roia (keyboards). The musical project, well rooted in the Italian songwriting tradition, turns its gaze to contemporary alternative sounds. The intent is to create songs that are stories, within which narration, sound experimentation, and pop structures coexist.



Réclame's piece is a reflection on the return journey, when people return from a holiday, a period abroad or, metaphorically, retrace their steps. They seem to return in a sad way, everything is the same, where people walk with their head down, with tired eyes, without ideals, and many things to say.



The Return Journey

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGnc2jd-mM8>)

is a timeless current
full of faces portrayed anywhere on the walls

and decent people
without great ideals
who hope someday
to see another face in the mirror
not to be themselves
not to have to walk.
Head down
with tired eyes
be one among the voices of many
who don't have much to say
if not screaming out loud
a few sentences said so as not to die.
The shoes consumed on the asphalt

the weight of some useless breathlessness
the words of hatred
grainy with fury
the party posters without color
and who returns irrespective of daytime
and detestable of the evening
who returns to drink a lot
and to remain standing still
with faith on your finger tip but always ready
for occasional new love stories
with clenched fists and a worthless cross
with hope under the soles
to see another face in the mirror.
But perhaps it's right like this
perhaps it is better to walk
with head down...

Which young people should be the protagonists of the story? Young agnostics? Yes. Young people who have a lukewarm faith? Yes. Young people who are far from the Church? Yes. Every young person has something to say to the others, to the adults, to the priests, to the sisters, to the bishops, and to the Pope. All of us must listen to them! (Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil for the 32nd World Youth Day, Rome -April 2017)



Generate for the world

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When as Educators we look at the world of children and of young people, we perceive ambivalence and tension.

The image of childhood is an open construct, in progress, with strong interconnections between theory and practice. The image of the reality of children and young people depends on our gaze and our history. The gaze is important because it directs the action: “The gaze is the first step. I sense, I see, I point out, I move” (cf. A. Augelli, *Christian initiation in practice*. Terrasini 2019).

■ In spite of attention and care

Since the twentieth century we have witnessed a historical process in which the child and the young person have been placed at the center of society. Just think of the various declarations, the attention, the achievements gained in the field of rights and care. However, the difficulty in recognizing the child in its uniqueness and in listening deeply to its real needs and resources is still noticeable. The feeling expressed by many is that the statements risk remaining just that, because adult life remains the measure.

The narrative about them divides itself between an ‘already’ and a ‘not yet’. Parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends are looking for elements of precocity. It is with pride that some say: “my child already knows how to do it”, “already knows how to say it”; or others, in a benevolent tone and almost apologetically indicate the traces of what is lacking, of imperfection: “not yet successful”, “not yet able”. In any case, the parameter is always adult life.

The subject of the child is a child who can express irreducible otherness and who continually goes beyond this binary and linear temporal logic. Despite the attention and care given to the world of childhood, the idea that big is better than small predominates. You have to be great to arouse esteem and admiration. For now, children and young people require care and expense, the concern

never fails: Will they survive? Will they disappoint us? Will they make it? We do nothing but study the omens. We want to predict everything, be sure of everything. “*This anxiety-filled waiting for what will be increases our lack of respect for what it is*” (Cf

Jannsz Korczak, *How to love the Child*. Reprint 2004).

■ The paradox and the question

We are facing a very strong paradox. First there is an ‘adultized’ child and then an infantilized adolescent. Today, this ambivalent message comes to the growing child: when you are small you have to become big to be worth something, to be someone, but then when you are big, it is better to be small again, because being adults is hard work and responsibility. *You grow to be valued, but you return to being small to be carefree.*

Paradoxically, the insecurity of the adult world asks them for a confirmation of doing good/harm: “tell me I’m doing well”, “tell me that you will be my satisfaction” (cf. Augelli 2019).

The question, “Will I be able to live up to the expectations they have placed in me?” weighs on the shoulders of the children.

Living with this weight is not simple, indeed it is extremely complicated. The children ask us, therefore, to be re-known, to be looked at continuously as custodians of their time and not as a mirror of adults. Recognition means the ability to continually see

and re-see their novelty, and also to offer them confirmation and disconfirmation, not indifference.

The message of those who generate is: you can exist for what you are, you are lovable in



your uniqueness, you are good as you are, you are a child and my satisfaction is in your being here and not in what you give me. As Educators we can be a resource for them by trying to free the relationship from expectations greater than them, bringing the proclamation of a God who loves them as they are and precisely because of their being the way they are. The skills that educators are called to acquire and refine are attention and intuition. Attention as an ability to strip yourself of everything that can prevent you from truly encountering others and seeing them for what they are. Intuition, that is, the ability to see in advance what the others can become and to help them truly believe it. Whoever generates does not do it for self, but for the world. As *Educators, as Church are we capable of generating children to be in the world and not to be "for us"?*

■ Curiosity/indifference

When we look at today's children and young people, we notice their curiosity and their desire to discover things. After all, the new generations live in a context in which there is a strong drive to go into research, to understand clues, to structure personal thought paths, and to build truths to their measure. Often, however, they also appear indifferent and tired, as if nothing attracted them. On the one hand they live a cognitive and discovery drive typical of this time; on the other, the excess of stimulation immediately leads them to tire easily. The excess of stimulation, which comes from the artificial images that new technologies make available, produces indifference to the known.

Indifference also has another source: children and young people are surrounded by non-questions and devices that do not train them for research, but for repetition.

Von Forster pronounced the need to stop asking *illegitimate questions* to children, where the already hypothesized answer is asked and where violence is done to the little ones in leading them to say exactly what we want to hear. He invited the Educators to train themselves to formulate *legitimate questions*, those that displace us adults too, the big ones, the ones we ourselves don't know how to answer, the ones that really push us to search for and discover something new.

As Educators we can be a resource for those who

are growing up if we rediscover ourselves in searching with them, 'ignorant', open to complex thought, amazed at their own questions. It is a question, then, of making explicit the confused questions they have inside, guarding spaces where these questions can arise and be shared. Train and listen to the 'child philosopher'.

■ Reflexivity deficit

For some time, many pediatricians have reported high rates of stress and psychophysical fatigue in children. They have an excess of stimuli and limited times of silence, solitude, emptiness. The desire to fill the agenda and have many experiences takes away the time of reflexivity, indispensable for experiences to acquire value.

Children and young people get tired quickly and are often even supported in the change of interests and experiential spaces, with the idea that they must try everything, excel everywhere in everything, and at any cost.

From this point of view, educational attention must be paid to knowing how to package and propose meaningful experiences, leaving space for reflexivity and personal reworking, without connecting the experience and its message to any cost.

It is important to remember that practical experiences allow an activation of body languages and emotions, very precious dimensions in educational processes. "But often what children lack is precisely the possibility of putting together mind, heart, and hands, the dimension of thought, with the emotional and experiential one" (Galimberti). It is therefore a question of encouraging the experiences of the senses, of the times of nature, of the activation of the body, but also in the ability to make it wise, which can only happen if there is space for reflexivity and thought (cf. Augelli 2019).

■ Learn to be in the world

Today the educational trend is increasingly that of relieving children of fatigue and pain as if it did not exist and as if it invalidated the dynamics of happiness. This on the one hand prevents them from being resilient in the face of challenges and increasingly fragile. On the other hand, it prevents them from finding the very meaning of

happiness, which is always in overcoming and in the search for something that is really worth living and working for.

Today's society seems to suggest living resurrection without death, of living happily without ever experiencing suffering, of seeing a plant grow without seeing the seed die and without seeing the roots spreading themselves and the body pushing and struggling to pierce the ground.

This ambivalence of seeing sad children and young people and at the same time of wanting to continue to relieve them from it, without helping them to overcome loss and detachment is what makes them increasingly insecure.

If we raise children with the idea that 'nothing must harm you', we prevent them from testing themselves and taking risks (getting dirty, hurting themselves, failing, suffering) and therefore we prevent them from learning and developing the resilience needed to be in the world.

Stories help us to live, because they are born from life itself.

The pomegranate

Once there was an enchanted garden, a corner of peace that gave colored juicy fruit that matured in a regular cycle of seasons, the natural time that leaves intact memory and its becoming. The child willingly went to the home of her aunts. She always discovered there something new and special, antique objects like the kaleidoscope and the wooden binoculars to observe the perfection of the colored corpuscles in movement or imagine distant unknown cities. Each time, curiosity pushed her to find new things among the rooms full of books and the dry penetrating smell of wood and paper. The collection of newspapers for children was a multicolored and varied scene. There among the pages that she turned with difficulty because they were too big, the images seemed alive, real, unique. But what most drew her attention was an old cardboard valise that contained samples of perfumes and glitter. The small bottles illumined her eyes. She opened them carefully to smell the flower essences and read. Each time, this small treasure was contemplated with sacred respect, like a secret that was not to be shared with anyone but to be kept away from time that transforms and fades everything. Her infancy was enclosed between the walls of the old libraries, the smell of the wood of the furniture, the magic dust that covered everything like a soft and safe protection for an enchanted and innocent world. The aunts' home and the garden remained impressed in her skin, in her life, just as the memories of the secret space of her infancy, the world where everything is possible, the fantasy of days past and never ended.

Many years have passed and the child is now an adult. The aunts' home is decrepit and abandoned. Real time has consumed and changed forever the images of that time. But the pomegranate tree is always there to remind the little-big girl that time always gifts a new season, the fantasy of colors that do not fade. The fruit of the pomegranate has a hard resistant skin and inside, the red color of its beans restores the unchanged memory of infancy to the heart and sight. There is a thin thread that binds the antique symbolism of this fruit: life and death, but also energy and fertility, elements that give real and imaginary time the roots to nourish body and soul in the remembrance that everything welcomes and restores.

(<http://www.educare.it> - Year XIX, N. 5, May 2019)



Young people in contemporary society

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In times of economic boom, the most active young people did everything to reach the top positions (and many succeeded). They interested themselves in politics, which carried out its role in the formation of citizens, and many participated in the life of the Church. In the Church, participation became concrete in the parishes; in the civil sector, the instrument for participating in political and social life was the parties, the associations because they were places of confrontation, of exchange of ideas, of formation of the ruling classes. Today the main places of socialization are the squares, low walls, shopping malls, pilgrimages, volunteering, sports gatherings.

The young people of the new century are lost and disoriented in the face of the power of money, the influence of advertising, the instrumental use made of knowledge, antagonism within and between Institutions of every kind, and of everything that transforms social life into a war of power and of cunning. They hardly follow the newscasts and the newspapers, and they are not all wrong in this. They know that news can be piloted, selected instrumentally, and directed to trap fragile citizens exposed to the attraction of the propaganda. They are mistrustful of politics that seems to resolve itself in a race to capture an electorate that they consider 'passive', and they feel they are remembered by politicians especially during election campaigns. I suspect that this does not create in them any passion for politics and feeds a growing impatience for the slowness of time and the incapacity for action. Then, the young that attempt to go into political life and try to actively get involved, are not always listened to thus, it is easy to be discouraged in the face of such a panorama.

■ Lost young people

Society does not always offer the young authentic witnesses and spaces for mutual confrontation. That's why young people opt for horizontal peer communication on social networks, where they manage to make themselves visible, to relate, propose, contest, build virtual communities. These are the places where they practice self-education and where they meet friends as well as risks of all kinds. Scholars

denounce the model of the so-called *homo vagans*, without compasses, lost in the mega complexes of stairs, elevators, intertwining intersections that outline shopping centers and megacities. Moreover, it is not easy to organize space in relation to your body and make sure of the correctness of the direction. We become victims of a geographical-spatial dispersion, which is also social, religious, political. Young people must 'be linked to each other' because alone they will not survive. They need each other to truly mark the difference in a world increasingly tried by divisions.' To grow humanly and civilly, it is necessary to start from what the self owes to others, rather than what others owe to the self. Pope Francis offers a golden piece of

advice: “Many times in life, we waste time asking ourselves: ‘But who am I?’ You can ask yourself who you are and make a whole life looking for who you are. But ask yourself, ‘Who am I for?’” *Social networks*, which revolutionize past strategies, are the privileged channel for adults who want to communicate with young people. It is a precious resource of contemporaneity due to the fact that, especially through WU and Facebook, it is possible to gain contacts and services that become an integral and decisive part of the lifestyle of young people in the family, on the street, at school, in religious settings, in sports. They do well to make the most of it, becoming aware before and better than adults that through digital channels they have the opportunity to build their own alternative world and from below, passing through horizontal networks that reveal unexpected potential for incisive repercussions on institutional structures. Think of the so-called ‘Arab springs’, which brought about revolutions - called by some *twitterized* - in which social networks guaranteed a level of communication that would never have been allowed by the regimes.

However, the Educators do well to ask themselves and ask the young many questions: *how to counteract the continuous and obsessive use of social media? How to discern the propaganda use of fake news? How can we defend ourselves from neuro-marketing techniques, which*

identify the implicit aspirations of citizens, consumers, and voters to influence behavior, sales, and votes? How to trust the interlocutors and what they circulate on social networks? The degree of user influence and viral content are unpredictable and also beyond the control of the social media manager. It is easy to be harnessed in networks that bombard the mind with ideas and characters passed off as myths even when they are actually harmful ‘dwarfs’. In fact, the young are continually exposed on the one hand by destructive criticism of the ruling class, of Institutions, and on the other hand by substituting them with false myths and paradises. Even the most discerning are trapped by enchanted castles that turn out to be sand and create disillusionment by blocking investments of trust and courageous actions. Disappointed by the proclamations of chairs and pulpits too often sadly contradicted by corrupt behavior, tired of ineffective politicians, paternalistic recommendations, and high-sounding promises, quite a few young people conclude that the world of the ‘arrived’ is indifferent to their problems and their anxieties, and they abandon the field. In the midst of the huge amount and diversity of information but with poor formation, references, and referents, these ‘nomads’ agree, surrender to the spread of corruption, to the systemic suspicions of postmodern culture, and renounce taking

sensible actions in the first person (*New vocations for a new Europe*, Rome 1998, n. 33c).

■ Courageous young people

And yet, there are courageous young people who refuse to be satisfied with the warmth of their small world and to systematically delegate commitment. They are decidedly different than NEET and circulate their resources, spending themselves for someone or something, even if often they do not have credible, close points of reference.

“We cannot limit ourselves to saying that the young are the future of the world,” the Pope writes in the Third Chapter of the Post Synod Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*. They are “**the present, they are enriching it with their contribution**” and therefore we must trust them, recognizing the positive they bring. “In some young people, we can see a desire for God, albeit still vague and far from knowledge of the God of revelation. In others, we can glimpse an ideal of human fraternity, which is no small thing. Many have a genuine desire to develop their talents in order to offer something to our world. In some, we see a special artistic sensitivity, or a yearning for harmony with nature. In others, perhaps, a great need to communicate. In many of them, we encounter a deep desire to live life differently. In all of this, we can find real starting points, inner resources open to a word of incentive, wisdom, and encouragement.”

The resources of a human being are unpredictable and it is not uncommon for discarded young people from whom it is thought impossible to obtain something good, and who instead reveal unthinkable and precious resources.

You can work with everyone, attuning to their specific existential and psychological condition. Trusting and involving them in beneficial actions is often decisive in restoring the dignity of young people to be able to be protagonists, to be able to take their own life in hand and spend it satisfactorily for themselves and for others. Coming out of the sacristies, reaching the peripheries is what Pope Francis asks, convinced that masterpieces can be made with waste.

We need educators who know how to involve them, help them to take on a commitment even at the risk of failing, of remaining alone, of reaching another end different from the one planned; who teach them to distance themselves from the confusion of values or of that ‘and, and’ which considers both one thing and

its opposite good, to learn how to choose, take and leave, accept and refuse, while knowing that it is easy to make a mistake. Blessed are the anonymous Educators who know how to pull them out of the limbo of indifference and make their eyes shine with the possibility of detaching themselves from the ordinary, from the *dejà vu* and throwing themselves into the adventure of a better future that also depends on them and in which it is beautiful and rewarding to invest energies, choose companions, the means and strategies to be used, the allies and the opponents.

“Dear young people, I will be happy to see you run faster than those who are slow and fearful. Run attracted by that much loved Face, which we adore in the Holy Eucharist and recognize in the flesh of the suffering brother. May the Holy Spirit push you forward in this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need it! **And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.**” (Pope Francis).



The bond that continues

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Mourning is a natural response to loss, a condition that people experience several times throughout their lives. In line with the Christian faith, some current models on the elaboration of mourning, claim that death marks a change in the emotional relationship with the deceased, not the end of it, and that the pain of mourning, properly managed, can be the engine of human and spiritual growth. In contemporary reality, difficulties arise in sharing loss and in the elaboration of mourning, for this reason it is necessary to discover or re-discover the generative force of community ties and learn to promote them and make them grow.

The voyage of earthly life concludes with death, an experience common to everyone and that no one can avoid. Many religions, among them Christianity, believe that death is not the end of life, but the beginning of a happy existence and of deep communion between the living and the dead. However, the death of loved ones is always a painful experience and often, is hard to accept and go on with life serenely without the tangible presence of those who have left us.

This pain is often described as a tear in the heart, an internal and external emptiness, a dark solitude, and time is

needed to accept it and manage it with the help of family, the community, and God. The ability to adequately face the pain of mourning does not only depend on believing more or less in eternal life, but also from the meaning that the person attributes to the experience of the death of a dear one that, being an experience of loss, generates sadness, anger, powerlessness, numbness, resignation, and can in many cases be transformed into an occasion of personal and spiritual maturation.

“The communion that has united us in life continues and is strengthened when we reach the moment of passing from this life to the Father’s house”
(Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, 1982, Art. 60).

■ Mourning as an experience of loss

Mourning is an experience of loss, a traumatic event that upsets life in every aspect and marks an enormous discontinuity in one’s autobiographical construction. There is a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ the event of death that causes a rupture and puts in discussion one’s life style, relationships, convictions, and values. If culturally the ways of living it change, universally mourning is a consequent psychological state after the loss of a significant person in one’s life and is closely connected to attachment, a dynamic system of attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the formation of a specific bond between two people, whose roots can be retraced back to the primary relationship that is established between the child and the adult who takes care of the child. Most people succeed to face the loss of a dear person in an adequate way and are able to adapt well thanks to internal resources, social support, and the type of personal attachment. In fact, people who have developed a bond of secure attachment are able to use contact and social support, transforming the painful experience into an occasion for personal growth and help towards others. Instead, those who have an insecure attachment experience notable difficulty in coping with mourning, especially if it is due to traumatic events, and have the possibility of developing the ‘disturbance of persistent

and complicated mourning characterized by prolonged psychological stress correlated with loss’ according to DSM 5.

Bowlby, a scholar of attachment, construction, and rupturing of affective bonds, maintains that the processing of normal or physiological mourning occurs through four phases:

- a *phase of numbness*, characterized by disorientation, confusion, disbelief or anxiety, especially when death occurs in a traumatic and unexpected way.
- a *phase of protest*, in which anger emerges for what has happened and the person can carry out a ruminative thought aimed at understanding the ‘why’ or ‘finding a solution’ to fill the emotional void and sense generated by mourning.
- a *phase of despair* is when one realizes the loss cannot be remedied. It is a depressive period characterized by profound sadness, melancholy, loss of motivation, social withdrawal, sometimes with sleep and eating disorders, in which the sense of emptiness and loneliness is often not canceled by the presence of other significant people.
- a *phase of reorganization* of oneself and one’s existence, characterized by an improvement in mood and a gradual recovery of interest in social activities, with the acceptance of the loss with which one learns to live and pain becomes an opportunity for human and spiritual maturation.

■ Mourning as an experience of growth

Much research demonstrates that the loss of a beloved person is a real trauma that can determine clinically significant hardship from the physical and psychological points of view. Other studies instead, document the possibility that mourning brings improvement in maturity and in psychological strength in those who face it. It regards **post-traumatic growth**, in which the traumatic and potentially devastating experience of death solicits the person to rethink their lifestyle, to revise

assumptions and beliefs, to activate internal and external resources so as to find new meaning in life when facing the experience of death. The actual models of mourning, 'Model of the Dual Process' and model of the 'Bonds that Continue' sustain that the resolution of mourning comes with the re-organization of the bonds of attachment with the deceased and not with the end of them, as some traditional models sustain, among them the one of **Kubler Ross**.

The American theory of bonds that continue (*Continuing Bonds Theory*), formulated in 1996 by **Dennis Klass** and his collaborators, explicitly questioned the dominant

part in cultural and religious rituals to honor and remember the dead, thinking of the advice that the loved one would give in a situation or live their life in a way the deceased would be proud of, use intercessory prayer to address the deceased, keep the loved one with oneself through an object or photo that mitigates the pain of absence.

According to the Dual Process Model of mourning elaboration, theorized by **Stroebe and Schut** in 1999, the bereaved person engages daily in a coping process between strategies that are loss-oriented directed to the painful event and restoration-oriented aimed at investment in the new reality, using internal resources, including religious faith or spirituality, and external resources such as the support of family and friends and belonging to a community. In coping with mourning the person alternates *loss-oriented* attitudes (crying due to separation, yearning for the deceased

person, staring at photographs frequently, etc.) with *reconstruction-oriented* attitudes (manage the tasks left unresolved by the deceased, deal with concrete aspects to reorganize one's life, develop new identities as widows/widowers or orphans); *non-coping* attitudes (completely distracting oneself, closing in on yourself ...). This dynamic process of hyper-activation and deactivation of the attachment system with the deceased has as its aim the elaboration of a meaning that makes death acceptable and gives a new significance to life. In the educational field, from the perspective of mourning as an experience of growth, **Death Education** (DeEd) is increasingly being developed, that is,

education to loss and death in the cognitive-emotional maturation process of children and adolescents, with the aim of teaching how to live the experience of death well to give full meaning to life itself in which loss, suffering, transformation, and growth coexist, promoting the idea that **death ends a person's life, but not the relationship between people** because love is eternal and the bond continues here and now.

FOR STUDY

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models of the elaboration of mourning according to the need to "let the deceased go" through affective dis-investing. They proposed a new paradigm according to which mourning is resolved by keeping the bonds with the dear one in a new and profound way. According to this model, based on Klass's twenty-year experience with groups of parents who had lost a child, healthy mourning takes place when the person gradually manages to go through their pain by accepting the loss and reorganizing the emotional bond in a new way. It does not become extinct, but can continue throughout life. There are countless significant ways to maintain the bond with the deceased: for example, taking

person, staring at photographs frequently, etc.) with *reconstruction-oriented* attitudes (manage the tasks left unresolved by the deceased, deal with concrete aspects to reorganize one's life, develop new identities as widows/widowers or orphans); *non-coping* attitudes (completely distracting oneself, closing in on yourself ...). This dynamic process of hyper-activation and deactivation of the attachment system with the deceased has as its aim the elaboration of a meaning that makes death acceptable and gives a new significance to life. In the educational field, from the perspective of mourning as an experience of growth, **Death Education** (DeEd) is increasingly being developed, that is,



Creative and ethical citizenship

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Keeping in mind the grand world scenarios with the rapid changes taking place and gathering the solicitations coming from the convocation of GC XXIV to be in contemporaneity with an evangelical and Marian heart, the Rubric *For a new citizenship* proposes the re-thinking of the term *Citizenship* with the aim of offering some points that can help us to implement the proposal of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, living as *honest citizens today*.

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for a new citizenship



Considering that the background of the current crisis is the anthropological question, the first aspect to be addressed is the urgency of recuperating the creative and ethical dimension of the person because only in this way can we responsibly live *digital, ecological, and planetary citizenship*, themes that will be developed in future issues, to implant a discourse aimed at a new citizenship.

■ Epochal changes

According to the sociologist, **Zigmunt Bauman**, the accelerated perception of time and the reduction of space that is now global have produced a *liquid* society today, marked by the transitory and uncertain in which the average citizen reacts with feelings of fear and insecurity in a complex world that he/she cannot control and from which they must defend themselves. In order to do this, they take the way of individualism and of conformism which, contrary to their desire, makes them more vulnerable and insecure. They tend to reduce time to presentism, cancelling the past and evading a too uncertain future. Epochal change allows fixating some traits, but just at the moment of wanting to grasp them, they have already faded and others appear that are even more fleeting.

At the same time, we see with awe the growing development of Science and Technology with a tremendous potential of bettering the quality of life, and parallel to this, we assist at the increasingly pronounced weakening of the person's self-understanding, especially in the area of Genetics, of Neurosciences, of Robotics, etc. If on the one hand the dignity and quality of human life is defended, on the other, the identity of the person seems very threatened in a world progressively robotized, where the human being is often treated in function of efficiency and productivity.

From this observation arises a question that challenges us deeply: *what traits should characterize the identity of the citizen of the 21st century today? How do we deal with change so that it favors of the growth of the person?*

■ A strong flexible identity

In this situation of mutation, if we want to live Contemporaneity as believers, we must first of all recover the centrality of the person with the value references that direct them towards the true, the good, the beautiful. In this sense, it is necessary to promote the critical emancipation of the individual from the social context, so that he/she can become a person capable of making right choices and acting effectively based on the choices made (cf. Bauman 2009).

It is about empowering the liberation of one's identity so that it maintains the balance between freedom and security, and thus assumes a strong and flexible identity. Strong to be faithful to fundamental values and flexible to adapt to change critically. In this form, the exercise of citizenship will be subordinated to the search for the common good beyond one's own interests. Participating in political life, in fact, is for the believer a vocation and a moral obligation (cf. EG n. 220). From this perspective, the new generations of citizens of today and tomorrow need to be oriented towards acquiring an identity capable of facing the challenges of today's world with awareness and creativity.

■ Creative citizenship

Given the often confusing complexity of the socio-cultural context, citizens today must be creative in order to inhabit complexity by generating innovation. It is interesting to note that even where the progress of Technology is exalted, as in the case of Artificial Intelligence, it is stated that humans can in no way be replaced by machines. Therefore skills such as critical thinking and creativity must be developed (cf. *Artificial Intelligence for Europe* 12). *What are the criteria that define the creative profile?* Various researchers describe the traits. We recall here the description of the Psychologist **Torrance**, "The creative person is distinguished by *fluidity* on the basis of the various responses that he/she is able to give to emerging questions; by *flexibility* that demonstrates mental elasticity, and therefore the ability to confront change in an efficacious way; by *originality* as a factor relative to innovation which helps to live

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contemporaneity with optimism; by *elaboration* as the capacity to think, alternating convergent and divergent thoughts with precision and richness of details and nuances.”

From this description, creativity is clearly perceived as a complex process that requires a method. For this reason, it is a skill that must be taken into consideration in education from an early age, because it is precisely children who are most predisposed to genuine expressions of creativity. In this way, the younger generations are empowered to develop all their potential according to the criteria indicated to live the present inspired by strong values inherited from the past and opening up to the future with novelty, hope, and joy.

■ Ethical citizenship to manage change

Another aspect that we consider urgent in contemporary culture based on an anarchist relativism is precisely the ethical dimension. If ethics, in general, is a set of rules that regulate human behavior and action towards free, fair, and responsible choices, the ethical citizen is the one who is able to deal with change with clarity, aware of their rights and duties. In this sense, it is a moral subject that engages in participation in social life and in the construction of a *civil ethos* open to peaceful conviviality. To this end **Howard Gardner**, known for his research on multiple intelligences, suggests recovering *truth*, *beauty*, and *goodness* as the keys to ethical citizenship. According to the Author, these virtues are essential for human survival and as a consequence, can help us to effectively manage change in openness to new scenarios, in a constant attitude of discernment, avoiding passivity and the tendency to conform to shifting fashions. In this sense, in order to contrast the exaggerations of Artificial Intelligence and revive the typically human moral virtues, education to ethical intelligence is necessary.

■ Educating to ethical intelligence

According to the reflection made so far, it is obvious that the ethical dimension pervades every expression of human life. For this reason, the



formation path of every person cannot ignore this fundamental aspect of human action. We read in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, “Often we prove inconsistent in our own convictions, however firm they may be; even when our conscience dictates a clear moral decision, other factors sometimes prove more attractive and powerful. We have to arrive at the point where the good that the intellect grasps can take root in us as a profound affective inclination... A good ethical education includes showing a person that it is in his/her own interest to do what is right” (265). This calls for an education of the moral conscience and of the will, in addition to the virtues of freedom, truth, goodness, and beauty.

Each of these elements is to be developed in an educational itinerary “Moral education has to do with cultivating freedom through ideas, incentives, practical applications, stimuli, rewards, examples, models, symbols, reflections, encouragement, dialogue, and a constant rethinking of our way of doing things; all these can help develop those stable interior principles that lead us spontaneously to do good. Virtue is a conviction that has become a steadfast inner principle of operation” (ibid. 267). Living as honest citizens today is, first of all, developing a high profile of creative and ethical citizenship to effectively face change. In this path, education is the privileged way that challenges educators, formators, parents, and all those involved in Formation, because they accompany the new generations in this time of historical change.



Traveling

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You can travel millions of kilometers in one life without ever marking the surface of places or learning something from the people you just met. Getting around is easy. It often requires work, war or you can fly on holiday to the other side of the world to send postcards, take pictures, buy souvenirs for friends and relatives, and then go back identical to the way you left. There is another journey that can be done by listening, meeting the other, and giving oneself.

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■ The interior journey

The journey is life itself: traveling opens the mind, broadens boundaries, and confirms identity. *Taking care of the journey and the journey takes care of us, the moment we decide to undertake it. It is the decision to face the unknown and the risk that being 'on the road' entails, which allows us*

"Living is not necessary, but if you want to live, it is necessary to travel".

to understand how overwhelming and important the desire for growth and change is, a desire that will inevitably lead us to our transformation.

The journey opens up to the possibility of change. You never go back to being as you were before. Appreciating and making travel 'useful', confronting different customs and cultures, require that the first and very important journey be made within ourselves. It is in this sense that, within the travel experience away from our reference points, we can start a change, a broadening of our borders that makes us better and richer than before.

A journey, in fact, that will mark us throughout our lives is the one made with eyes wide open to carefully observe the changing atmospheres of the

"One who travels without meeting the other, does not travel, but only moves"
(Alexandra David-Néel).

places, with ears well attentive to listen to the words and stories of those we meet, with slow steps that scratch the surface of the places, with the heart and mind open and attentive to understand the essence of the spirit of the place you visit. And then perhaps *"go back on the steps already taken, to repeat them, and to trace new paths alongside them. We have to start the journey again. Always!"* This is what **José Saramago** the Portuguese poet, writer, and winner of the Nobel Prize in 1998, writes in his book *Journey to Portugal*.

■ A journey towards the other

"From every trip I came back with the memory of *someone* more than *something*." I know the places through the stories of men and women, young people and children met along the journey, and with the eyes of memory I can more easily see the expressions of their faces, rather than the beauties of many landscapes. These encounters do

not go away even when you leave. There are people, images, who stay and going away from certain places is perhaps impossible. Many of them have become friends with whom I have not lost touch.

"The real journey that saves us is not around ourselves but towards otherness, because the rapport with the other is always the possibility of a relationship

that opens our hearts. It makes us accept diversity: I remain me and you remain you, different but friends" (José Tolentino Mendonça).

The journey makes a way, the way becomes a bridge that invites welcoming the other and this reveals the profound meaning of life. Every person on the path becomes a friend, almost a brother/sister, you don't just see them because you meet them. The journey allows you to 'go beyond', to see what you cannot see, and to perceive its depth because "the essential is invisible to the eye."

And meeting with the other is not necessarily just the other person. It is also the other culture, the other world, the other way of being and thinking. A journey allows you to get to know a different reality. And if you don't encounter it, if you don't want to discover it, then you are not traveling but only moving.

Rubén Blades Bellido de Luna, Panamanian singer-songwriter, in the song taken from his album, *Caminando*, talks about traveling as 'walking', because it is not enough to go to a certain country, to visit it on board a car or a bus to capture its beauty, its culture in general, and especially know its inhabitants and their problems. A slow journey of walking is needed to be able to stop and listen to anyone who has a story to tell, an experience and an emotion to share, and thus learn the meaning of life.

Traveling is walking towards the horizon, meeting the other, getting to know, discovering, and returning richer than when the journey started.

■ A journey for volunteering

Traveling is an opportunity to open new horizons: getting to know each other, getting to know other

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Three things in the suitcase

1. A pair of glasses that not only shows me things, but also allows me to understand them.
2. Coal/paper to copy and make my own the good ideas that travel leads me to discover.
3. A pair of comfortable shoes to tackle somewhat difficult and uncomfortable paths, and undoubtedly the richest of surprises.

people and other cultures, getting involved, learning and growing. Young people often choose to live in other countries, even if only for a limited period, also thanks to volunteer projects and programs that encourage mobility. Unlike for tourism or work, traveling for volunteer purposes opens up to a more intense, aware, and responsible dimension. Traveling to volunteer implies a strong involvement in the social environment of the place you visit and contributes to openness towards solidarity beyond national and linguistic borders, helping to rediscover human nature beyond cultural and linguistic barriers. With volunteering you learn to become active and intercultural citizens, you acquire a broader way of thinking, free from prejudices. Traveling to volunteer involves participation with the clear intention of giving oneself 'for free' yet returning richer. Thus, day after day, you discover companions

Wayfarer, the path is nothing but the footprints of your steps. Wayfarer, there is no path, the path opens by walking
(Antonio Machado).

on the same journey of life, educating each other to go beyond what they see of each other, discovering how the Word lives in the most disparate situations of existence. It is enough to know how to observe carefully to see how it traverses our every gesture and word. Traveling has marked the lives of many and of many others who will mark it in the time to come: because the Other and elsewhere always have something in store that we have not yet known, which will change our life and open up the passage to new horizons for us.

Social Educommunicate

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We adults many times perceive, a generational abyss in the face of the familiarity with which our children with a few touches, manage to activate functions that we would never expect from a tablet. Young people live cyberspace naturally: it is a meeting place and, at times, it seems to have replaced the wall where we used to meet with our friends as teenagers. On the Social Media they exchange information, they enter into a relationship. Digital reality has become not only a communication tool, but a place to live.

We are struck by those who - thanks to the shield provided by the screen - act or speak on the Web as they never would in reality. From those who flaunt extravagant poses to those who, moderate and calm in everyday life, in chat bring out unexpected aggressions. Spectators and actors of a great social change and of the great potential offered by the Net, we also recognize in it risks that we do not always manage to face. The person, with their inviolable dignity, must remain at the center of the current digital revolution and it is necessary to avoid that the increasingly pervasive culture of the image hide its value. *"We need to humanize the social community, through a path of*



self-awareness and responsibility,” explains **Flavia Silli**, Professor of Philosophy at the **Pontifical Lateran University** in Rome, Italy and an expert in Personalism. “We are witnessing a progressive aestheticization of reality. It is good to recover a correct relationship between physical and virtual reality.”

■ What risk is there?

“The risk is that, through *Social Media*, a system of signs that is completely detached from real life can be developed, building a parallel reality of simulation. It is a reality that we are very aware of if we think, for example, of the spread of video games among young people: it is a hyper-reality, a strengthening of the human being, where there is no referent, but there is self-referencing. However, *wisdom*, which is the characteristic trait of *homo sapiens* in its search for meaning, cannot be completely extinguished by the digital revolution. This is why it is necessary to recover a correct relationship between image, reality, and subject in order to humanize the virtual world.”

■ What has been highlighted by the increasingly widespread use of Social Media?

“Today we are all immersed in Social Communication through *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc. This use should be regulated, therefore have a critical approach and recover the appeal of the human being to the anthropological constitution, which is the matrix of each type of relationship. *Social media* are, in fact, relationship tools. It is natural that, on an educational level, their use implies a sense of responsibility. Only through responsible use will we be able to encourage a correct interaction and intersection between being *online* and *offline*. It must be recognized that Social Networks have made explicit the desire to communicate and the search for social recognition proper to each person. There are, however, some critical issues, learning to discern and teaching to choose. Our children find it very important to show their image online. On social networks, they seek recognition of their value through *likes*.

But can the regulatory criterion of self-esteem be dependent on the recognition of the other through the image?

Above all, the younger ones link self-esteem, growth in self-esteem, and the appropriation of one’s identity to the recognition given to the profile image by the *Social Community*. Then there is another critical issue: there is a process of externalization of the self, which sometimes leads to that “withdrawal syndrome” from Sociality. I could easily remain closed in my room for whole months, without having authentic relationships and be enough for myself. Think of the phenomenon of *hikikomori*, identified in Japan and now also widespread in the West. It is a self-referencing that *feeds* on a false balance. We must never forget the value of corporeality in the relationship. The intersubjective relationship is deeply connected to corporeality. When I meet a person, I express myself through the body and the signals that only it can send: gestures, sudden redness, etc. In the empathic relationship, a corporeality is implicated that in virtual communication does not exist.”

■ How can we teach the new generations a correct relationship with the digital world?

“We adults, as suggested by the Evolutionary Age Psychotherapist **Alberto Pellai**, are called to a reflection from the early years of our children’s lives. Often, in fact, without any hesitation we publish their photos on Social Media. The more rules we will give ourselves in using their image, the more they will understand that they must, in turn, adopt rules in the social world.”

■ How can we live a correct relationship between physical reality and digital reality?

We are called to integrate *online* and *offline* communication. Above all, the dualism of *image* - *reality* must be avoided and, more than the value of popularity, the rediscovery of *dialogue*. I would propose to empower the character of active and responsible participation that characterizes social dialogue, through a rediscovery of what I would call *logo-filia*, borrowing a term coined by the Personalist **Michele Federico Sciacca** in

the 70s. Sciacca saw an increasing risk of a logophobic attitude in western technocracy. The *logo-filia* should be understood as the re-appropriation of a conscious attitude, to contrast the power of a-logical suggestion of the image.

The term *lògos* (rationality-word) has a double semantic connection that binds the interlocutors involved in the *dià-logo*, in a shared openness towards something that engages them in a search for meaning beyond representation. It is important to ask ourselves what the function is that we give to Social Media. *Are they just a playful entertainment, an evasion externalized by inter-subjective relationships or on the contrary do we consider them a relationship tool of the “homo sapiens-digitalis”?* If it is true that the digital revolution permeates every aspect of our life, Social Media then reflect constitutive aspects of the human being in an existential continuum between being online and offline. Stopping exclusively at a narration of oneself through images risks making the relationship between interlocutors superficial. The image does not define being, but only expresses it incompletely.”

■ Can an altered self-image be provided on Social Networks?

“Identity on *Social Profiles* is often full of expectations, frustrations, desires, projections that the ego has on itself. The image can express a whole unprocessed world of expectations, therefore it should never be absolutized. On my Social Profile, through photos and videos, I can make myself be seen smiling and project into

that image a profound meaning that I seek and cannot find, which does not correspond to the authenticity of what I am. It is the projection of what I would like to manifest to others and which is not always authentic. For this reason it is always important to refer the image to the knowledge of the subject that produces the image. Otherwise you risk a superficiality of reading and not grasping the true sense of an image. Only when the relationship is integral and therefore consists of being *on-line* and being *off-line*, can I ascertain whether in fact that image corresponds to the state of the subject. This is a very important aspect precisely because the image constitutively has an allusive, and not exhaustive, function. Said in terms of the Philosophy of Knowledge, the image produced by the subject never contains the whole being, and only expresses a part of it. This does not mean that the image must necessarily alter or dissimulate the object represented. It can simply express validly, but always incompletely, the intimate constitution of reality. The image always refers to “other than itself”, says Personalist **Luigi Stefanini**.”

■ It is therefore a strong reminder of responsibility, both by those who post an image and those who benefit from it, with a view to authentic dialogue.

Sure. Responsibility, etymologically, evokes feeling called to answer for something. If you are not aware of the meaning of posting or interpreting an image, you also lose responsibility.



21st century travelers: the challenge of contemporaneity.

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Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), a Canadian Philosopher, Scientist, and Teacher, a great visionary revolutionized the Sixties by proposing a theory about the influence and potential of the Communications Media on reality. He affirmed that because of the velocity of communications, the entire human society would begin to be transformed and its lifestyle would become similar to that of a village. Thanks to technological progress, all the inhabitants of the planet began to know each other and to communicate instantly and directly. It regards the unidirectional communication flows in which, as in a village, everyone can speak and communicate with everyone.

The vision of McLuhan represents the 'global village' and is the origin of *globalization*, a well-known term to define today's society. It is the motive for many initiatives in the space of communication and technology that brought the social networks to birth with the aim of shortening distances and having 'everything' at hand.

Above all, since the beginning of the second half of the Twentieth Century, this globalization process has reached planetary dimensions and is reinforced with phenomena like those of multiculturalism and the technologies of Information and of Communication.

Moving in this 'global village' is not easy. It is a round trip between inhabited spaces, peripheries, stories, changes of paradigms and meanings. The citizen of the twenty-first century is again a traveler who must prepare different luggage other than the traditional ones and adapted to the present time. It is necessary to re-define with new contents, the meaning of being a 'traveler', because the trip is bi-directional:

to the heart of human beings and to the environment that surrounds them.

*The further I go,
the closer I get to myself*
(Andrew McCarthy).

■ What motivates the journey?

At the start of a new decade, words acquire greater relevance influencing the various sectors at the world level. The Church and each of her members, cannot remain outside, and even less, the FMA Institute. In preparation for General Chapter XXIV, one of the words that calls for reflection is **Contemporaneity**. Circular 985, presents the *Road Map* of the traveler very well:

"The contemporary world is not only a temporal category. It is a complex

relationship with time itself for reading the social, political, religious, institutional, educational, and cultural environments in which we live. The contemporary person is one who, although perceiving the present darkness, is able to grasp the light, to interpret the times by bringing it back to the past, to read history and its value in a different way, to transform from Kronos, a time of finitude, into Kairos, a time of salvation open to God's surprises. Being aware of the moment in which we are called to 'place ourselves' is a condition for our mission."

To the extent that we study and try to understand the meaning of 'contemporary', we speak of the *construction of identity*, of a new value of time and space, of a different meaning of 'home', finally, of being in the today of history with the experience and learning of life, of memory. Leaving local stories aside to turn them into a single Universal History full of interconnections is the face of the new humanism. This is the way to transform *Kronos* (the lived) into *Kairos* (God's time).

The 'digital culture' emerges in this contemporaneity: the set of knowledge, skills and abilities, interactions with different tools and digital media. They

impact the life of people and their relationship with the environment and society. The new communications media make communication between millions of people possible by generating a 'global collective consciousness.'

Those who live in the digital environment are not only users, they are called to be interlocutors who interact, create, participate, and promote new knowledge on a global level; this is the new way of creating culture, characteristic of digital spaces and platforms.

This is where we speak of influencers, that is, those who have the ability to influence people, provoking reactions and encouraging the construction of opinions through the Internet and digital

The term contemporary (from the Latin '*contemporaneus*', which is derived from the prefix *con-*, that means '*convergence*' or '*encounter*', and the term '*tempus*', which means '*time*' or '*duration*') is a qualifier generically used to refer to a what belongs to the same time or moment.

media. Many proposals are on social networks so that large companies find in them an accessible, fast, and massive way to advertise; it is the so-called influence marketing.

In the Christian sphere an example of an influencer are the stories of Pope Francis through *Instagram* and *Twitter* that have millions of followers. Two Spanish Religious, Sr. **Xiskya Valladares** who has a strong evangelizing presence on the Social Networks and is the Founder of the *Rete@iMission* of the missionaries in the digital age. There is also the Priest **Daniel Pajuelo** youtuber and rapper.

Walking alone is possible, but the good walker knows that the great journey is that of life and requires partners
(Dom Helder Camer).

the skills needed to succeed in the digital world. But if we don't expand access, digital technology can create new gaps that prevent children from reaching their full potential. And if we don't act immediately to keep up with rapid changes, online risks can make vulnerable children more susceptible to exploitation, abuse, and even trafficking, as well as other less obvious threats to their well-being."

The time has come to travel, right where we are, with the task entrusted to us, preparing our luggage for 2020. It is evident that the *Road Map*, the environment in which to move is Contemporaneity: *Living in*

our heart and its context with intentionality!

The guiding compass is also clear: Christ and His Gospel. He guides the steps, accompanies along the way, and encourages the realization of one's dreams.

As the Educating Communities of this new Kairos, we ask ourselves: *what can't be missing from the suitcase? What challenges summon our local and provincial realities? What is the path to follow?*

Courage and journey well in life!

UNICEF, in presenting the report on the 'World situation of children' **Niños en un mundo digital** (https://www.bibliotecaunicef.uy/doc_num.php?explnum_id=189), in 2017 affirmed: "If adequately used and universally accessible, digital technology can change the situation of children left behind, whether because of poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, displacement, or geographical isolation, by connecting them to a world of opportunities and equipping them with



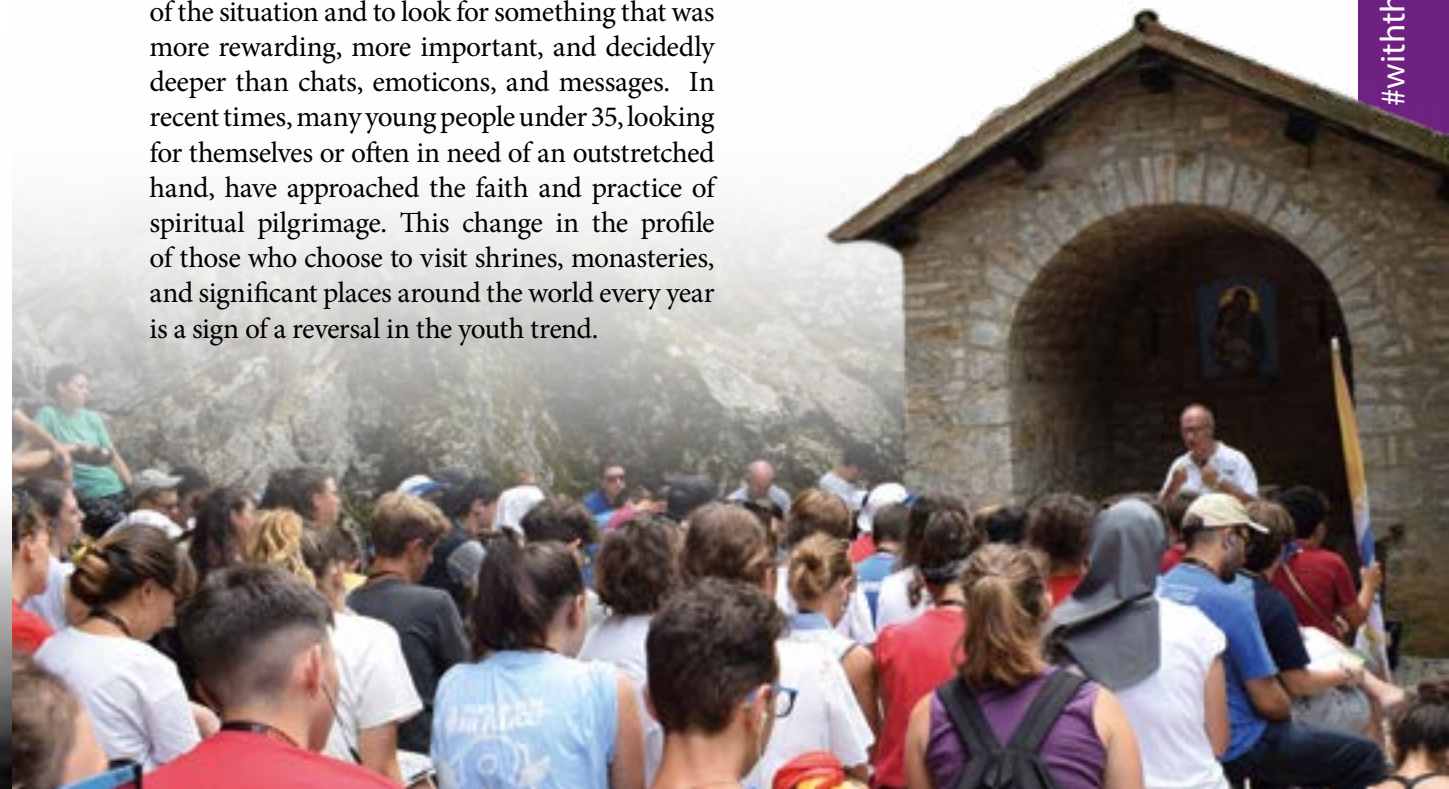
The Young and the idea of the pilgrimage

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The pilgrimage is the attempt to change something starting from oneself. Not all paths are the same and the type of path you decide to take it is essential to understand what you will be able to achieve. For example, there is the journey along the *Via Francigena*, an ancient pilgrimage route in the heart of Europe; the ways of faith, those of the Saints who help us to retrace the stories and faces of holiness lived in love for God and human beings, and then the WYD experiences, or the experiences that are built with respect to specific interests and with more personalized stages. And then there are the paths that have neither head nor tail, those that are too short. It is therefore necessary to get information and get help from those who have already experienced it and know more than we do.

There are those who said yes, and had the courage to leave the group, to make the *Jack Frusciante* (cf. Enrico Brizzi, *Jack Frusciante left the group*. Mondadori 1992) of the situation and to look for something that was more rewarding, more important, and decidedly deeper than chats, emoticons, and messages. In recent times, many young people under 35, looking for themselves or often in need of an outstretched hand, have approached the faith and practice of spiritual pilgrimage. This change in the profile of those who choose to visit shrines, monasteries, and significant places around the world every year is a sign of a reversal in the youth trend.



But how does change happen? **Msgr. Paolo Giulietti**, Auxiliary Bishop of Perugia, during the *Fair of the Paths* promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) on 26 and 27 January 2018, talking about the experience of the pilgrimage as a “pastoral proposal, a path of discernment, and an experience of spirituality”, stressed seven ingredients: *detachment*: the choice is made to suspend the daily routine to interact with space and time in a different and unusual way compared to the usual daily routine; *fatigue*: test yourself and experience not only your possibilities, but also your inadequacies; *loneliness*: the opportunity to enjoy spaces of silence essential to be alone with yourself; *others*: on the way you realize that you need others who become company, a friendly presence; *wonder*: finally there is time to look with amazement at new places and cultures, to admire landscapes, cities, and large cathedrals; *tradition*: you walk in the wake of a tradition that makes you participate; *prayer*: each journey conveys a religious message and a reference to the mystery, young people must be helped to recognize the presence of God in their life.

■ On the way to find God and ourselves

Young people are looking for faith and pilgrimage is a support for spiritual and human growth. Every year over 35,000 pilgrims choose sacred places, of which a significant number is between 13 and 35 years of age, confirming a preponderant growth in the bond between young people and faith. At the same time, it highlights the motivations that push young people to undertake a pilgrimage: suffering, illness, search for happiness, choice of life...

In pilgrimages, young people see a chance for redemption and rebirth, a way to overcome inner fears. They do not seek miracles, but only to be able to make a journey of soul and spirit to recompose what they have lost during their daily journey.

Many young people after facing the path of faith, declare that they have found in themselves an unimaginable drive and strength to face the challenges of everyday life. All this thanks to prayer, faith, the support of companions, volunteers, and pilgrims encountered.

Real emotions, significant moments that must be told, shared so that others can experience the strength and depth of the pilgrimage of faith.

The pilgrim, however, is not a tourist. The pilgrim abandons self to the experience of the other and the Other and fully lives the unrepeatable, unique, and non-artifact encounter with interiority.

Probably, the approach to faith and prayer of young people is also due to the teachings of Pope Francis. His humanity and humility have united us since the beginning of His Pontificate. The Supreme Pontiff has young people very much at heart and, above all, he knows how to approach us, speaking our own language, which breaks down every wall and brings us closer to Christ: “Do not be satisfied with just getting by, have the courage to dream. Your happiness is priceless and cannot be traded; it is not an ‘app’ that you download on your mobile: even the most updated version will not help you become free and great in love. Free love is to love without having: to love people without wanting them as your own, but leaving them free.



Jesus' true friend is essentially distinguished by concrete love, not love in the clouds.”

His words go straight to the heart, even to young people still far from faith, who, however, feel encouraged by the Pope to seek true happiness and freedom in their life journey: “Freedom is not always being able to do what I want : this makes you closed, distant, prevents you from being open and sincere friends; it is not true that when I am well everything is fine. We must be able to say no. Freedom, on the other hand, is the gift of being able to choose the good: those who choose the good are free, those who seek what pleases God, even if it is tiring. But only with courageous and strong choices can the greatest dreams come true, those for which life is worth spending. Do not settle for mediocrity, to ‘be lively’ while being comfortable and seated.”

■ On pilgrimage with the young

Jack Kerouac writes in his novel, the symbol of the Beat Generation, *On the Road*, “A tall,

slouching guy with a broad-brimmed hat stopped his car in the wrong direction and crossed towards us; he looked like a sheriff. We secretly prepared our stories. He approached without hurrying. Are you guys going somewhere exactly or are you traveling aimlessly?”

On the road, walking with young people in the heart of contemporaneity is also a challenge for the Educators. Get involved and impassion young people about faith. Here, now I will call you and ask you to do a piece of road together. And while I try to understand and listen to you, I understand and listen to myself too. Walking together implies recognizing oneself as disciples. It is the logic of the Gospel.

Embarking on a spiritual journey, opening up to the world, to the wonder of Creation and to the beauty of the other, gives impetus and quality to an experience that discovers new realities, intertwined with more human relationships, strengthens the link with a strong, alive, and unmediated reality, and makes the sharing of life moments unrepeatable.

Traveling... what a story!

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“Just start saying something: Ah how nice, you should really photograph it! and you are already on the ground of those who think that everything not photographed is lost, that it is as if it had not existed, and that therefore to truly live you have to photograph as much as you can, and that to photograph as much as you can you must: or live as photographable as possible, or consider every moment of one's life to be photographable. The first way leads to stupidity, the second to madness” (Italo Calvino, *The difficult loves*, from “The adventure of a photographer”, Mondadori, Milan, 2016, p. 47).

Attracted by the beauty of what is seen and fills us with awe, human beings have always sought to ‘photograph’, or to keep a visible imprint of what is worth remembering.

If officially the photograph was born from the invention of Louis Mandé Daguerre, the *daguerreotype*, which since 1839 makes it possible to reproduce unlimitedly what is imprinted on a photosensitive material, then perhaps already the Lascaux caves, with the famous cave paintings representing animals portrayed with a great wealth of details, can be recorded as a primitive attempt to fixate what the senses would like to capture at all costs. In fact, attracted by the beauty of what is seen and that fills with amazement, human beings have always tried to ‘photograph’, that is, to keep a visible imprint of what is worthy of being preserved. Sometimes it happens that ‘old photographs’ are found, yellowed by light or ruined by wear or signs of aging, which nevertheless do not lose that irresistible vintage charm and above all do not cease to return the preciousness of the memories linked to them. Clothing, hairstyles, and furniture from other times, will perhaps arouse a smile in the presence of the hyper-technological era we are experiencing, but these are the photos that we would never want to be lost, even if they are blurred or creased, as they mark important passages in life.

■ The value of the instant

Photography - etymologically writing made with light (from *phôs*, light and *graphè*, writing) - can therefore be considered a mnemonic

medium to which we entrust moments that we do not want to forget. It is a support that has changed over time, keeping step with the increasingly *smart* and light innovations, up to the loss of real physical consistency with digital photography. Yet we have not lost the desire to keep, print, and show, so much so that the legendary Polaroid Instant Camera, the only device that can immediately print the photo, has in fact recently had a *revival* and been put back on the market. However, while daily life often appears trivial and routine, not worthy of note, to photograph the story of a journey gives people the opportunity of redemption, allowing them to situate themselves in unusual contexts, to explore new worlds, to tell the wonderful opportunity of distancing oneself from everyday life.

■ Be here and now

Until the mid-90s, the story of holidays took place on the return trip, when they went to develop the photographs or slides and met again

in the family to see each other immortalized in dreamy landscapes that were so envied when they were far away. Today, however, digital cameras integrated in mobile phones, and especially social networks, allow you to show in real time to those who stay at home - waiting with some impatience for new updates - the places visited and the foods tasted. “Let me dream!” Was the comment on my WhatsApp status with some travel photos in a location that I was lucky enough to visit. If we think about it, the photo albums, kept as relics and cataloged by years and places visited, are now outdated and the virtual frames, which were to be part of the digital album, never caught on, supplanted with impressive rapidity by the stories or from social media (mainly Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp) lasting only 24 hours, which instantly satisfy the hunger for news and emotions.

As stated by Silvano Petrosino, Philosopher and Professor of Philosophy of Communication, “*it is an irrepressible desire to signal one's presence*,



to be recognized in one's identity, to keep repeating to the other and to all the others: do not forget that I exist." (S. Petrosino, *The magnificent sign. Communication, experience, narration* - San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2015, p.16). A presence that can be reported immediately here and now through geolocation, that is, indicating the location where you are taking the photo through the position detected by your device.

■ Photos within everyone's reach

The advent of the digital certainly leads to great novelty. The first is making the shot immediately visible, allowing you to take another one immediately if not satisfied. This is an undoubted advantage when the trip is one of a kind and perhaps it will never happen again to visit the same place or to attend a show like the Northern Lights. The second is that of not having to fear wasting film and money for development, being able to take as many

photos as the storage memory available allows us and reserving the right to delete those that have been bad at another time. Another advantage is linked to the ever-increasing progress of the quality of the cameras integrated with *smartphones*, with automatic adjustments and an ever-increasing number of megapixels - factors that determine competition between the major brands - and apps for editing photos (*editor*) that make photography accessible to everyone, with an almost professional rendering. Filters and effects also allow you to customize your shots, expressing styles and moods: memories, vintage, sentimental, attractive... are just a few examples.

■ Storytelling of trips

In each of us there is an innate need to tell and re-tell, to share with others the travel emotions

experienced directly on one's skin: "*the one who communicates 'shares' something of self with the other. The very complicated theme of relationship returns: as is obvious, to place in common one must always enter into a relationship with the other person*" (S. Petrosino, *The mirage of social media*. Interlinea 2019, p.19).

Yes, because the story always requires a listener, otherwise it falls into the void, into oblivion. And telling is an art that requires the ability to keep those who follow us, that is our followers, hanging on our narrations and thus tell *our journey* in a unique way. In general, the more active we are in our travels, the more we will be followed, because we keep their attention with something new and unusual. The travel blogger knows it well, a 2.0 traveler who by profession shares stories, tips, photos, and videos on the Web with all fans. For its success, *#hashtags* are indispensable, that is, keywords, a sort of thematic labels (*tags*) that significantly affect the popularity or otherwise of the photos.

■ Interactive stories

But the real novelty lies in the new potential of social media stories. Who among us hasn't connected a soundtrack to an epic moment he/she was experiencing? Instagram and Facebook stories today allow you to associate a song with the image and to see the words flow over it. To interact with those who follow us, you can also create a survey, insert *stickers*, *animated gifs* that enliven the story or *links* to websites that we wish to be visited, and also create the expectation of departure for a trip or an event with the *countdown*.

■ The enhanced trip

To take again Italo Calvino's phrase, the risk may be to let yourself be taken by the desire to photograph everything, to store memories even before having lived the moment - and to send photos to say "*I'm right here*" - losing the beauty of the real spectacle that lies before us. By passing everything through the camera lens, you also become demanding and go in

search of an almost artificial beauty, sometimes forgetting to taste the *#nofilter* genuineness of shots that only the depth of a glance can find. A good use of digital photography, new technologies and stories, however, also give an extraordinary opportunity to 'enhance' the journey, allowing us to share emotions with those at home and to personalize our experience with sounds, phrases, and extemporaneous comments.



Journey between opposite worlds

Uğur Gallen (@ugurgallen) is a young creative Turk who does not pass unobserved on the social media for his photomontages created with the oxymoron technique - the juxtaposition of two contradictory images - through which it shakes consciences and leads to reflection on the crude disparities of the world. **In his digital collages, war zone archetypes and the archetypes of objects and backgrounds of our normalcy come together to show us the dark side that we often do not want to see in order not to be involved, through indifference or we simply believe that it does not concern us, because facts and people are far from our lives.** War/peace, death/life, well-being/ despair, are some of the binomials explored by the artist, who combines with a perfect and almost natural overlap a series of images of contrasting worlds, capable of a devastating but healthy impact on the viewer.

<https://www.instagram.com/ugurgallen/>

Be there... with a Gospel Salesian heart

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How can we face the challenges of *Contemporaneity*? First of all, we need *to be aware* of the moment we are living with its risks, its opportunities, its complexity. And then “*Be there*”! “Being aware of the moment in which we are called to ‘*be there*’ is the condition for our mission” (Circular No. 985, *In preparation for General Chapter XXIV*). So, “*be there*”... in what way?

We need to inhabit our times with the outlook of Educators who know how to see the challenges as opportunities, who know how to interpret their times realistically, who know how to give a response to the problems that agitate and preoccupy humanity, who have an integral vision of the person. This means living time as *Kairos*,

which requires attention and renunciation, asks us to leave aside the mentality of ‘we have always done it this way’, inertia, a pessimistic outlook. This is not the time to act like prophets of doom. Living time as *Kairos* asks us to cultivate an optimistic outlook, to be ‘antenna’ ready to grasp the seeds of newness aroused by the Holy Spirit

to help the ecclesial community to assume this benevolent gaze and find new, courageous roads to reach everyone, especially the poorest young people.

Pope Francis speaks of the mystique of encounter. “Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage” (Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 87).

In this sense, Salesian Spirituality speaks of the encouragement of the educational relationship, of interpersonal relationships marked by transparency and benevolence, of a family spirit, of the centrality of the person created in the image and likeness of God, of empathy for the world.

■ With the eyes of Mary

To do this we need to look at and learn from Mary. The Wedding of Cana affirms that she ‘was there’. “This verb suggests a stable reality, on which history can lean, according to the symbolism of truth-rock” (Simoens Yves, *Evangelo secondo Giovanni*. Magnano (BI), Edizioni Qiqajon 2019).

She was fully present, taking part in the wedding that occurs in history. She is the first to be aware that something is

missing, “They have no more wine.” And not only because of the “encompassing gaze” that characterizes female intuition, but because she knows that humanity lacks the wine of true life brought by Jesus. Mary knows the people in whose midst she lives, she perceives the discomfort of the young newlyweds, and without unnecessary drama or imprudent fretting, she will fill the deficiency by bringing people to the essential: “Do whatever he tells you”, that is, she brings them to Jesus, the only one capable of filling our thirst for happiness and fullness of life.

■ With an oratorian heart

With the same evangelical heart of Mary, Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello responded in their times. Don Bosco never pulled back from history, he was not afraid to face the challenges of his times, he never got discouraged in the face of adversity. On the contrary, he always got his hands dirty trying to answer the questions and concerns of young people: for this reason he created oratories, evening schools, vocational schools, churches, printing presses. He planned the missions, he was at the forefront of the world of communication using advanced techniques such as writing aphorisms and phrases on the walls, promoting theater and music, writing books of various types, etc. ... For this, Pope Pius XI affirmed: “When it comes to something that concerns the

great cause of good, Don Bosco wants to be at the forefront of progress” (PIUS XI, *Address to the participants in the Beatification of Don Bosco*, June 3, 1929 and to the Salesian Family of Rome, May 11, 1930, in *Discourses of Pius XI*, II 92 and 326).

Don Bosco himself wrote to Carlo Vespignani: “In things that serve for the advantage of youth in danger or serve to earn souls for God, I run to the point of temerity” (*Letter of Don Bosco to Signor Carlo Vespignani*, April 11, 1877, in [Giovanni BOSCO], *Epistolary*. Introduction, critical texts and notes by Francesco Motto, vol. V (1876-1877). Rome LAS 2012, 344). Moved by the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd and with the attentive and provident attitude of Mary, he was a deeply ‘contemporary’ man in his time, with his feet firmly rooted on the ground and with his eyes fixed on heaven; where God is, there is happiness that never ends.

■ With the maternal solicitude of Mother Mazzarello

Mother Mazzarello, far from the spotlight and the important centers of history, was fully ‘contemporary’ to her people and knew how to insert herself into the complicated context of the era with clarity, wisdom, and great projects. She was fully involved in parish life with her clear vocational choice of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. After her typhoid illness, she made a clear choice for preventive education to respond to the needs of the young women of her time. She accepted



God's call "*I entrust them to you*" by living her 'being there' in the Church and in the society of her time with a sense of responsibility and humble active participation in the renewal of it. Knowing Don Bosco's project, she feels called to collaborate with him in the Foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, becoming Mother and Formator of the first community. She lived this mission as a call 'to be' fully present in the history of her time with the humanizing force of the Gospel and with the prophecy of the missionary spirit. The contribution of Mary Domenica has had an ecclesial resonance that goes beyond the small Parish of Mornese, assuming a universal meaning. This is why she is recognized as having an 'educational ministry' of unmistakable historical significance (cf. John Paul II, *Be a model of*

your consecration for the young women to whom you turn, in ID., *Teachings of John Paul II*, IV / 2, Vatican City, Vatican Publishing House 1982, 919) and the title of Mother and Co-founder of the Institute of the FMA.

We are asked today to rediscover the secret of being there of Jesus, Mary, Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, **cultivating a contemplative heart**. Contemplation does not drag us away from our brothers and sisters and from the dramas of history, rather it makes possible a true and real immersion in reality and leads us to engage more intensely in the pressing problems of the time in which we live with an evangelical heart. Spiritual life makes us alert and aware of the world around us, so that everything that exists and happens becomes part of our contemplation and meditation, inviting us to respond freely and without fear; that is, it invites us

to a creative response and to live in a proactive way (Cf. NOUWEN Henri J. M., *The three movements of the spiritual life. Spiritual journey for contemporary man*, Brescia, Editrice Queriniana 2004, 43-44), transparent and positive.



The inner journey of music

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French writer and explorer Alexandra David-Néel said at the beginning of the twentieth century: "Those who travel without meeting the other, do not travel, they just move."

Today, paraphrasing her aphorism, we could say that: "Those who travel without meeting themselves, do not grow, but remain still."

Today's young people, as those of the past, live in music, the inner journey of the search for self, to understand the world around them, to project themselves into the future.

Who does not remember the melody and words of John Denver full of nostalgia and melancholy when in 1971 with *Country Road*, he sang of the desire to return home and how that environment reminded him of the happy times of his childhood: "Take me home, country roads, to the place I belong..." Traveling always foresees going, but also returning.

Your own inner journey

Each of us has a personal, inner reason that leads us to think of a journey to discover something new. The singer Ultimo speaks of this in the

song *Dance of Uncertainty* that says: "I lost time to look inside of me and I fixed a few habits, but then the night came and I wondered where is the point. If there's a point. But the dance of uncertainties will come and there will be a place where I lose everything 'cause to be at peace with yourself and the world you must have dreamed at least for one second."

Ultimo asks himself where is the meaning of the effort to live, to understand, and to be understood. We read in his words delusion and sadness before the incomprehensible of life. This can be faced by freeing oneself from human and mortal thoughts, to free the mind towards the other, "Cause to be at peace with yourself and the world, you can try to fly leaving yourself on the ground."

Traveling is an inner need that we all have inside us; it means searching, not simply for something, but also for oneself. Basically the journey is a discovery that allows us to know new people, making us better persons. This is what the British singer, James Arthur, recounts in *The Truth*, "I set fire



to the glory, I set fire to the dream, I set fire to the only thing that lead me from the streets. Don't tell me it's over, 'cause I don't want to believe. 'Cause now I've opened my eyes and I have found a way to breathe. The truth sets me free." The journey is the discovery of the truth of oneself, beyond the conventions that the world and society impose on us.

What is important on the journey is to remain positive and not become discouraged. This is the message that **Elton John** gives us in his song *Never too late*, that is part of the songs of the remake of the film *The Lion King*. "It's never too late to turn things around, recover, unravel the past, to confound the doubters and losers, that line of despair, who tell you it's over, you're goin' nowhere. It's never too late, I hope It's never too late. It's never too late to get back on track. To get at least some, if not all of it back. I thought I was happy, and sometimes I was. The sadness is just as important because got to carry the weight and hope it's never too late."

In fact in an interview, the British singer says that, "*It is never too late to change ideas, and this happened in my life as well. I had an epiphany in the Nineties. The epiphany served to give me a new insight into what we were doing with our life, and if we are making a mistake, we are always in time to change things, doing the right thing for our family and ourselves.*"

■ The trip for two

The journey is also that of a couple who know each other more and more and decide not to live superficially anymore. This is what was sung by **Lady Gaga** and **Bradley Cooper** in the award-winning song *Shallow*, winner of the Golden Globe, the Oscar, and two Grammy Awards: "Tell

me somethin', girl Are you happy in this modern world? Or do you need more? Is there somethin' else you're searchin' for? I'm falling. In all the good times I find myself Longin' for change and in the bad times I fear myself. Tell me something, boy Aren't you tired tryin' to fill that void? Or do you need more? Ain't it hard keeping it so hardcore? We're far from shallow now."

In these words there is all the disappointment and malaise towards today's world that offers us only superficial values, but at the same time there is the will to change, to dig deeper within oneself to find out what is true.

"I'm going under and this time I fear there's no one to save me. This all or nothing really got a way of driving me crazy. I need somebody to heal. Somebody to know. Somebody to have. Somebody to hold. It's easy to say, but it's never the same. I guess I kinda liked the way you numbed



all the pain. Now the day bleeds into nightfall and you're not here to get me through it all."

This is the desperation of **Lewis Capaldi** contained in his Ballad *Someone you loved*. The help of someone who stays beside you is not always the best solution because perhaps they try to diminish the problem or avoid it. In fact, the voyage represents a kind of perennial challenge tied to the sense of personal duty and commitment aimed at building a better world and working hard to accomplish it.

■ The spiritual journey

The metaphor of the inner journey can also be used to indicate the introspective journey that leads into a real spiritual journey. This is what **Franco Battiato** sings in *Lombra della luce* (Shadow of Light) where he speaks of an intimate way that projects us towards happiness until we reach the possibility of uniting ourselves with the beauty of nature, the absolute, finding it even within ourselves. "Defend me against opposite forces, The night, while asleep, when I'm unconscious, when my path becomes undefined. And never abandon me, because the joys of the deepest love or the ones of the softest yearnings of the heart are just the shadow of light. Remember me, how unhappy I am when I stand far from your laws; How not to waste the time left, and never abandon me, please, never abandon me!

Because the peace I've felt in some monasteries or the quivering harmony of all my senses filled with rapture are just the shadow of light."

Whatever the human experience or voyage, it is always only the shadow of the greatness we can live. The contrast between light and darkness, salvation and suffering, ignorance and sin are only the stages of a greater process that involves us and leads us towards our future.

John Steinbeck, the United States writer, said, "People do not make the voyage; it is the voyage that makes the people." It is really true that at the end of a trip we can become conscience of our changes and of understanding what we have gained.

Basically, the voyage is the account of the story of each of us, an occasion for maturation, for change, for hope, and even sometimes, for delusion and failure.



Where There is Need to Stay

by Daniele Gaglianone and Stefano Collizzolli

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There is a Country that, in the face of fears and injustices, practices solidarity and struggles for rights every day, in an often informal and unstructured way. *Where There is Need to Stay* tells of four women, Elena, Georgia, Jessica, and Lorena, of different ages, who in various places are engaged in activities that at first sight seem absurd for common sense, women who appear out of place, almost incomprehensible. By listening to their stories and giving back their daily lives, we discover linear speeches and gestures, extraordinary in their simplicity. We find that they are not out of place, but in a very real place, in the place where they feel they need to be.

There is a Country that moves safely, which spends time and resources for hospitality and for very concrete activities of solidarity. It is Italy that chooses to build 'bridges and not walls', which has many stories to tell that are the heart of the Documentary Film **Where There is Need to Stay**, by Daniele Gaglianone and Stefano Collizzolli.

Various volunteers engaged in reception activities listened. Among the volunteers are Georgia, Elena, Lorena, and Jessica, four women who have one thing in common: "they are there because they have the joy of being there and have made these practices a life job, sometimes very tiring and challenging but also of great richness," said Collizzolli in an interview.

The idea for the Documentary came from **Zalab**, an Association that works in the production, distribution, and promotion of social documentaries and cultural projects, with the support of **Doctors without Borders** and of other civil Institutions and Non-Profit Organizations.



■ Be in the heart of Contemporaneity

There is talk of the trajectories of life, not always known, of those who arrive in Italy and discover many stories of volunteers who stand on these bridges and have a gaze on Italy which is very important and partially unpublished.

The docufilm begins the journey in the border area between Bardonecchia (Italy) and Briançon (France) where *Elena* lives, who for some months has been welcoming a young Cameroonian rescued in extremis by some volunteers in the Alps. Then it moves to the city of Como where the twenty-six year old *Georgia* works as a secretary in a doctor's office. One day, while she was going to buy a pair of shoes, she found an improvised camp with a hundred migrants in front of a station in her city; it was at the Swiss border that was already closed. She immediately thought of stopping to help and

then decided to spend a week of her vacation to continue helping. Today, Georgia is still there. *Lorena*, on the other hand, is 64 years old and was a psychotherapist in an ASL in Pordenone, and together with Andrea, they became a reference point bringing aid, information, and attention to those who must take refuge in the *jungle*, an old industrial area that has been empty for years now in which Pakistanis, Afghans, and Bengalis find shelter. And finally there is *Jessica*, the youngest, twenty-two year old student from Cosenza who lives in an abandoned building together with eighty other people.

■ Courageous women

Georgia, Elena, Jessica, and Lorena are four Italian women who accepted to live Contemporaneity with courage. It is their obstinate, serene, and very feminine initiative to 'be there' where you have to be, a message and a testimony of life that, I hope, can involve and attract all of us.

Four stories and four women protagonists, persons who are very different from each other, of different ages and worlds, who want to tell what happened to them and encourage reflection on "*Where There is Need to Stay*". They turn the mirror upside

down and tell a story of immigration in which immigrants are almost the background; the real protagonists are in fact ordinary people, who "do politics without knowing how to do it", who give what they can, fight for the great ones. And they found themselves concretely faced with a situation of marginality, exclusion, chaos, and did not turn away. They stayed there, where they felt they needed to be.

More than of immigration, it is a documentary that speaks of us. The Documentary speaks of a possible response to the challenges of the complex contemporaneity. It does not only speak of immigration from the point of view of those who choose to leave or are forced to do so. It speaks of us, of our capacity to compare ourselves with the world and to share its destiny.

It is not an objective and detached gaze of directors, who themselves chose on whose side to stay, just like the protagonists. This is why the '*directors*', Georgia, Lorena, Elena, and Jessica, in addition to acting, can remember, reveal their family roots, their past, and experience.

To do this, Gaglianone and Collizzolli used a mixture of shooting styles, from amateur footage to the journalistic repertoire frame, without fear of dirtying the image, just as they are not afraid of "getting their hands dirty". They followed the four protagonists, standing by their side as they climb railings, raise their voices to impose the rules, inquire about the lives of those in front of them, walk on the snow for miles, until they take on themselves the worries, difficulties, and fears of the immigrants.

Nothing is taken for granted and they try to take the point of view and the difficulties of those who arrive in the Country, which is often only a pause towards other destinations. The bureaucratic complexity for those who need asylum, medical assistance, cultural and linguistic mediation, information on their rights and duties is not taken for granted. It is everything that citizens, volunteers, social workers, and solidarity groups deal with

While the political class chases emergencies and visibility, there are those who act daily to put dignity and justice at the center.



each day, in the silence of the *mainstream* media, which focus more on exploiting the phenomenon.

“*Where There Is Need to Stay*” questions us and solicits a response, to look for simple possibilities and solutions to complex global phenomena. The documentary shows that by observing the others, you gradually recognize yourself in them and step by step you reach unity and conviviality.

And it reminds us that the first condition for not judging is the right/duty to be informed.

In a final scene of the film, the same women say: “not to be here or there, no longer in the life of the past, is not enough to understand the experiences of those who leave their Country.”

Today they are at the side of the immigrants, feeling a little out of place for choosing to be “*Where they need to stay*”. And we?

The infinite thread

by Paolo Rumiz

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The Infinite Thread is the story of a spiritual journey that led the Author, Paolo Rumiz to visit the Benedictine Monasteries to rediscover the authentic roots of Europe.

■ How was Europe born?

Who were the men who saved Europe with only the power of faith and the wisdom and pragmatism of *ora et labora* (pray and work)? This is how the barbarian people were Christianized and Europeanized through only the power of gratuitous hospitality, with the silent example of life, with a millenary culture that was saved, and with hectares of abandoned lands to make fruitful again. They are the disciples of Benedict of Norcia, the patron saint of Europe who made monasteries the basic defense for the protection of an entire civilization.

“In a Europe harassed by returning nationalisms, which is closing in on itself and refusing to welcome the *least*, dominated by fear, what has happened to the message of Saint Benedict? The message that focuses on listening, welcoming, working, and studying, and which has as its purpose the celebration of Creation without destroying it, the joy that arises in an existence that does not deny spirituality and understands and lives it in its fullness. *How much is still authentically Christian in a West overwhelmed by materialism?* The answer emerges from the journey, essentially an inner navigation which, in contact with the monastic lifestyle, rediscovers



the authentic roots of Europe summarized by the Author: *A fragrant wind penetrated the ruins and I felt that in my world keywords like silence, dedication, spirit of sacrifice had been liquidated or their meaning had been lost. The very word 'Europe' was lost. The foundations of Christian culture, compassion and solidarity, had become a crime. On the skin of the desperate, an entire political class made the general rehearsals of a ruthlessness that would surely have fallen on our children, but we were unable to notice it.* The

historical reality of the first monks was not at all simple. The Western Roman Empire had fallen and the Italian territories were surrounded and attacked by violent and warlike populations, but in this situation they opened themselves to the other, they listened and welcomed. They experienced solidarity, manual work, study, reading, charity. In this way they *conquered the conquerors*, and persuaded them to become Christians. Europe was born this way and, even today, its destiny - Rumiz argues - can only be hospitality,

integration, solidarity, and democracy, values that Europe's geographical position indicates. In fact, from its dawn, it has always been the arrival point of migrations of peoples who have settled there, almost to remind us that the salvation of Europe can be represented by union, not by barbed wire, nor by questioning democratic conquests or denying Christian roots. Finding the spirit that guided monasticism and understanding how much teaching and inspiration can still be drawn today is the goal of the voyage. The maze of the soul that the author travels, tracing a multidisciplinary process, indicates an educational path that could be followed and developed with the contents presented in the book, which offer interesting comparisons with current affairs, devoid of moralism and not forced.

■ The revolutionary places of convents

The boundless journey on which Paolo Rumiz leads the reader is multifaceted, realized through the life that is conducted in the Benedictine abbeys of the Christian West, providing even bitter and authentic reflections. The author's elegant prose leads to questioning the present, to rediscover the historical roots with seriousness and passion, surprisingly under the banner of a Jewish imperative: *Human beings have an obligation to be happy, because only in this way*

can they make others happy. Sadness offends God who has prepared wonders for humans to enjoy, so joy is a duty, rather than a right.

It is the attitude that mysteriously re-ties the threads of a frayed civilization that is still threatened today by a new barbarism.

The penumbra of the ancient cenobites, the

What did the monks of St. Benedict do if not plant prayer and work garrisons in the most uncultivated areas of Europe and then weave together a solid network of threads?

silences, *the prayerful joy* of the monks, the work and humanized relationships as a celebration of the greatness of God, generate a journey into the depths of the soul, take on religious connotations with a singular nuance in what, affirms Rumiz, *"Benedict is not a mystic, even if his day is punctuated by prayer; the tension is all turned to the human."* In fact, his main fertilizer is the encounter with the other, with the Word, it is the humanization of life. Thus convents reveal themselves to be

the most revolutionary places, the most significant when *the monk is a pyromaniac in whom the fire of faith burns*, then the monastic revolution is authentic, able to counteract violence with work and prayer. *"We must find a new balance between prayer and work. We must ensure that prayer re-learns how to nourish work and, at the same time, ensure that the dimension of service and the taste for work well done nourish prayer."*

Returning in the footsteps of St. Benedict and his followers, Rumiz invites us to regain possession of an ever contingent teaching in the light of contemporaneity, through the pauses on a journey that lead to the sources of a civilization: the deep root of our humanity, in the certainty that *the breath of the spirit is present in every person but the dominant culture rages against it, ridicules it. It deactivates our compass, it takes*

away our orientation but - says Paolo Rumiz - it is still possible to find the thread of the soul's skein, to stretch other threads with a gesture of love that returns to appropriate the founding values of Europe that are actually universal: *industriousness, silence, invention, welcome, song, and democracy among the peoples.*



On the way...

New Year, New Life! Best wishes to all our dear friends. Let's make a toast with *good wine new wine!*

I am very happy with the proposal made by Mother and the General Councilors inviting us to take a holistic path that embraces everything without neglecting anything: the Word, the Salesian Charism, the Church, the Society, and thus I feel enveloped by a large cloud: **Contemporaneity**.

Isn't it fantastic?! Do you also see the far-sighted gaze of such a current and profound theme, where young people are the horizon? I am truly speechless in front of the many possibilities of contemporaneity that pushes us to relaunch the Salesian mission as an *outgoing* Church.

I thank God because we have alert people in this time of animation and government, Mother and the Councilors, the Collaborators, the Lay People, and the Young, and even if I do not know them, I can however follow the proposals that come to us from the Animation Sectors and the

Visiting Councilors who come, listen to us, and guide us with a humble heart and a lot of wisdom. I take this opportunity to thank everyone, encouraging all to always go forward in the mission with enthusiasm.

I want to express a great deal of Gratitude to the Provincials and the Provincial Teams. With the help of God, Our Lady, the laity, young people, and all of us, we will commit ourselves with hope and enthusiasm, to promoting a vocational culture so that Mother will rejoice, because the fruits will come.

Is this how we can talk about **Generativity**? You see, we are on the way, towards General Chapter XXIV, just like Mary towards Cana. She stood next to those who prepared the feast, perceived the intuitions of the Father's Spirit who in Jesus, urged all to continue on the path of salvation.

Mary, Woman of Contemporaneity, understood the mission of the Son and accompanied Him to the end. Also our Founders, Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, docile to the breath of the Holy Spirit, intuited the journey of salvation for many young people. We inhabit Contemporaneity, with the charismatic perfume of Valdocco and Mornese. With the young, I wish to undertake the journey, step by step, and understand reality in depth. This is why I want to read, reflect, personally and with my community, so that we can live networked and inter-connected with each other.

So long for now until the next 'pause' on this journey where we can narrate the experiences lived of the 'Chapter preparation in daily life.' See you soon!

Words of Camilla!



Salesian Marian Spirituality

You have the privilege of belonging to Mary

From the Extraordinary Audience of **Paul VI** for the **Centenary of the Institute - 5 July 1972**

“Dearest Daughters in Christ,

The celebration of such an important date for the life of your Institute cannot be limited to the simple retrospective view of a luminous past. We must also look at the future. *Will your Congregation respond to the appeal of the Church in the tormented hour that turns? By what means will it ensure that the ancient vitality of the robust stock, planted by your holy Founders, continues to flourish in all its fullness?*

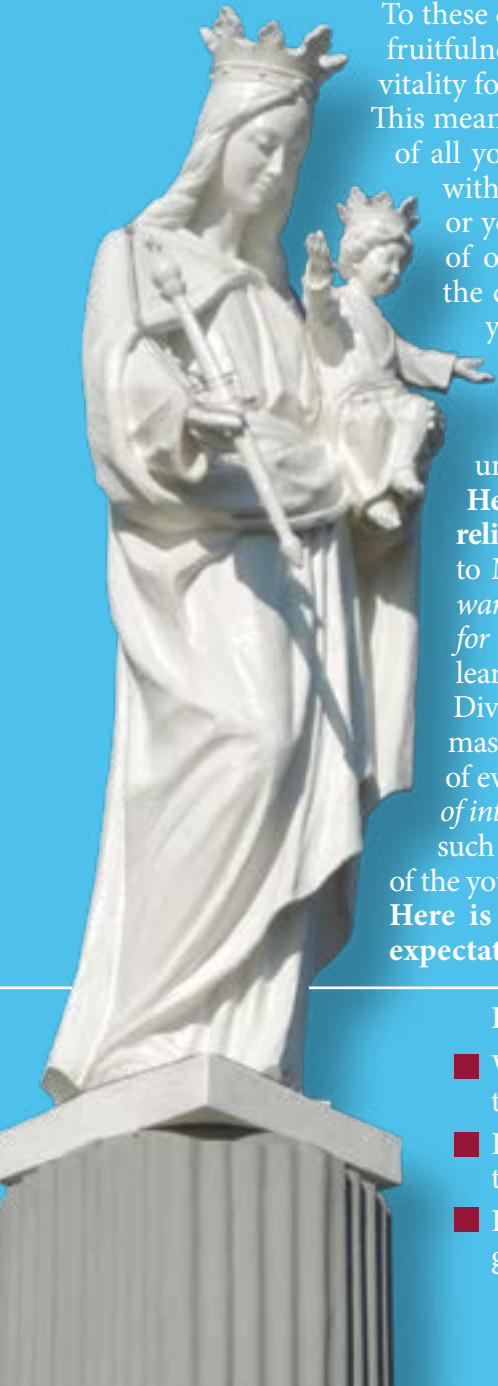
To these questions there is only one answer, which, as the extraordinary fruitfulness of the past explains, infallibly assures your Institute of its vitality for the future: **Holiness**.

This means for you to ensure the primacy of the interior life in the midst of all your educommunicative, charitable activities that generate Life, without ever fearing that your apostolic dynamism will diminish or you may be prevented from dedicating yourselves to the service of others. It means loving prayer, poverty, the spirit of sacrifice, the cross. It also means your special commitment to reproduce in your life of piety and apostolate the examples of the adoring and operative love of Mary Most Holy.

O how we would like to preserve in all its primitive freshness this markedly Marian character, which everywhere is the unmistakable note of the **Spirituality of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**. **You have the privilege of belonging to a religious family that belongs entirely to Mary** and owes everything to Mary. *Is not your Institute the living monument that Don Bosco wanted to erect to the Madonna, as a sign of his undying gratitude for the benefits received from Her?* Yes, daughters, for as long as you learn at the school of Mary how to direct everything to Christ her Divine Son, as long as you keep your gaze fixed on Her – who is God’s masterpiece, the model and ideal of every consecrated life, the support of every apostolic heroism – *the source of generosity and of dedication, of interiority and of fervor, of holiness and grace*, which has made of you such precious collaborators of Our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the young, will never dry up in your Institute. ‘I entrust them to you.’ **Here is what the Church expects of you. Do not disappoint its expectations, but respond to them beyond all its hopes.”**

For reflection

- What traits of Mary am I committing myself to imitate at this time of my life?
- I will re-trace the main stages of my life to recognize in them the active presence of Mary.
- I will make a habit of ending each day with a thought of gratitude, not only to God, but also to Mary.



“Contemporaneity
represents a challenge to enter
with an evangelical heart in the multicultural
and multi-religious societies.
An opportunity to ‘*be there*’ with the heart,
the generative source of human actions,
the place that converts into the ‘*see*’ of the Spirit.
Jesus is the very depth of the human being and of God.
He worked with human hands,
He thought with human intelligence,
He lived with human will,
He loved with a human heart,
in the heart of His reality”.

(Circular 985 In preparation for GCXXIV)



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco

