

in the heart of **Contemporaneity**



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Dossier



Concluding a cycle is always an opportunity to collect the lights that emerged on the roads traveled. It is being able to look at the past and grasp the present-future in the horizons of a new normal.

It is time to redefine the gaze, to bring out its communicative strength, its ability to capture what is beyond appearances to enter, with delicacy, the mystery of the other. The experience of the gaze demands reciprocity. The contemporary scenario invites us to re-grasp the path taken by *broadening the gaze*. And just as we were about to say goodbye to the theme of GCXXIII, we are urged to take it up again in its full relevance. How many vital experiences contained in this exercise of *broadening the gaze*! An *open gaze* is one that allows itself to be challenged by reality in its full authenticity, stripping away prejudices to welcome the other in their essence. A *contemplative gaze*, which rests on the world seen as a work of art, as a 'text' disclosed by a perception charged with planning, possibilities, creativity. This contemplative gaze comes from the Spirit. With Him we enter into *contemplation* by living in the Trinitarian *Temple* and drawing from Him the communicative sensitivity to visit the temple which are the young and immense humanity. *Broaden your gaze* is the invitation to live with them and to let them live in order to be God's home-abode *for* and *with* young people.

The gaze, defined as the '*window of the soul*', is still today the *window* through which the gaze of Mary is reflected. *Looking* at the reality of her people, she let herself be touched by the affliction of a couple during the wedding party.

Mary's gaze at Cana is the permanent invitation to open ourselves to a gaze illuminated by the Spirit, molded by Him; a sensitive gaze that lets itself be touched by the hopes and hardships of yesterday and today.

In the horizons of a *new normal*, the gazes must be educated by the Spirit of God. With the eyes of the Spirit we touch reality in its deepest essence. The Gospel of contemporaneity is alive in the clamor of the young, the poor, the immense crowds of the excluded.

In order to "*do whatever the Lord tells us*", in the 'new contemporary wedding', we need the wise eyes of the Master; the humble and lucid eyes of the servants; the believing eyes of the disciples; the eyes absorbed by a prophetic parrhesia, embraced by a hope that does not disappoint that it is precisely the Lord and Master of history, the one who offers us a communal vision of life. A synodal gaze because in communion with everyone, with the Trinity, we will be able to embrace reality in its saving entirety.

The *synodal gazes* of Emmaus and Cana meet. *From an expectancy* ("Some of ours went to the tomb and found it as the women said, but they did not see Him" - Lk 24:24), and *from a bewilderment* ("They have no wine" - Jn 2: 3), the Lord - the *Wayfarer* and the *Good Wine* - strengthens the hope and trust of an Institute that has tried to walk with Him together with young people and which invites everyone, in this historical moment, to always look at the horizons that generate life. The Spirit of God urges us to forge a synodal gaze to be able to assume the attitude of evangelical solidarity contained in that "*do whatever He tells you*", which will lead us to an encounter with Jesus, the Good Wine, present in the faces of the excluded of our time.

Editorial

In synodality

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It takes an embrace!

DOSSIER



Embracing is leaning towards the other, spreading your arms to welcome and be welcomed. It is feeling in a bond of fraternity; feeling in a roped party, supported, even when alone. It is a gesture of reciprocity par excellence. It is crossing distances without ever being able to eliminate them, uniting without merging, to form a communion that does not erase differences, but is more than the sum of two units. The embrace multiplies. It is a gesture of an alliance that transforms from within (Giaccardi Chiara).

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Embrace a world that has no borders, which requires common attention and care. A world that must be inhabited *in a synodal style*, so that it becomes more and more a 'common home' for all. Synodality is not an external dress. It has a mysterious meaning, contained in that small preposition: *syn*, together, fruit and condition of the coming of the Holy Spirit who loves unity and harmony. Synodality arises from below. It starts with listening, where each has something to learn from the other, in the desire to get in tune, to welcome each other. It transpires in language and behavior, in relationships, in choices, in the ordinary way of life. Synodality is generative. Approach reality with the willingness to learn and get involved. It takes courage to open spaces where everyone can feel called to promote new forms of *hospitality*, of *fraternity*, of *solidarity* to give shape to new styles of *cooperation* and *governance* to embrace the Planet and all its peoples.

“Contemplating means giving oneself time for silence, for prayer; so that harmony will return to the soul. We need to look into the eyes of the one beside us and of creation that have been given to us (Pope Francis).”

The future of the Salesian mission depends on the FMA Institute living in *synodality* today. *Synodality* is translated by the vocation of the human being to live in communion that is concretized in the sincere gift of self, in union with God, and in unity with brothers and sisters in Christ. *Synodality* calls for the involvement and participation of everyone at the service of the mission. The FMA Institute is called to activate with synodal synergy the charism of the origins to discern the paths of evangelization, listening to the Holy Spirit. The synodal dimension of the FMA Institute is expressed through animation and governance processes of participation and of discernment able to manifest the dynamism of communion that inspires all the institutional decisions in synergy with the Church and the Territory.



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The common good requires everyone's participation. If everyone contributes and if no one is left out, we can regenerate good relationships at the community, national, international levels and also in harmony with the environment (Tweet of Pope Francis).

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■ Embrace the Earth

Neglect of creation and social injustices influence each other and, therefore, it is legitimate to say that "there is no ecology without equity and there is no equity without ecology" (Pope Francis at the meeting with the *Laudato si* Community, Vatican City 12 September 2020). In creation all is in relationship, all is connected and the task of everyone is to safeguard our common home, facing the root causes of the upheavals taking place and looking far, "working today for everyone's tomorrow", for the young and the poor. We need to admire and contemplate nature. We must make choices that connect progress and equity, development and sustainability for everyone so that no one is deprived of the earth they inhabit, the good air they breathe, the water they have the right to drink, and the food they have the right to eat. It is necessary "to work as brothers and sisters" to build a universal fraternity. This year, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed how deeply the world is connected. We have become aware more than ever that we are not isolated from each other and that the conditions for human health and well-being are fragile. The impact of the pandemic solicits us to take seriously the need for vigilance and the conditions for sustainable life on the whole earth.

■ Time of Creation

Christians around the world celebrate September 1st as the *Day of Creation*. The Time of Creation dates back to the roots of the Christian faith. Creation is a gift from God for humanity and for all living beings; it is therefore everyone's responsibility to guard it as good and reliable administrators and as faithful servants of God. *"The earth and all it contains is the Lord's: the world, with its inhabitants"* (Ps 24: 1). Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, underlines that "the urgent challenge of protecting our common home includes the concern to unite the whole human family in the search for sustainable and integral development". At the same time, he makes a strong appeal "to renew the dialogue on how we are building the future of the Planet. We need a sharing that unites us all, because the environmental challenge we are experiencing and its human roots, affect us and touch us all". **Juergen Moltmann**, contemporary theologian, says that "today the theological adversary is nihilism practiced in our relations with nature"

and asks for "a discernment on God who is present in creation through his Holy Spirit", a discernment that "can bring men and women to reconciliation and peace with nature".

The celebration of the *Time of Creation* has a significant ecumenical dimension. Celebrating these days as a *Jubilee for the Earth* underlines the need for a just and sustainable balance between social, economic, and ecological realities. The teaching of the biblical jubilee indicates the need to rebalance the systems of life, affirms the need for equality, justice, and sustainability, for a prophetic voice in defense of our *common home*.

The point is, therefore, to move on to the encounter with the other from which the thoughts that weave the embroidery of an existence arise. Maybe this time will be an apprenticeship. It will serve to learn again to embrace the Earth: forgotten, violated, exploited. And only when we can embrace the Earth, obey it, will we be able to embrace each other as brothers and sisters.





■ Embrace our brothers and sisters

The South African Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner **Desmond Tutu** recalls the sub-Saharan **Ubuntu** philosophical principle "*I am because we are*" and explains: "We are human thanks to the interdependence on each other. We need people to be fully ourselves. We are made for complementarity. We are human, because we immerse ourselves in the life experience of other human beings."

Taking care of the other is what we are called to do at this moment, which has unexpectedly turned habits of thought and action upside down.

The Perugia-Assisi march, which will take place on 11 October 2020, is a call to commitment to peace and today, in the time of Covid, it is even more urgent, it is even more necessary to have peacemakers, brothers and sisters who assume the responsibility of thinking and of making peace. A human chain will be a call to a commitment to peace, which must resonate in the hearts and minds of all because *human fraternity* is needed to build some peace in Syria, Libya, Yemen, in many parts of Africa and America, Belarus, Turkey, Palestine; for the 70 million migrants, for families who today live in uncertainty due to the economic crisis and the loss of jobs. The symbol of unity and fraternity to be reconnected will be the thread, which each one will carry and tie to that of the others, a commitment to remain united and to weave fraternal relationships.

■ Fratelli tutti

Is the title that Pope Francis has chosen for the new encyclical dedicated to "*fraternity*" and "*social friendship*". The first words of the new *circular letter* are inspired by the Saint of Assisi. The Successor of Peter intends to address them to all humanity and will sign the document on October 3, 2020 on the tomb of St. Francis.

Pope Francis chose the words of the Saint of Assisi to inaugurate a reflection on fraternity and social friendship, with which he intends to address all sisters and brothers, all men and women of good will who populate the earth, to everyone in an inclusive and never exclusive way. Living in a time marked by wars, poverty, migration, climate change, economic crises, pandemics; recognizing in those you meet a brother and a sister and, for Christians, recognizing the face of Jesus in the other who suffers, are a way of reaffirming the irreducible dignity of every human being created in the image of God.

It is a way to remember that one can never get out alone from the difficulties of the present time.

In the midst of the pandemic, the Bishop of Rome

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Care is the compass to follow to build a human chain of peace and fraternity.
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prayed for the salvation of all: "With the storm, the disguise of those stereotypes with which we masked our 'egos', always concerned about our image, has gone. Once again that (blest) common belonging from which we cannot escape has been discovered: our belonging as brothers and sisters."

■ Fraternity and social friendship

The central theme of the Encyclical is this "blest common belonging" which makes everyone brothers and sisters. *Fraternity and social friendship* indicate what unites men and women, an affection that is established between people who are not related by blood and that is expressed through benevolent gestures, with forms of help and with generous actions at all times. It is a disinterested affection towards other human beings, regardless of every difference and belonging.

From the boat you are in, everyone has the opportunity to learn to be together, looking beyond. There where

vibrates the hope that comes from the desire for communion, to build in synodality. Fear disappears when you take the path of compassion, empathy and respect, gratitude and solidarity.

The experience of this unprecedented time teaches us that we must embrace the other to return to building a world in which nothing is taken for granted and values are elevated for the good of the community.

"Who can, put; who cannot, take". This sentence written on a sheet hanging from a basket in an alley in Naples (Italy), is the tangible sign of care, of everyone being brothers and sisters. In this simple popular statement there is the mystery of the beauty of being and what one can be.



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The courtyard is the meeting place between young people and God; it is the sacred ground of the incarnation of the Salesian charism for all times and in all situations.

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■ We embrace a dream

Synodality inevitably refers to young people. Educational passion urges to make them grow in the desire to undertake, to be generative, to weave community and relational networks.

"I am convinced that young people have helped the Church to rediscover her synodal nature, because they have asked us in a thousand ways to walk alongside them: neither behind them nor in front of them, but alongside them!" (Pope Francis, Synod on young people).

Synodality leads directly to education which is a team sport. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello thought of Salesian houses as family environments where everyone could feel at home, a space full of engaging proposals: a true 'edu-communication ecosystem' where a favorable climate for human and spiritual growth is created. *"Here is your field, here is where you must work."* A dream has come true! The courtyard experience is a call to go out, to make every place an educational environment in which to be with young people.

The Pandemic of COVID-19 has confronted us with evidence: the presence *among* and *with* young people in the digital environment today makes the Salesian proposal of '*pedagogy of the environment*' even more vital and fruitful. The new courtyards of *social networks* are the space of values in which to experience the educational adventure, the family spirit, sharing, dialogue, weaving together a network of relationships in solidarity that involves and creates connections near and far.



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"Behind the closed doors of our homes, our schools, our oratories, and Youth Centers... there are hearts that live for you".

gestures of solidarity and mercy are the strength of the Salesian mission.

Dear young people,

These are long months of distance! Our homes are closed due to the concrete situation of the Covid-19 Pandemic that the whole world is experiencing. In this unprecedented moment, beyond the closed doors of homes, schools, Youth Centers, oratories... there are hearts that beat for you. These days, walking in the courtyards, listening to the silence... we think of you!

Dear young people,

We are physically distant from each other, but we do not lose hope, it will not be like this forever. Your names and your faces are written in our hearts. In all our communities, we are united in prayer for you, for your families, and for all humanity, for those who suffer from illness or who have lost loved ones to the virus... and let us not forget all the volunteers and doctors. Staying at home during this time, we invite you to accept the challenge of responsible citizenship, because concrete

Dear young people,

Get ready to return to your schools, to your oratory... to your home! Here we dream of seeing you happy now and for eternity!

Our doors will reopen soon! Your laughter will be heard louder in our courtyards! Your smiles will brighten our days once again!

We will return to have fun and study and the bond will be stronger because it is rich in God's love.

We trust in Mary Help of Christians whom Don Bosco taught us to pray to in difficult times.

Mother Mazzarello, in one of her letters, writes: "Even if an immense sea divides us, we can meet and be close to each other at any moment in the heart of Jesus. There we can find each other and so our hearts will always be united!"

(cfr. Letter to young people, from a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians from the Province of Our Lady of Hope in East Africa - AFE, during the lockdown)

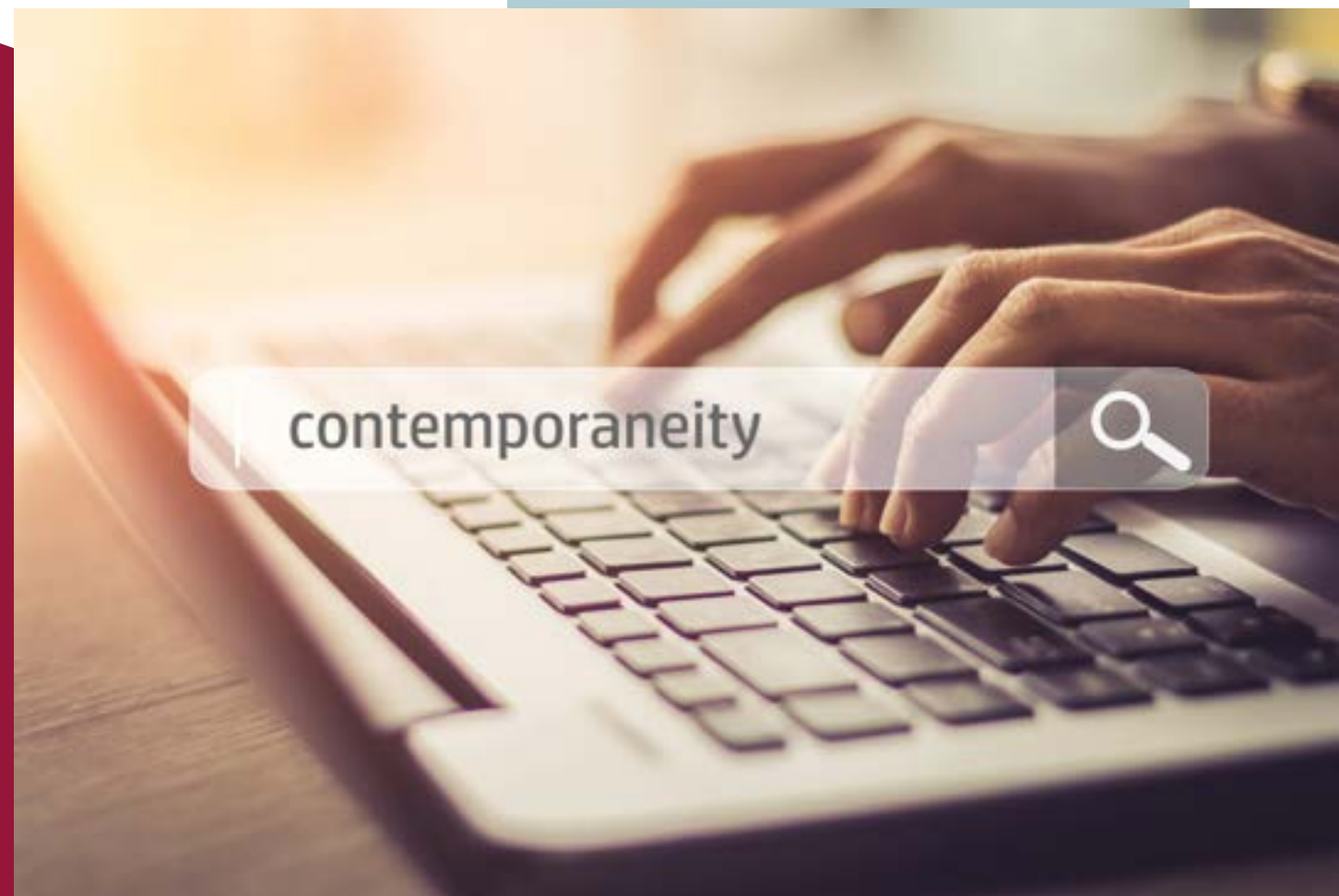
The whole life of young people is marked by dreams that are taking shape, by relationships that acquire more and more consistency and balance, by attempts and experiments, by choices that gradually build a life project. *"Young people, do not give up the best of your youth, do not observe life from the balcony. Don't be parked cars, rather let your dreams blossom and make decisions. Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life!"* (Christus vivit, 143). These words are valid for everyone, if you want to remain young with your own charisma! We must go out, we must take risks, we must enter the logic

of the ecstasy of life! There is only one certainty: the best defense is the attack! "May you live more and more the "ecstasy" which consists in going out of yourself to seek the good of others, to the point of giving your life" (Christus vivit, 163). Go out and embrace with love looking for the good with young people because together everything is easier. *It takes an embrace* that involves the world, that welcomes the dream of creating deep relationships, capable of giving meaning to living together, to the responsibility of taking care of the ecosystem that we all welcome as the cradle of life.

It takes of Massimiliano Padula

It takes *an embrace*, that of humanity for humanity. It takes *hope*, that does not empty expectations, but is the inexhaustible source of life and of future. It takes *faith*, in God and in the good will of whoever seeks to contribute. It takes *time*, which does not mean impatience and suspension, but patience and waiting for the beauty that will be. It takes *courage*, which means being responsible, committed, and planning for tomorrow. It takes *creativity*, synonymous with the person and with all the generativity of which he/

she is capable. It takes *community*, to consolidate the sense of belonging, strengthen the spirit of solidarity, and transcend selfishness and personal interests. It takes *family*, it is necessary to protect it in order not to succumb to the comfortable flattery of sterile individualism. It takes *education*, with its teachers and with its students, to grow together in amazement. It takes *care*, that doctors, nurses and health personnel give incessantly. It takes a *vaccine*, to protect the body from disease, but also the heart from the harshness of indifference. It takes *politics*, that finally bans bureaucratic rigor and becomes - as Don Sturzo and Paul VI suggested - an "act of love" and "the highest form of charity". It takes *communication*, not only medias, technologies, platforms, and algorithms, but above all encounter, proximity, relationship, knowledge, essentiality. It takes *peace*, born inside and reflected outside, in every area of conflict and alteration of truth. It takes *human beings*. And above all women who are mothers of reflections born of their own competence. It takes a *Pope*, called Francis who alone manages to fill an empty square by giving us the caresses of his prayer (Massimiliano Padula, journalist and teacher).



Narrate to live

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If the written or printed representation of the words can be similar to a label, the real, spoken words cannot. Narration is a concept transversal to orality and writing; it is inherent in the human person, there is no evidence of civilization that has not used narration. It crosses cultures, eras, places. It has always been present and, perhaps, will always be present, so much so that we can say that with the birth of sociality, of the inter-human relationship, narration was born which, together with relationality, is the an element that has always been present.

The narration automatically arouses a mental connection with orality, evokes in us the impression of someone who speaks and someone who listens. We do not commonly think of a narration understood as an individual and silent reading. The narrative is therefore configured as a moment of suspension of the real that outlines the contours of the suspension of the present to project itself into the past, mythical or real, into the future or into unreality. Narration was the main instrument of

the construction and transmission of knowledge. Francois Lyotard, in the book *The Postmodern Condition* speaks of the pre-eminence of thought and of the narrative form in the construction of knowledge in the most advanced civilizations, with respect to scientific knowledge, assigning the function of transmission and processing of knowledge to narration.

■ Narration and formation

If the formation function is assigned, in the new perspective of ongoing formation, a value of individual *empowerment*, of implementation of the capacity to reduce complexity or at least of 'governance' of complexity itself; if it is true, as Daniel Taylor argues, that everyone is the product of the stories heard, lived, and also of those not lived, then it is inevitable in formation contexts to find space for narration as object, tool, and subject of the formation process.

The contribution of narrative pedagogy is fundamental. However, this does not simply mean implementing the use of narration through stories, novels, short stories in education. Narration is not an object, but a subject of the educational path or narration as a constitutive form of pedagogical development. As if to say: *educating by narrating*, giving a narrative structure to the educational path, conceiving education not only as a time and place for explanations, for the transmission of knowledge, but also as mutual listening between narrating subjects whose identity is above all a narrative identity.

■ Space and time for life

Today there is a 'thirst' for narration because in narration one finds space and time for one's life. Formation therefore cannot give up its intrinsically narrative dimension, in at least three directions:

- A formation essentially composed of narratives, which knows how to enhance the narrative dimension of the 'contents': recount the business, recount the motivation, recount the communication, and even recount information technology.
- A pedagogical education, expert in the analysis of

narratives, concerned with keeping the narrative skills of the civil community awake, which aims to teach, listen to narratives, and produce narratives. Here is the education to memory, to a socially legitimated collective memory as a key to reading even periods of crisis.

- A formation to diary, to autobiography that is not just a way of speaking of oneself, a revelation with a narcissistic background, or a *post hoc* explanation/justification of the choices made in the course of life. In fact, writing your own story is a way to learn something about yourself. Writing it to be read is a way to form others to understand self.

Three directions, which are also motivations, and can be assumed as one's own by formation, so that one begins to tell stories and one is not afraid in many environments, of speaking of oneself, of telling, of also founding narratives that pretend not to explain something but to add meaning.

■ Dangerous memory and open history

For biblical faith, the story of the Lord's deeds of redemption is a 'dangerous memory', capable of actualizing God's salvation in the present. The story is particularly suitable for taking human history seriously and for mediating salvific history in a meaningful way, opening the future and in a certain way drawing the promised tomorrow into the present.

For this to be the case, the story must be experienced as an 'open story', which refers to a first, made of expectation and hope, and opens up to a continuation in the life of the narrator and the listener (cf. Bruno Forte 2008).

The decisive reference to the story, both for the communication of ideas and for the specific transmission of faith, is inseparable from the interpretative mediation, which must always take into account three elements: the otherness between the narrator and what is narrated, the correspondence between them, and the necessary 'fusion of horizons' between the 'narrated' on the one hand and the 'narrator' and the interlocutors of the narration.

The story unites the narrator and the interlocutor if it moves from the involvement and transformation

of the heart. In short, what is at stake in an authentic narrative communication is the person in all the richness of their potential and relationships, starting from the fundamental relationship that gives life, love. Therefore St. Augustine underlines how it is the preventive force of love that communicates the joy and grace remembered in the story: "There is no greater invitation to love than to prevent in love" (A. Mura, S. Agostino. *De catechizandis rudibus*, La Scuola, Brescia 1971).

Woe to losing, by narrating, the sense of the excess of life and of real history, with respect to any communication strategy: narrating is not saying everything, but inviting to somewhere else, to an

encounter that only direct experience reveals. The co-belonging between the narrated and the narrator must never be lost sight of. It is based on the uniqueness of the story to which we all belong. As faith is communicable insofar as it responds to a nostalgia for truth present in the heart of every person, so every authentically communicative narration appeals to the restlessness that disposes every human being to search for and encounter the other in every time and in every place. Diverse in richness, humans are in solidarity and close in the radical poverty of existence, which is silence, questioning, waiting (Cf. Bruno Forte 2008).

NARRATE FOR LIFE

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

Shadows in the fog

The Mediterranean Sea, "Do you know it?" the teacher Paola asked her pupils. The excited 'yes' of the children echoed. Tarek remained motionless, unable to utter any faint sound. The Mediterranean Sea: Of course Tarek knew it! He had known it personally! Indeed, it was thanks to that sea that he was there, at school, following that science lesson.

He remembered that it was at night that everything seemed more bearable. Wrapped in his mother's warm arms, he lifted his nose up and counted the stars. He was certain that, sooner or later, he would succeed in counting them all and so, one day, they would remember him as the one who had counted all the stars in the sky.

Tarek remembered, for example, that night when the sky must have been so sad, but so sad, that it had cried an endless number of tears, to the point that it seemed to want to drown them, rather than the sea, in their own boat, already so narrow, so dirty, and so full of people always with sad and frightened faces. That night Tarek could not count his stars, both because the spiteful sky did not let him see them, and because he was busy all the time, together with the other traveling companions, throwing off the boat all the tears that cluttered every free corner, if it was possible to find one.

He also remembered another night when he couldn't count his stars. It was what the others called the most beautiful; but he understood only after some time why. Tonight the sky was gray, impregnated with a wet, sticky sheen, which did not let you see beyond the tip of your nose. There was a great stir on the boat. His mother was also different than usual. She hugged him so tightly to the point that the beats of their hearts beat so close that they formed the single beat of a single heart. But he wanted to get a glimpse for himself, to find a point from which to see his stars. But she held him tight enough to prevent him from moving. But suddenly. . .

"Mom, look, that star is very big! Why do you think it is so close?" he insisted again. This time his mother could hear his words and gently replied: "My little Tarek, that light is the star that has come to save us."

Tarek only later understood how a star could save people,

but in that moment it was enough for him to know that, for the first time, a star had descended from the sky to greet him closely.

The closer the star came, cutting through the opaque cloud with its beam of light, the more the screams, prayers, and agitation increased on the boat. There was so much movement that Tarek did not understand if the commotion was due to the strong sway of the sea or the irrepressible impatience of his traveling companions. He hugged his mother tightly and, squinting his eyes, turned all his thoughts to the star that had come down from heaven to greet him.

"Tarek, Tarek! The teacher is talking to you. Tarek, answer!" the annoyed voice of his desk mate sounded in his eardrum, which seemed to awaken him from a torpid sleep.

"Oh ... what?" and immediately resumed "Yes, madam teacher!"

"I was wondering, Tarek, which of the four elements is your favorite."

And he, not thinking about it even for a moment, replied: "The water! Without a doubt: water!" and continued "In fact, without water there would be no life; certainly, there would be neither mine nor that of the people I love" and as he uttered these words, which mostly sounded like nonsense, the tinkling of the bell imperatively announced the end of the lessons.

"See you tomorrow, children!" stated the teacher, bent over to collect all her material from the desk.

"See you tomorrow, Teacher!" echoed the cheering screams of the children, for whom another school day had finally passed.

Even Tarek's heart was happy. That regular and undisturbed flow of time was the reason why he, like his mother and any other traveling companion, had faced the great pitfalls of a blue sea that was tinged with black at night, swallowing names, faces, fears, and hopes in the dark.

(Barbara Lanza, Computer engineer with a vocation for educational activities. Educare.it - Year XVII, N. 6, June 2017)

Laity who dare to dream

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Synodality is walking together and participating in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Therefore an *out-going Church - Laity going out*. There is a need for trained lay people, animated by a sincere and clear faith, whose life has been touched by a personal and merciful encounter with the love of Christ Jesus.

"I told young people - comments Pope Francis - we need lay people with the flavor of the experience of life, who dare to dream".

It is recognized that Jesus was both a lay-priest and a priest- layman. The New Testament, on the one hand, claims that He is the only Priest in the world and, on the other, attests that in the eyes of His contemporaries He presented himself as a *lay person*, a priest in a completely different way from the past. In fact, He, who was a descendant of the tribe of Judah, was dressed like ordinary Jews, not in the sacred

vestments. He wore a one-piece tunic, presumably woven by His mother and considered attractive, since it was gambled for by the Romans. Nor does it appear that He entered the Sanctuary to perform the priestly rites according to the law.

"Once the priesthood changed, a change in the law necessarily also takes place. This is said of those who belonged to another tribe, of which no one was ever assigned to the altar. In fact, it is known that our Lord sprouted from Judah and of this tribe Moses said nothing about the priesthood" (Heb 7: 12-14). Consequently, the

"All the lay faithful, children of the Church, must be helped to grow, putting their talents at the service of new missions in society, culture, politics, facing without fear the challenges that the contemporary world poses".



exegetes emphasize that the priesthood of Jesus is no longer linked to rites like the Levitical one ('It was necessary,' that another priest should arise in the manner of Melchisedek, and not instead, in the manner of Aaron' Heb 7:11), but to the oblation of His own life: "He did not become such by reason of a carnal prescription, but by the power of an indefectible life" (Heb 7:16).

An *unfailing* life is the one that every Christian aspires to live in imitation of Christ, who transmits His essential and 'existential' priesthood to us. For every believer, for every Christian family it is important that, by spending their energies and assuming specific responsibilities, they are aware of exercising the priesthood of Jesus. This is true for women and men called in marriage to bear witness to unity among themselves and with the Vine from which they draw lymph. All Christians, lay people, religious, and clergy are called to live in union with the sacrifice of Jesus. All enter the Church as lay people. The first sacrament, the one that forever seals the identity of the faithful, is baptism. Through it and with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, (the faithful) "are consecrated to form a spiritual temple and a holy priesthood" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 10). The first and fundamental consecration has its roots in baptism. No one was baptized a priest or bishop.

All are baptized lay people and this is the indelible sign that no one will ever be able to erase.

There are periods, such as that of the coronavirus, when it is not possible to go to church and receive the sacraments. It is appropriate to recall the admiration of the Jews for the temple and Jesus who indicates His body as the temple that the Spirit inhabits: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up". The Evangelist explains: "He spoke of the temple of His body" (Jn 2: 19-21). If the temple would even be destroyed (as it happened after two decades), if services and rituals would be prevented for any reason, His body would continue to house God.

He could only be put down, but He would triumph over destruction. That temple, St. Peter writes, from now on will be built with the living stones that are Christians inhabited by the Spirit and made capable of offering themselves (1Pt 2,4-10) mediating between the world and God. Everything becomes in Christ a priestly work, because His body and that of Christians, in their various manifestations of life and until death, are united in the Eucharist. This is the new universal priesthood.

There is a need for Christians, lay people, religious, clergy capable of continuing the life of Jesus in the world. Christian families, founded precisely on the covenant between a man and a woman blessed by Christ, are particularly suitable for creating authentic bonds with all and contributing to the reconciliation of the world with God. Weaving and reweaving the web of relationships, generating alliances

with others or the marginalized of the peripheries, contribute to transforming a mass of individuals, scattered and quarrelsome, into a people and build the temple in which Christ loves to live.

The contemporary postmodern world pushes everyone to free themselves from the stringent bonds of the past, not to lean on structures, to always convert themselves again. In the letter to the Commission for Latin America of April 2016, addressed to Cardinal M. Quellet, Pope Francis complained that the hopes raised by the Council were, in various respects, unfulfilled with regard to the way of living ecclesiology: "I now remember the famous phrase 'it is time for the laity'. But it seems that the clock has stopped. We have generated a lay elite, believing that only those who work in 'priestly' things are committed lay people and we have forgotten the believer who often burns his hope in the daily struggle to live the faith."

Families are often prevented from evangelizing. The fruitfulness of their Christianity must be able to develop in the concrete dynamics that they find themselves living in and in which they exercise their creativity and their charity: groups of mutual aid, solidarity communities, associations active in the social, political, and ecclesial sectors. Everywhere they can foster fraternal relationships for a family-friendly society. A united couple testifies with facts to solidarity, dignity, unity, and thereby generates around them that "civilization of love" so desired by Paul VI. Generating requires the ability to give oneself without being invasive, to be present and disappear, which is true for families as well as for the clergy. Pope Francis specifies: "It does us good to remember that the Church is not an elite of priests, consecrated persons, bishops, but that we all form the holy faithful people of God and forgetting this involves risks and distortions in our own experience, both

personal and community, of the ministry that the Church has entrusted to us."

This call to humility acknowledges that it does not have ready-made recipes to solve problems and dictate behaviors: "It is never the pastor who has to tell the layperson what must be done and said, he/she knows so much and better than we do. It is not the pastor who has to establish what the faithful must say in the various areas."

It is necessary to recognize that the laity because of their reality, their identity, because they are immersed in the heart of social, public, and political life, because they participate in cultural forms that are constantly generated, need new forms of organization and celebration of the faith.

It is necessary to imagine spaces for prayer and communion with innovative characteristics, more attractive and meaningful for the people. It is impossible to think that pastors have a monopoly on solutions to the multiple challenges that contemporary life presents. Only with this freedom is it possible to be creative in facing the challenges of history and the Church and, on the contrary, if this freedom is not granted, many will take it in fact. We need a little more trust in the Spirit: "We trust in our people, in their memory and in their 'sense of smell', we trust that the Holy Spirit acts in and with them; it is not only the 'property' of the ecclesial hierarchy".

The parallel that Pope Francis draws between priests and grandmothers and mothers of families who enjoy seeing their children and grandchildren grow up is significant: "Our role, our joy, the joy of the pastor, lies precisely in helping and stimulating, as many did before us, mothers, grandmothers, and fathers, the true protagonists of history. Not because of our concession through good will, but by right and by its own statute. The laity are part of the faithful Holy People of God and are therefore actors and interlocutors of the Church and the world."

The educating communities, living among the people, are stimulating and promoting charity and fraternity, the desire for good, truth, and justice.



By playing you grow

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Play is considered an existential need for humans, who, thanks to it, shapes their personality, develops the spirit of cooperation, socialization, and self-control. At all ages, you should devote the right time to playful activities because they allow you to relax, release tension, stress, and recover useful energy for work activities.

The word 'game' comes from the Latin *iocus*, which means 'joke, prank' and refers to something that unites everyone, young and old, in fact everyone loves to play! The game was born as a complex of practices, rules, techniques, and mental constructions, which help structure time, have fun, and give a playful sense to reality.

■ Play and its functions

The game has several functions summarized in some key words:

Communication: play is a communicative act, because it presupposes the presence of the other, real or imaginary. This allows us to distinguish, according to Winnicott, between imagination and daydreaming: *imaginative fantasy* enriches life with new meanings and gives new ideas for action; *daydreaming* is the result of an isolation that inhibits, up to the point of interfering with the psychic balance of the person and with daily activities.

Rules: there is no game without rules. The rule is the prerequisite for the creation of the game and can be compared to the structure of language that allows the interlocutors to communicate. In children, the awareness of respect for the rules, starting from the game, allows us to understand their level of learning.

Transmission: concerns the transfer of knowledge, knowledge and notions from one player to another; in all cultures, in fact, there are typical games that are transmitted between generations.

Evolution and socialization: contemporary sociology believes that the playful attitude is capable of making the community evolve in the sense of socialization, cooperation, and constructive competitiveness. In the digital age,

for example, we are witnessing the rise of virtual games and interactive video games.

Learning to grow up: the ability to know how to play, as adults transforms into the ability to know how to work, given that between the two areas we find significant parallels and the same basic conditions, such as:

- the ability to control aggressive-destructive impulses or transform them into constructive ones;
- the ability to carry out pre-established plans, beyond the result or immediate pleasure, tolerating momentary frustrations, in view of the final result;
- the ability to pass from the '*pleasure principle*' (source of self-centered enjoyment) to the '*reality principle*', which allows you to experience pleasure while respecting social rules.

■ Playing is learning

Research in the pedagogical and psychological fields has shown how with play, in particular

symbolic play, children can develop cognitive, affective, and social skills. Through play, in fact, children test emotions and feelings by training themselves to face reality with confidence and mastery.

Play and learning, therefore, are two concepts linked together: the child is able to learn by playing in order to fully develop the psycho-physical life of the child. The saying '*playing is learning*' is not just for children, but also for adults, who can learn, feed their fantasy, imagination, and creativity. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that creativity is not learned,



but can be encouraged and stimulated through suitable recreational and cooperative teaching methods. From an educational point of view, in fact, there are methodologies such as *problem solving* and *brainstorming*, which stimulate the development of creative skills. The challenge for teachers and educators is, therefore, to make learning fun through playing.



For further study

C. Garvey, *Il gioco. L'attività ludica come apprendimento*. Armando Editore, 2009.
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Scholars who have given importance to the child's learning through play

Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852), German pedagogist, was the first to give value to play, no longer considering it a useless waste of time, but rather a means that favors the development of the child, since it helps to understand what are the general forms of the universe thanks to toys, called 'Gifts', which can stimulate symbolic, evocative, and imaginative activity.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952), with her method, proposed a school suitable for children, where everything had to be handled and moved freely by the child, so that it could stimulate creativity and imagination. The play material she proposed was graduated in order to develop the sensory-motor functions in an environment suitable for the child's need to act, play, and learn spontaneously.

Eduard Claparède (1873-1940) supports the theory that play is an effective activity to satisfy natural needs and allow desires to become real, by promoting the creativity and spontaneity of the child.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980), defines playful activity for children as a real training for future adult life, as well as a way to socialize, use energy constructively, and learn to control moments of frustration. In fact, children tend to transfer concrete events into play (even of a negative nature), which, in a fictitious dimension, are predictable and more manageable, compared to reality. Language learning is also based on playful activity: in play, the playful linguistic forms become an extension of the action and are transformed into real dialogues with objects and characters of imaginary thought and allowing the child to subsequently introduce the skills acquired in relationships with others.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) says the psychological aspects of the game are:

- the cathartic aspect: playing helps to control anxiety, re-proposing a distressing situation in playful activity, so that it can be better managed.

- the control of internal and external reality: with the game, the child can pass from a fictitious situation to a real one with less anxiety and can externalize his/her own inner world, concretizing it in objects.

Donald W. Winnicott (1896-1971) considers play one of the transactional phenomena, that is, the activity with which children make the transition from dependence to autonomy, learning to be alone and maintaining a certain confidence in a positive reality that protects them. From transactional objects (toys or blankets, scarves, etc.), in fact, children draw an immediate sense of security, comparable to the security acquired in future interpersonal affective relationships.

San Giovanni Bosco (1815-1888), in his experience as an educator priest, perceives the importance of play in the life of children, since playing develops specific aspects of their own human and social formation. In the courtyard of Valdocco he himself had arranged many games, the wooden horse, the swing, the jump bars, gymnastic equipment, demonstrating that the game, from the beginning of the Oratory, was conceived as an important point in the educational and pastoral process that marked the life of the Educating Community. Furthermore, in Salesian pedagogy, play prepares and ensures the energies and the suitable disposition to carry out one's duty well, that is to study, work, and pray. This explains the importance of recreation in Salesian houses for both children and adults. In fact, you never stop playing. Playful activity in adults continues to maintain the characteristic of being able to symbolically transform reality (creative writing, sports, music, art, etc.), and responds to the need to confront or test oneself, suspending the consequences of actions. In playful moments, one feels pleasure and the creative potential of the person engaged in playful activities is expanded. So to continue to grow even as adults you need to use your time creatively, since play at any age is good for you, it allows you to find yourself, release tensions, and be in company by developing your creative self.

Planetary citizenship

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The issue of planetary citizenship is nothing new. For some decades scholars and international organizations have been talking about it. UNESCO, in particular, has made it the subject of several documents on global citizenship. The planetary adjective applied to citizenship lets us perceive a concept that goes beyond the national, regional, and continental dimension in favor of a sense of belonging to a global community that recalls a common humanity. This implies a relationship of interdependence and interconnectedness at all levels (Cf. *Education for Global Citizenship*, ECG 2018). The health crisis caused by Covid-19 is a strong reminder that humanity is asking for planetary solidarity.

■ Covid-19 and consciousness of the planetary era

In an interview, the well-known philosopher and sociologist E. Morin clearly describes the consequences of globalization in the history of the planet. The technical-economic unification of the world created by the spread of capitalism, has generated an enormous paradox that the health emergency has made visible to all: the interdependence between nations, rather than favoring real progress in knowledge and understanding between peoples, has produced forms of selfishness and ultra-nationalism.

Globalization has created a global market which, through the most advanced technology, has shortened the distances between continents, but at the same time has not favored dialogue between peoples.

Covid-19 has brought this contradiction to light. This is why today it is necessary to encourage the construction of a planetary citizenship on a humanitarian basis: to encourage cooperation between nations with the main objective of fostering feelings of solidarity and fraternity among peoples (cf. Edgar Morin *Brothers of the world*, Interview - *Corriere della Sera* of 5-04-2020).

■ For a new humanism

Covid-19, Morin says, could lead to an awareness of the interdependence of all human beings. In fact, the triple crisis we are experiencing, the *biological* one of a pandemic that threatens our lives indiscriminately, the *economic* one born of restrictive measures, and the one of *civilization*, with the abrupt transition from a civilization of mobility to the obligation of immobility, could provoke a crisis of thought.

There is a need for a *regenerated humanism*, which draws on the sources of ethics, solidarity, and responsibility present in every human society. Essentially, a *planetary humanism* is required. "The gigantic planetary crisis in which we find ourselves is the crisis of humanity that does not attain humanity. [...] The development in which we must commit ourselves now is that of human humanity. Only in this way will we be able to save ourselves and our planet."

The epidemic, with the restrictions generated, has forced a slowdown to regain possession of time with greater awareness. Regaining inner time is a political challenge, but also an ethical, existential one. In these times of epidemic, we only learn something if we know how to rediscover and cultivate the authentic values of life: love, friendship, fraternity, solidarity. Essential values that have always been known but end up being forgotten.

The seven images of Pope Francis for the post Covid-19 evoke the passage from this time marked by the pandemic, to a "propitious time to find the courage for a *new imagination of the possible*, with the realism that only the Gospel can offer" (cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Quaderno 4080, 2020, v. II, p. 567-580). According to the Pontiff, the pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities and false certainties with which peoples have built agendas, projects, habits, and established priorities. Change can only take place by resounding the *overflowing proclamation* of the Gospel that generates the "renewing gaze" that today serves as the basis on which to build *planetary citizenship*.

■ Educate to planetary citizenship

The construction of a planetary citizenship essentially passes through education. In fact, at a world level, there is an insistence on the urgency of putting the values of humanism in solidarity back at the center of education. In this sense, education for planetary citizenship can contribute to the development of a model of citizenship based on the awareness of human dignity, the sense of belonging to a global community, and the active involvement of people, for a more just and peaceful society. It is an education based on a multifaceted approach that seeks to integrate, in a coherent vision, education to human rights, sustainable development, justice, peace, interculturality, international understanding and cooperation, guided by recognition of the interdependence between the local and the universal (Cf. ECG 2018). Each of these areas should be developed to underline the facets of this mosaic which has a great transformative value.



Therefore, education for planetary citizenship must be articulated in a learning process that forms at the level of skills, involving the person throughout life, at the level of *knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes*. So it is a process that can be declined in three verbs evocative of the path: *recognize* for a better understanding; *feel* and *share* the values of common humanity; *act* to transform the world.

Recognize

The first step in promoting planetary citizenship is the need to become aware of cosmopolitan human identity. Recognizing this plural identity, the conditions must be created to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about the world, global issues, structures, and systems of *governance* (politics, history, economics). Furthermore, understanding the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups is essential to ensure that they are respected. It is essential to cultivate the capacity for critical thinking on global, regional, national, and local issues and to know how to

identify the interdependence between them. Education will have to enable the recognition of multiple differences and identities, such as culture, language, religion, and common humanity, developing useful skills for living in a world that is increasingly rich in diversity. In this line, media education is essential for a responsible use of new information and digital technologies. Planetary education promotes the ability to make decisions, to solve problems, to dialogue with a view to promoting peace and the common good (Cf. ECG 2018).

Feel and share

The awareness and the feeling of sharing the same humanity in all its aspects stimulate the cultivation of attitudes of empathy, solidarity, and respect for otherness. Education in a planetary perspective will accompany the younger generations to deepen their identity within the plurality of relationships, as the basis for understanding the global dimension of citizenship. It is necessary to learn to "be on the planet", that is to learn to live,

share, communicate, be in communion, because they are humans of the planet Earth. In this sense, "education is aimed at the *anthropological conscience* which recognizes the unity of the human in diversity, the *ecological conscience* which is both the awareness and the project of inhabiting the same living sphere, the *terrestrial civic conscience* which is responsibility and solidarity for the children of the Earth, to the *dialogic awareness* that allows the practice of criticism, self-criticism, and mutual understanding" (*Educational looks on happiness and active citizenship* by Bijoy M. Trentin - 2015). At this socio-emotional level, education to planetary citizenship includes education to the emotions, as a fundamental component of learning for coexistence, integrating thinking, feeling and, acting.

Act

It is not enough to recognize and feel a living part of the planet to be good citizens. It is above all necessary to act responsibly and effectively at the local, national, and global level for the

transformation of the world. To reach the goal of a transformative education for planetary citizenship, a capillary action is needed on all fronts and at all levels of existence, starting from the personal level, with the change of lifestyle. Covid-19 has made it clear that nothing you do or do not do is foreign to the fate of others. This makes us responsible for the fate of humanity and the planet, in a concept of world citizenship that integrates all dimensions. This approach makes us realize that education for planetary citizenship is transversal to the entire formation journey. Human solidarity must become a norm of life. Humanity, as revealed by the pandemic, requires planetary solidarity because one is safe only when everyone is safe. This is the invitation made by the International Commission on the future of education (Cf. *Rethinking education. Towards a global common good* 2019 - UNESCO). Education for planetary citizenship must be the priority in the post-Covid world. For this, one must be bold in the way of thinking, courageous in acting, and contagious in hope.



Narrating migratione

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The current migration scenario is complex and often has painful implications. The global interdependencies that determine migratory flows need to be studied and deepened. The challenges are manifold and affect everyone. No one can remain indifferent to the human tragedies that continue to take place in different nations of the world. We need to act together, not alone.



"There are many other pandemics that make people die and we do not realize it - said Francis in Santa Marta on May 14, 2020 -, we look the other way. May God also stop the other pandemics: that of hunger, that of war, and that of migration." It is a pandemic of the spirit and social relations of which the coronavirus becomes a symbol and image. The paralysis of recent months seems to have been overcome but the fear remains today. The 'worrying' trend of coronavirus infections, the crumbling of certainties, the disruption of acquired lifestyles, the economic turmoil, and the growing suffering for many people and families present a 'new emergency', that of solidarity, of welcome, and dignified integration.

This 'new emergency' calls for more and more attention to the poor, to those fleeing war or leaving their land in search of a life worthy of a human being. We must act together, not alone. Frontiers can be windows, spaces of mutual knowledge, mutual enrichment, communion in diversity. They can be places where new lifestyles are experimented to overcome the difficulties that the new arrivals entail for indigenous communities.

Facilitating orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, and the mobility of people, also through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, is the commitment to which the 2030 Agenda refers in target 10.7 of objective 10, also on based on the awareness of the essential contribution that migrants can bring to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is therefore essential to change the way we see and speak about migration: it is a matter of giving priority to people, to faces, to stories. They are migrants, illegal immigrants, refugees: they are first of all human beings, and there are many communities that experience the impact of migratory flows and hospitality at the forefront.

"The current pandemic has highlighted our interdependence: we are all linked, to each other, both for evil and for good" (Pope Francis, General Audience - Rome, 2 September 2020).

The inhabitants of the cities and frontier territories - the societies, the communities, the Churches - are all called to propose different approaches, inspired by the culture of encounter, which constitutes the path towards a new humanism. Migration is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, it is a political issue that requires concrete efforts and actions, undertaken by people and organizations/networks at all levels of society.

Voices and experiences from the borders

Snapshots from the borders is the three-year project co-financed by the European Commission. Nineteen territories are involved in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fifteen other countries are involved to varying degrees in the activities: Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Estonia, Portugal, Finland, Slovakia, Ireland, the United Kingdom. The general objective of the project is to increase awareness, knowledge, and critical understanding on the global interdependencies that determine migratory flows, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the project intends to strengthen a horizontal and active network between border cities affected by migration flows, to promote more effective policy coherence at all levels (European, national, local). Cultural, information and promotional activities aim to raise citizens' awareness of the causes of migration flows and globalization, but also to collect points of view and reflections, to be disseminated in public initiatives at various levels.

The project involves both local authorities and civil society organizations in the management. The main activities are: campaigns, information seminars, local events, visits, exchange of good practices, creation of a network of border towns, participatory research in the territories of partner local authorities, advocacy actions at national and European level.

Social networks in aid of migrants and refugees

Social networks are essential to bring help and support to migrants and refugees, among the people most affected by the consequences of the pandemic. The **Refaid App** (*Refugee Aid App*), developed in several European countries and used by over 400 non-governmental organizations around the world, is aimed at improving the conditions of vulnerability of migrant populations. It is a real guide that offers migrants a map of all the services provided by the numerous humanitarian associations active in the area. Services that can save lives and alleviate the suffering of thousands of people. A concrete example of the use of the **Refaid App** the initiative carried out in Tangier in Morocco by the diocesan delegation for migration, in collaboration with other bodies, including the *local Caritas*. **#Refaidfront**, is a fund-raising campaign to authorize the use of the App throughout Morocco. In this way, humanitarian organizations in the area can provide information, provide updates in real time, and facilitate access to basic services for migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and asylum seekers.



Never Alone, for a possible tomorrow

An initiative to promote the autonomy and inclusion of minors and young unaccompanied migrants, ensuring full respect for the rights of minors, with the aim of building a new culture of welcome. Among the priority actions promoted is that of supporting interventions aimed at sustaining the subjects of the *Never Alone* Network in the reformulation of the narrative on migration, in order to pursue the social inclusion of foreign minors/young adults and encourage the construction of more inclusive societies.

The concrete proposal is to make a toolkit available: a video, 12 'key' summary forms, and the information platform www.narrativechange.org/it, also containing the guidelines to support the work of raising public awareness on issues related to migration.

A transversal tool that works on the imagery and perceptions of migration, and which can help modify the debate and stimulate social change on other issues of great relevance today.

TherAsia

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To carry out a mission for the poor in the Church, from this need *TherAsia* was born, a *non-profit* organization that supports small projects for the human and social promotion of the Church in Asia. The inspiration was cultivated since childhood by Co-founder Monica Romano: "I was struck by the question of poverty and hunger in the world. By attending the parish, I understood that helping the poor is an important part of the missionary work of the Church, even if the priority is the proclamation of the Gospel."

The *TherAsia* Organization supports Asian churches in their charitable initiatives, in the formation and strengthening of the Institution, especially the Church in China, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. The chosen name recalls Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus and Saint Teresa of

Calcutta. Asia "is the continent where we felt called to serve, to which both of these Saints were linked in different ways. I discovered that St. Theresa was destined for Vietnam, where she never went due to poor health. But from her monastery she wrote to the missionaries



and prayed for them. I started asking for her intercession to have the grace to serve the Church and the mission, and the *TherAsia* project gradually began to take shape. I then realized that the Saint of Calcutta was a woman of prayer even more than of action. Her example confirmed in me the idea of the need to root charitable and social service in a Christian vision.”

■ The relevance of the message for Asia and the Catholic world

“These female figures have a lot to say to Asia today. Several Asian countries are experiencing rapid socio-economic development, for example China, which has managed to cut poverty in half. At the same time, many are unable to keep up because materialism and individualism begin to disintegrate values and social bonds. Saint Therese and Mother Teresa can be understood or rediscovered by the great religious traditions in Asia. These can contribute to giving a more human face to a process that also has dark sides when it forgets or leaves behind the poor, ethnic-religious minorities, women. Both of these figures are also an example of leadership and ecclesial service for the women and religious of Asia. They call Catholics to focus Christian life on the two essential pillars: prayer and charity.”

■ Giving Christ to China and China to Christ, was the goal of the evangelizing action of Father Gabriele Maria Allegra, a Franciscan priest and biblical scholar, who died in 1976

“Father Allegra was an authentic communicator of the Word of God and of the Good News. He was the first to translate the Bible for the Chinese Catholic community. He was a man of deep prayer. Before starting the translation work, he wrote an invocation to Our Blessed Mother on the paper. His version of the Bible - published in Hong Kong in 1968 - remains the most used by Catholics in China. In 2012, in collaboration with the *Little Family of the Assumption* Association, *TherAsia* collaborated on a project for the printing and free distribution in Italy of 10,000 copies of the first Chinese-Italian bilingual version of the New

Testament and the Psalms. This initiative aimed to help younger generations, born or raised in Italy, to learn about Scripture in Chinese, and to facilitate the study of the Bible for Chinese who attend Italian churches or Pontifical Universities. Some copies were donated to the Chinese Protestant brothers in Rome. In 2018, *TherAsia* participated in an Ecclesial Forum in Beijing on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the publication of the biblical translation of Father Allegra. The importance of the Bible in the life of the Church in China has emerged, because to love God one must start with the Bible.”

■ The Chinese translation of the history of the Second Vatican Council, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, how was it welcomed by the Chinese Catholic community?

“At the request of the Chinese Catholic Publisher *Xinde* or *Faith*, the history of the Council and related texts have been reprinted. For historical reasons, the Second Vatican Council arrived in Mainland China later. In the decade 1966-1976 the Cultural Revolution made the contacts of the Chinese Church with the Universal Church more difficult. In 1978 the Chinese Church gradually began to ‘resurrect’. And in the early 1990s Mass was celebrated in Chinese, according to the liturgical reform of the Council, and the printing of the biblical edition of Father Allegra was authorized in China. There is great interest on the part of Chinese Catholics in the major themes of the Council. Living in a context where Christians are a minority and having relatives and friends belonging to other religions, that of salvation is a topic that is particularly close to the heart of many Chinese Catholics.”

■ What is the role of the laity and of women in the Church in China?

“There is a growing awareness of the important role of the laity in the church, and many are engaged in catechesis, liturgy, and charity, especially women. The Chinese Church is investing heavily in the formation of the laity. I know of women who have made care and attention to others their goal in life, who take

abandoned children with severe handicaps from the streets and assist them voluntarily. There are many religious who take care of the poor and the disabled. I have met lay women who lead prayer and Bible study in communities, and women religious who teach in seminaries. However, due to the cultural influence, a somewhat ‘hierarchical’ idea of the Church remains, where the leadership of priests emerges.”

■ In recent years there have been significant changes in the life of the Church in China. What does the provisional agreement between China and the Holy See mean for the Chinese Catholic community?

“In September 2018, a provisional agreement was signed between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China on future episcopal appointments. At the same time, eight Chinese bishops, previously ordained without a papal mandate, were readmitted into full and visible ecclesial communion. Today, after several decades, for the first time the Bishops in China are in communion with the Bishop of Rome. The division within the Chinese Catholic community is an ancient and deep wound, difficult to heal, which requires time, patience, and a faith rooted in the Successor of Peter. With this agreement,

Pope Francis has taken another important step of a long journey on the path of dialogue and reconciliation, for which we hope and pray in communion with the Church in China.”

■ A woman, the Virgin of Sheshan, illuminates the life of the Church in China

“Chinese Catholics have a great devotion to Our Lady. Every year, on the eve of Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May, they invoke Mary as the *Holy Mother of China*. In the Letter to Chinese Catholics (2007), Pope Benedict XVI announced a day of prayer for the Church in China, which is celebrated every year on May 24, on the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, with the invitation to the faithful to go on a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of *Sheshan*, near Shanghai. On the pinnacle of the Basilica stands a statue of the Our Lady holding up the Child Jesus, ‘presenting Him to the world with His arms wide open in a gesture of love’ - as the prayer composed by Benedict XVI says. Chinese Catholics turn to Our Lady of *Sheshan* for help and protection, just as one does with a mother. It is beautiful that they invoke her as the Mother of all China, because they recognize themselves as her children, as a people and as a Christian community.”



The challenge of the Global Educational Pact

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A global educational pact will be signed in Rome on 15 October 2020. *"I love school, I loved it as a student and teacher, and then as a Bishop."* Pope Francis's initiative is the concrete translation of a personal sensitivity, a vision of thought, and a response to the many educational challenges of contemporaneity.

"Community" and "common good" are the key words to promote change, love for human rights, democracy, and culture. Young people are looking for a more just world. They want to save the Earth from climate change. They dream of a better future.

Ties need to be rebuilt by generating dialogue and discussion, participation and collegiality. Change is possible, because many small drops make an ocean.

■ A global educational pact

Great changes characterize society on an economic, political, relational, and values level. Society today asks the education/formation system to think of new paradigms capable of facing post-modernity. Family, school, society, Church, community invest energy and resources to foster love for culture, to make room for new interpersonal skills, and a new way of interpreting the person. Not an individual, but a "community". The person, in fact, is fulfilled only in relationship with others within the united world.

This is the response to contemporary educational poverty: a Global Educational Pact, launched by Pope Francis. Addressing all men and women who have the common good at heart, of all cultures and all professions, he proposed "a meeting to revive the commitment for and with the younger generations, renewing the passion for a more open and inclusive education, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue, and mutual understanding. Indeed, on October 15, 2020, International Bodies, Institutions, the academic, political, economic, and cultural worlds gather in Rome to sign the Global Pact on Education, with the aim of generating a change of mentality at a global level through education.

■ The village that educates

Educating today reminds us of past times, in which education seemed a clearer and more natural process, in a society in which roles and

tasks seemed more defined and in some respects sharper. It seems we are faced with difficulties and obstacles, greater than in the past, in transmitting values, norms, traditions, in a society of weak ties, tight rhythms that sometimes leave few moments to devote to relationships.

We look back to the experiences lived together not only between parents, between families, but also between adults who lived in the same context, city, educational environment, streets, public spaces, neighborhoods where everyone felt responsible for an educational function towards the younger ones, in a relationship of mutual help. There is a need to meet in order to form, share with each other, to get out of isolation and create spaces in which to feel free to

"It takes a whole village to educate a child". But we have to build this village as a condition for educating
(Pope Francis).

express experiences and share the new challenges and complexities of generativity, parenting, the school-family relationship. "Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and the family as a whole, in its primary educational role, need help to understand, in the new

global context, the importance of this early stage of life, and be prepared to act accordingly. Teachers, as artisans of future generations, must be supported and encouraged in their demanding educational role."

An African proverb says that *it takes a whole village to educate a child*. But it is necessary to build this village as a condition for educating, says Pope Francis in his message, in the wake of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, to collaborate all together in safeguarding our common home. Efforts must be united in a broad educational alliance to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and contrasts, and rebuilding the fabric of relationships for a more fraternal humanity.

Parents, teachers, students, society with its institutions, all are called to collaborate in the educational village. And from the village, it is necessary to come out well formed to face courageously the even greater challenges of the world and to build the common good.

■ Educational pact and ecology

What is the relationship between ecology and education? The ecological question, because it is intrinsically relational, and therefore educational, "Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it."

(*Laudato Si* n. 139).

The search for a renewal of the educational commitment of interiority and identity, increasingly caused by the globalized and digital world, requires that the link with the broader social, cultural, and environmental horizon in which it is inserted is not broken. Human beings and nature must be thought of in their interdependence, since the lack of care for the interior is reflected in a lack of care for the exterior and vice versa.

Indigenous peoples, resilient populations in the area, and some nature conservation institutions are some of the examples from which to learn. They are those who, over time, have managed to preserve the diversity of nature and the diversity of lifestyles, respecting its balance but

also its role as a producer of wealth, limiting the withdrawal to what is strictly necessary.

"Our body is our territory; our belly is our temple; our veins are our rivers." From this 'listening' to the cry of the earth and of humanity, an educational program was born for the reforestation of the Amazon through the awareness and education of young people and children.

Promoted by Scholas, about 450,000 schools have joined the project to contribute to Amazon reforestation by planting 10 trees, and starting a teaching program that involves students in activities aimed at rebuilding an adequate relationship between humanity and the Biosphere,

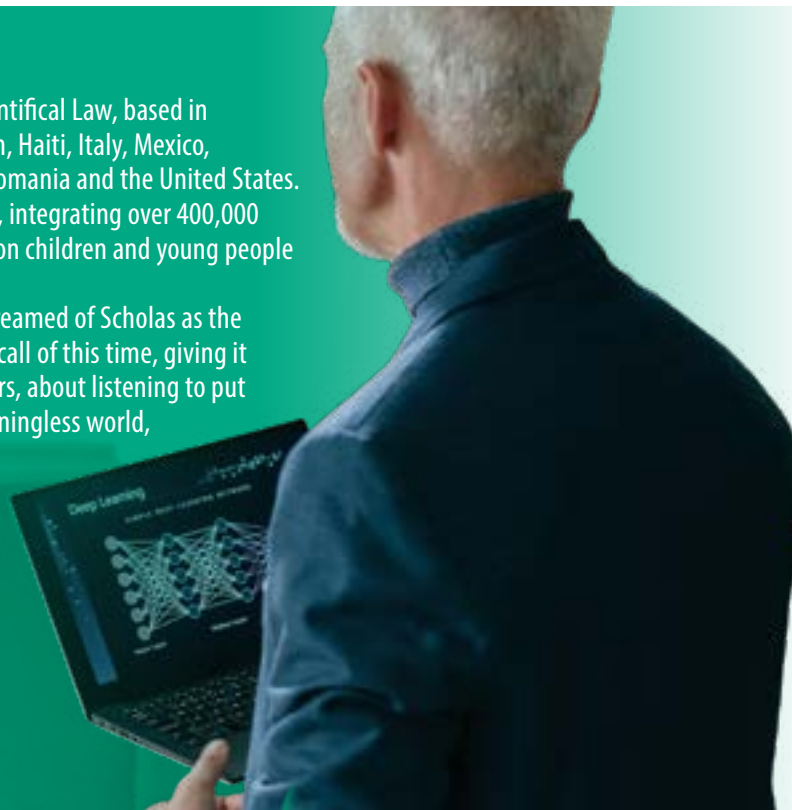
following the example of the populations originating from the Amazon and with formation and sharing activities between schools (exchanges between students, teachers, and experts) of an inclusive nature. To generate change, an educational journey and the establishment of an education village are necessary, in which to form people willing to put themselves at the service of the community. Receive and give support by helping to create that fundamental climate for building educational and collaborative networks.

"Educate young people to fraternity, to learn how to overcome divisions and conflicts, promote acceptance, justice, and peace" (Pope Francis).

Scholas Occurrentes

Scholas is an International Organization of Pontifical Law, based in Argentina, Vatican City, Chile, Colombia, Spain, Haiti, Italy, Mexico, Mozambique, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania and the United States. It is present with its network in 190 countries, integrating over 400,000 Educational Centers and reaching over a million children and young people around the world.

Pope Francis - then Archbishop of the city - dreamed of Scholas as the possibility of giving a concrete answer to the call of this time, giving it the task of educating about openness to others, about listening to put together the pieces of a fragmented and meaningless world, to start creating a new culture: the Culture of Encounter.



Young people and video games

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Don Bosco, Founder of the Salesians, never tired of repeating to his boys: "I am happy that you are having fun, that you are playing, that you are happy; this is a way to make yourselves saints."

Having fun, being together, and sharing are special characteristics of the 'game', and in the 21st century, of video games. The video game is an expressive medium and an open tool that qualifies the educational experience.

In the current context, increasingly sophisticated games invade the market and fascinate children and adolescents. Two thirds of 12-19 year olds define themselves as *regular players* (Cf. JAMES 2018 Results Report - *Youth, Activities, Media*). The tendency to play is related to the development of technologies: at home practically all young

people have a computer or a mobile phone and an Internet connection; some have a fixed or mobile console. Access to video games is therefore greatly facilitated. The video game is a means of expression, but also an open tool to create a scenario that qualifies the educational and didactic experience.



Gaming is one of the most popular media activities for young people. It is played both alone and in the company of friends. Boys play video games more than girls and the percentage of gamers increases with increasing age.

There are many genre of video games: *action*, speed, and reaction based games (*Shooter games*); of *adventure*; *logic* and *learning* games (*Edutainment*); *battle* video games in which the protagonist must win the opponent with fists, with weapons, and often with special skills; *role-playing* games that almost always take place in fantastic worlds

where you choose a character with special faculties, which are developed over the course of the game. It is often played online with other players. *Simulation* and *management* games involve managing a company, a sports team or an entire city with the use of strategic and tactical reflections and organizational skills; *social games*, small games integrated in *social networks*, such as Facebook, which represent a quick and simple means to spend some moments of mental relaxation.

Video games encourage cooperative and competitive behaviors; they focus on interaction with others and allow you to follow the successes and progress of friends and acquaintances. Players interacting simultaneously with other players and with the environment itself, cooperatively achieve goals such as overcoming the highest levels, exploring, making friends, and acquiring knowledge and skills.

These video games do not take into account any age ratings. With the opportunities offered by digital technologies, members of the *gamer community* constantly interact with each other. One of the most observed phenomena is that of 'Let's play' videos, in which individual players present video games, providing comments and suggestions on how to overcome particularly difficult points. Electronic sporting events (*e-Sport-Events*), where players compete with each other, alone or in teams, are in great

"Video games are our most advanced frontier and our most fascinating future" (Alberto Abruzzese).

demand. This is the genre that more than any other favors meeting friends to play together. All players are involved in the game by observing the same whole portion of the screen, managing the movements of their player on the field, and interacting with the other persons at the same time. The prizes and the number of spectators grow from year to year. Just think that the final match of the 'World League of Legends' held in

2017 in Beijing was followed by 80,000 live spectators and over 40 million fans from the screens. There are various skills that young people acquire with video games. They develop intellectual

skills, a sense of spatial orientation, motor skills, teamwork, and creativity. It is interesting to underline the experience that the player lives between the real and virtual world. In the game, you learn to move between the world of experience and that of adventure, between virtual and real space. Thanks to interconnection and digital technology, you become part of a global community, you play with people who live in other Countries and speak different languages, you confront yourself with different identities by opening your mind and your own culture, you live authentic *intercultural experiences*.

In video games you can also live the *optimal experience (flow)*, which is the state in which the person is completely absorbed in an activity for his/her pleasure, during which time flies and actions, thoughts, and movements happen one after another, non-stop.

Those who manage to achieve more and more complete control of the game and pass from level to level feel that they are invincible, confident. But it is precisely this experience that can carry the risk of an Internet addiction. Living the experience of play in solitude and placing such a great expectation of fulfillment in it, risks increasing insecurities and tendencies

towards isolation, creating discomfort in socialization. Additionally, players can engage in aggressive and manipulative behaviors.

Recent research shows that the choice to stay in front of a screen for a long time comes from a deep sense of boredom and the desire to escape from everyday life. The fascinating world of video games and the possibility of taking on different roles can lead young people to take refuge in virtual space in order not to face reality.

"Those who distinguish between entertainment and education may not know that education can be fun and fun can be educational"

(M. Mc Luhan).

And the game is thus transformed into 'evasion', distraction, and suspension of reality, rather than an experience of knowledge and understanding

of everyday life.

Relationship, being together, having fun can bring out the educational and social value of the video game. If you play in company, you can socialize and feel part of a group; you learn to work as a team; you get used to developing strategies and looking for solutions, with a view to *problem solving*.

You can train the most varied skills, such as reasoning, sense of orientation, and creativity.

We need to start again, listening and walking with young people, to redesign environments rich in genuineness and carefree learning and cooperation, like the one in a video game.



Playing is serious business

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The word game derives from the Latin *iocus*, 'joke, hoax' and is an expression of lightheartedness (*iocundus*, playfulness), typical of the time that children live or should live. Play is an important pedagogical element for the construction of identity and exercises this function throughout one's life, helping to re-read and give a new shape to the reality in which one is immersed.



"Playing is serious business!", said Bruno Munari, because by playing one learns to live. Italian artist, designer, writer (1907-1998), Bruno Munari was the inventor and author of games, objects, and books for children based on the active participation of the child, on the development of creativity, on learning by playing. What he communicated through his works and his workshops was his approach to life, of amazement and of discovering alternative ways to interact with his surroundings. When he was a child, he enjoyed flying feathers and maple seeds, capturing the sun's rays in a mirror, listening to the sounds of water drops falling on different surfaces. As an adult, he continued to grasp the calls to creativity that animated the world around him and to teach children this approach, as his son, Alberto Munari recalls: "I must have been 5 or 6 years old and I was drawing a landscape on a sheet of white paper with colored pencils. At one point, while I was coloring the sky with a blue pencil, he said to me: 'Couldn't it be done differently?'. And he continued, "For example, instead

"Playing is serious business! Today's children are the adults of tomorrow. Let us help them to grow free from stereotypes, help them to develop all their senses, help them to become more sensitive. A creative child is a happy child!" (Bruno Munari).

of taking a white sheet of paper and making it blue with the pencil, you could immediately take a blue sheet of paper, wouldn't it be simpler?" These questions, "Could you do it differently?" or "What else can you do" with an instrument or an object, are precisely the key questions that always made my father function" (cf. Beba

Restelli, Silvana Sperati with a speech by Alberto Munari, *What game shall we play?* - Corraini Edizioni, Mantua, 2008).



The games of Bruno Munari are simple, unfinished objects with which to interact freely and intuitively; where doing, surprise, and marvel are engines of knowledge. Like the **Cat Meo Romeo** and the **Monkey Zizi**, two foam rubber toys with a light iron core to change their position by shaping their limbs with your fingers, two pleasant travel companions to always carry with you, which leave room for children's imagination.

For the older ones, the **Abitacolo** (Cabin) is a real 'habitable module', in which Munari from childhood draws the idea of a refuge where they can stay quiet to read, study, play, sleep or listen to music. Reduced to the essential, but with infinite possibilities - bed, bookcase, box to collect things, desk, hiding place. It is a steel structure, easily removable, ready to take on a new look, 'running after the imagination'. *Abitacolo* is an icon of design: in 1979 it was awarded the prestigious Gold Compass Award, and then was included in the permanent collection of the *MoMa* in New York.

■ Playing is "for children"?

Bruno Munari denies the concept that playing is considered a non-activity: "During childhood we are in the state that the Orientals call Zen: knowledge of the reality that surrounds us occurs instinctively through those activities that adults call play. All sensory receptors are open to receive data: looking, touching, feeling the flavors, heat, cold, weight and lightness, soft and hard, rough and smooth, colors, shapes, distances, light and dark, sound and silence... everything is new, everything has to be learned and the game favors memorization. Then we become adults, we enter 'society', and one by one the sensory receptors close. We hardly learn anything; we only use reason and speech and we ask ourselves: how much does it cost? What is it for? How much do I gain from it?".

Munari thus creates the **Forchette parlanti** (talking forks): small sculptures obtained by bending the teeth of stainless steel forks, favoring expressiveness over function, in a communicative game based on the exercise of

imagination. "Forks is a game, a kind of mental gymnastics, like what I do with children." This tells us that there are no 'ends in themselves' or 'useless' activities: every activity - and therefore also play - is always and in any case a promoter of learning, of becoming aware of one's abilities, of self-affirmation. It is in concrete action that every living being builds its own identity, orders the reality to which it relates, and at the same time uses the cognitive tools that guide its actions.

■ Life is at stake

The game allows us to 'stage' all that we are: vivacity, imagination, creativity, but also fragility, aggression, defeat. This is why it is important that you learn to play from an early age and that, once adults, the pleasure of playing should not be lost. Don Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Congregation, in Salesian pedagogy privileged movement in the courtyard and play for his children: "Give yourself ample freedom to jump, run, make noise as you please" (Cf. Preventive System). Don Pietro Stella in his studies underlines, "playing in the courtyard was an important moment of life as well as a healthy exhaust valve" (P. Stella, *Balance of the forms of knowledge and studies on Don Bosco*, p.35). In the absence of a boy's desire to play, Don Bosco identified an alarm bell for his moral and spiritual state, as happened to the young Michael Magone: "all of a sudden that anxiety to amuse himself began to subside! He appeared rather thoughtful, nor did he take part in the amusements unless invited". It is significant that in Salesian environments the term 'recreation' is privileged, proper to re-creating, recovering vitality when one is tired from study, worries, work.

■ Free play and play freed

There are particular situations in life in which playing can appear, even for children, an 'extra' that is not appropriate and not taken for granted. This is the case of wars, migrations, violence, but also of disasters and pandemics, such as that of Covid-19 which has completely

upset the routine of life and, consequently, places, times, and ways of playing. The sudden and prolonged closure at home (*lockdown*) has determined for the children the loss of relational reference points (educators and teachers, friends, grandparents), spatial and temporal (school, ordinary rhythm) and the return to a strong dependence on parental figures. The state of alert and the gravity of the situation has often led them to a sort of suspension between dream and reality, the understanding of which has not always been favored by the use of virtual images employed to simplify what happened. The game is a valid tool for the symbolic elaboration of what happens in reality and has the ability to transform a traumatic experience into an experience of construction and consolidation. Free play, with simple objects - such as the Cat Meo Romeo and the Monkey Zizi or Munari's Cabin - with the technique of fiction, can help children to stage what is incomprehensible and to 'bring out' what causes fear. This is true for adults as well. **Carlo Meneghetti**, Lecturer at the IUSVE in Mestre and Verona, *ludo strategist* for training and toys designer, in his speech at the online seminar "Celebrating the right to play at the time of Covid19" held

on 29 May 2020 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjjc1i_AjE8), proposes exploring new educational opportunities for play to re-read the experience of Covid-19, rediscovering known games that are already in the house. For example, find the **Dixit** Cards, a storytelling game that puts imagination at the center and, starting from the images on one's cards, reconstruct the experience during the time of the pandemic. Even the **Taboo** game, where you make your teammates guess a word without using some 'forbidden' words, can be a stimulus to build narratives with what is not said. Games and *storytelling* constitute a valid educational interweaving: "They are all strategies that help us both to get involved and to activate a sort of exchange, sharing, working on decentralization, and observing the needs of those around us through the lens of the game."

A video published on You Tube is emblematic showing the reaction of passers-by to the 'Bell' game drawn on the sidewalk. Will they pass by undeterred or will they not be able to resist the irresistible call to walk around the squares, hopping, and returning to be children again for a moment? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZcvZSpaRrk>) At whatever age, playing can be an occasion for growth.



The prophecy of “walking together”

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Can Mornese be defined as a ‘synodal community’? ‘Synodality’, ‘synodal communities’ were not terms used in the nineteenth century. However, if synodality is a way of being and acting, promoting the participation of all in the common educational mission, then some elements of a synodal style can be found in the life of Mary Domenica and the first community of the FMA.

The term *synod* derives from the union of two Greek words: *syn* (with, together) and *odòs* (road, path), that is, a journey to be made together. The synodal path referring to our communities could be indicated and combined with another word that contains the same root, that is, *exodos* (cf. CESARATO Regina, *A Synodal Style Fruit of the Ecclesiology of Communion*, in *Consecration and Service* 1-2017, 7). It means to be an ‘outgoing’ community that makes an ‘exodus together’, sharing the richness of the charism of the Founders to propose significant apostolic works, build gratuitous humanizing relationships full of Gospel joy, and never self-referential. Therefore, it can be said that synodality involves a ‘going out’. Walking and reaching a goal requires the determination to ‘go out’. What does this mean for the Educating Communities? From what do we need to ‘go out’ of (= *exodus*) to undertake a ‘journey together’ (= *synodality*)?

Go out

Looking at the reality of the Communities, reflecting on the circulars of Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and on the Magisterium of Pope Francis, some elements can be highlighted: go out from individualism, from the idealization of communities, from consolidated mental schemes, from the mentality of *it has always been done like this* and *it is not for me to do*, from spiritual worldliness, from pessimism, from a comfortable life, from the frenzy of this time, etc. Following this ‘outgoing’ path, the communities are preparing and forming themselves for synodality. The Document *In Preparation for GC XXIV*, taking up the *Constitutions*, emphasizes that “creating a community with many faces, which lives and works together, is possible because it is ‘gathered by the Father, founded on the presence of the Risen

Christ and nourished by Him, Word and Bread’ (C 49)” (Circular 985 *In preparation for GC XXIV*, 21). The synodal style of the community of Mornese and of the Educating Communities, therefore, has a theological foundation: the community is gathered by the Father and is based on the presence of the Risen One. It is an expression of the spirituality of communion which has its foundation in the Trinity and is concretized in the communion between the sisters and the young people the Lord entrusts to the care of the communities.

For a missionary spirit

Synodality is linked to the missionary spirit. The FMA Institute and each community were born not to be an end in themselves, but to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. Both the FMA in Mornese and the Salesians in Valdocco were

born from a very intense community experience. The atmosphere of the foundation of the Institute is a dynamism of charity that brings together in communion simple, poor women with little culture. However, charity is a powerful force that pushes, animates, brings together such different people and helps them to overcome the inevitable conflicts and poverty at all levels. It makes them bold, far-sighted in proclaiming the Gospel to the peripheries of the world. It is beautiful to think that from the community of Mornese, small and lost in the hills of Alto Monferrato, albeit with limitations, hardships, and weaknesses, a Salesian evangelical richness continues to flow that reaches all the communities on the five continents, enriching them with ever new life. Some elements of the Mornese synodal style typical of the Preventive System are: the sacred



sense of the human person, joyful and family welcome, trust, proximity, hospitality, solidarity, gratuity, integration, recognition of the other for what she it is (Circular 985 *In preparation for GC XXIV*, 22). Educators, FMA, and lay people sharing the Salesian charism, are called to rediscover with more enthusiasm and responsibility the meaning of 'walking together' as Educating Communities, with young people, to give them reasons for hope, joy, and awaken in them the sense of a life given out of love, the sense of a missionary spirit, of acting in view of change and of a more just and fraternal society.

■ In synodality

The educating communities are challenged to give life to synodal-style processes that appeal to young people. This way of walking together can be a prophecy for the community itself and for the world. Feeling we are on a journey with them is much more than a 'preferential choice', than 'doing something for them', but making them protagonists of their growth and the transformation of the

society in which they live. Synodality becomes the way of being Educating Communities, of meeting each other, of expressing oneself, of listening to each other, of discerning, of sharing the joys and labors of the mission, of seeking the common good for the transformation of the world and of society according to God's plan.

Walking together is not always a straightforward and easy process. It involves efforts and a spirit of initiative: "Take courage, my good sisters, Jesus must be your whole strength. With Jesus burdens will become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are turned into sweetness" (Mother Mazzarello, L 22,21). To live in the 'synodal spirit' there is a need to assume a theological hermeneutic, to look at and interpret reality from God's perspective, and to rediscover the Christological foundation of Christian life. To do this, you need to change your mentality to make life be reborn: to die to yourself to let the other be born, to create communion, to make the mission fruitful. The style of 'walking together' in communities has a purpose: to live the prophecy of communion and the missionary spirit. Walking with young people

so they discover that they are loved, saved, and precious in the eyes of God. *Walking with young people* leads to discovering full joy and life in abundance promised by Jesus: "I have told you these things so that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11); "I came that they may have life and life in abundance" (Jn 10:10). This is living 'synodality', a way of being Church and in the Church.



The evolution of sounds: from a game tool to gaming

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Who among us has never played with a musical toy as a child, or imagined being a singer? The first memory I have is that of the *music box* placed on my cradle. There were animals hanging in the air that made a pleasant sound when they moved. And I tried to grasp them with my hands. I think it's an unconscious memory, but it's certainly the first one I have.

Music has always accompanied our lives and it is no coincidence that our mothers started playing with us, when we were still in our baby clothes, singing songs to us, or even when we were still in their womb, singing them from *outside*.

It can therefore be said that music certainly has a playful aspect in our growing up and becoming adults, from the first sound games to today's videogames.

■ Play and music when you are a child

We all had games in our childhood that made sounds: instruments, musical mats, singing dolls or talking robots, sound board games. It is wonderful to see the smile of a child when holding a toy that emits sounds, and is amazed. Recent research has shown that the musical experience we live at an early age can increase skills in non-musical activities,

such as communication skills and basic cognitive functions that are essential for performing non-musical tasks.

All parents play with their voice to stimulate the child's attention with nursery rhymes, using pauses and silences, using the loud and the soft, exploiting the high or low voice, adopting the full range of sound potential of their own voice by imitating sounds and animals, giving life to the emotions described in the text of a book or narrating the illustrations.

Using music as a game allows the child to stimulate the development of attention, concentration, memorization, physical and motor coordination, the ability to interact with other people. The musical activity thus manages to develop listening and



observation skills, strengthening the child's imaginative and creative skills. The world of children, therefore, must be inhabited by sounds and noises. In fact, rhythmic experiences allow you to optimize language skills and reading speed and are an indispensable prerequisite for learning to read and write.

In the eighties there was the *Simon* game, an electronic game invented by **Ralph Baer** that appeared as a disk with four large buttons in red, blue, green, and yellow. These buttons lit up in a random sequence and each button's lighting was also associated with the emission of a specific musical note. Once the sequence was finished, each player had to repeat it by pressing the buttons in the same order. If you had guessed right, a new sequence would have been proposed, the same as the previous one but with the addition of a new button and a new sound. Undoubtedly this game allowed experimenting with new intellectual abilities that would later become useful when grown up.

In fact, music can be a good practice which, if started in the family and developed continuously even in school or play environments, supports the growth of children with lasting effects. The musical habit allows the strengthening of the motivation to learn through play, which is the union of pleasure and fun.

■ Music as a tool for immersion in video games

Sound exploration is an activity that covers the entire arc of our life and today reaches its peak in the generation of young people through a unique device that is video games. Research suggests that the music contained in video games is more memorized by adolescents aged 12 to 16 than radio hits.

The products contained in the classic media used for example in radio and television, have a linear and already pre-established language. In the video game, on the other hand, the language is not linear, allowing the construction of a system of understanding and memorization that is extremely receptive by the player. Since there is an active participation of the player,

emotional mechanisms are set in motion in the brain, extremely complicated to describe in their structure, but extremely simple and real to see and recognize in the subjects.

In fact in the players, a **principle of immersion** is realized in which the players are so involved with the experience that the world around them is forgotten, estranging them from external noises and concentrating on those related to the actions of the video game and the musical carpet, which is present as a background. When it is necessary to run, fight, and escape, the music will be very fast and with very present drum sounds, in order to increase adrenaline and heartbeat. On the other hand, when the goal is reached, crossing a finish line or defeating the enemy, there will be triumphant music, full of blaring



trumpets. While in moments of calm, waiting or planning a strategy, there will be pianos and violins to build the sound background.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Hungarian psychologist who migrated to the United States, attributed a new meaning to the English term *flow* by inserting this type of detachment from reality that occurs in video games. If we analyze it in depth, this triumph of evasion from reality is given both by the images and by the sounds used, languages both used in the two most significant modalities for humans, which are kinetics (i.e. movement) and proxemics (i.e. nearness).

Isabella van Elferen, Professor of music at Kingstone University in London, analyzed in a recent research what happens in the player's mind in relation to the sounds contained in

video games. Music is able to produce similar emotional states while being experienced in different subjective ways from one subject to another, all having the same direction. Despite having different perceptions, all subjects come to experience the same emotions. This is due to an archaic form of decoding of sounds by all of us, whereby the sound of the drum transmits energy to us, while that of the piano gives us affection, and perhaps that of the violin sadness or melancholy.

The challenge today is to continue more and more in the discovery of sounds and their expressive possibilities in the game, awakening and activating musical motivations, attitudes, and behaviors, without settling into repetition or *mainstream* models.

Cinema and video-games

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Cinema and video games, two different and very similar mediums, with a marketing vision and an economic and communicative evolution that are similar or perhaps parallel. Indeed, the direction in which the film industry is pointing seems to be videogames. The reasons for this proximity can be interpreted according to two elements: digitization and usability. Both are linked to each other, since it was the digitization process it went through in the early 2000s that radically changed the usability of the two media, up to the convergence of the media in cultural dissemination.

These mediums can be used on more than one device (eBooks, RaiPlay platforms or podcasts of radio programs, available on the Web), and have favored the development of mass media communication, which has also radically changed advertising over time.

Surprisingly, for example, the social accounts of the *Fallout* video game shared a campaign to announce the arrival of a TV series inspired by the saga on Amazon Prime Video. *Fallout*, a video game saga set in a post-apocalyptic future between the 22nd and 23rd centuries, lands on the small screen and follows in the footsteps of *The Last of Us* and *Cyberpunk 2077*.

This similarity has given industries great scope to expand the market for their products. Think of the streaming platforms, such as *Netflix* for movies and the *Xbox Game Pass* for video games, which are achieving enormous success, so much so that it is thought that they will have such an evolution as to supplant the old distribution systems in the future. The similarities between the two mediums are also reflected in the production, for example, starting from the *budget* invested for their realization. It is clear that a film can have high costs due to the addition of the factors involved in production (*fees* of famous actors, movement of the *crew*, setting up *locations*, post-production,

The **videogame** is "a medium that is at the same time representation and action, reading practice and configurative practice, communication and event, mediation and performance" (Rune Klevjier, videogame researcher).

distribution work, and so on). For its part, the gaming industry is changing because a video game requires the work of hundreds of professionals and significant investments to become a quality product and stay on the market.

Evolution

Cinema and video game have characteristics in common in their development. In the early years of its life, cinema was aimed at a popular form of entertainment. The social and stylistic

transformation from the 'cinema of attractions' to 'narrative cinema' is therefore similar to the idea of a video game which from a simple pastime has become more complex and sophisticated. The era of the 'video game of attractions' ended in the late 90s, when the communication and narrative skills of the medium began to be experimented with. Many trace the origin of this process to the release of *Metal Gear Solid*, but it is true that such experiments were already underway with average positive results (the first *Final Fantasy* released in 1987 is an example). The *Metal Gear Saga* itself can be understood as an approach to cinematographic language, and at the same time **Hideo Kojima**, its author, was very skilled in progressing with videogame communication paths, becoming an artist in the sector.

Today it seems that this medium is heading towards a more authorial and artistic form: as evidenced by titles such as *Death Stranding*



(also by Kojima) or *The Last of Us* part I, which essentially aim at the creation of a product that can excite, communicate besides entertain. If on the one hand there is a real experimentation in this field, on the other hand there is, in increasing numbers, a natural propensity on the part of some video games to the cinematographic discourse, putting in the background the 'gameplay' which, like the editing for cinema is a distinctive feature of the video game. The videogame seems to be integrating its own characteristics (interactivity, control, identification) with the aesthetic, technical, and narrative structures of cinema. There is a real process of convergence and interchange between cinema and videogames. To say it with **McLuhan**, it is evident how the videogame has incorporated within itself the cinematographic language by reworking it for its own purposes and making it, in fact, a characteristic inherent to it, no longer necessary.

■ Communicativeness

And it is the iconic nature of communication that makes cinema and video games different. An example is the use of the camera. In the *Seventh Art*, in fact, there is a total privatization of the image according to the author-director, which cancels the arbitrariness of the image as it was and is for theater or sculpture, in which the spectator has the possibility to choose where to look. At the same time, it is the linking of the various shots to each other, that is the editing, which really affects the rhythm and allows for incident visual solutions and a strong narrative. For video games, however, the camera is at the player's direct disposal. Obviously, if on the one hand this helps the process of identification, on the other hand it sacrifices much of the author's expressiveness and therefore of the strength of the narrative. This is why the "Cut-scenes" were born in the video game, which allow in the key moments of the plot, to highlight the narrative turns and to sacrifice what is its most iconic component: interactivity. Because it is precisely the ability to know how to excite in playing with the player that has made and makes video games a powerful medium for telling stories and in some cases even an art form. It is the first real

opportunity for the user of a work to interact with it and change it: a possibility that most of the currents of Contemporary Art have sought, breaking a centuries-old tradition between those who create and those who observe.

If cinema falls into the video game category, it has the inherent revolutionary freedom to make the viewers authors, creators of a product that is not theirs: this is the path that the video game can take and here is the true revolution of Art.

So how will the cinematographic and videogame storytelling evolve? Cinema and videogames are destined to evolve, to profit from a reciprocal exchange, and to remain substantially distinct from each other... like two paradoxical lines that get closer and closer, each with its own ontological value, each with its own peculiar characteristics.

The **video game** is a relatively young product, with no more than fifty years of history. Yet it has experienced an unprecedented evolution, marked by a rate of growth directly proportional to technological development, which soon transformed it from an elitist experiment usable only on futuristic calculators, to mass entertainment enjoyable on today's relatively inexpensive consoles, which are designed to potentially have a place in every family's living room. The surveys of important economic research institutes periodically give us an account of unthinkable 'figures' until ten years ago. The turnover linked to videogames has reached considerable proportions, demonstrating how the videogame has always carved out a slice of a wider range of users over time. Yet if you think of the first videogames with which children of the seventies and eighties played in the game rooms, it is extremely difficult to understand how those 'luminous dots in motion' have reached such a diffusion that they have even gained the right to disseminate through the traditional media. It is evident that something has changed. In fact, as the videogame spreads, its language becomes more refined, inheriting the best characteristics of related media, it is loaded with aesthetic values and becomes more complex.

Life after the pandemic of Pope Francis

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The reflection that Pope Francis dedicated to the Covid-19 crisis is contained in the book *Life after the Pandemic*. The text collects the core of the Magisterium of Francis in eight texts, from 27 March to 22 April 2020 to "Suggest a direction, interpretations, and guidelines to rebuild a better world that could arise from this crisis of humanity and sow hope", thus writes Cardinal Michael in the preface Czerny, SJ.

■ Rebuild a better world...

Pope Francis says that it is necessary to prepare for change, to look to a post-Covid world and, in addition to action, it is necessary to rediscover prayer, so that the gaze returns to orient itself to hope. The path indicated in the book is multiple and can be read as a message addressed to humanity according to the typical, warm, and inclusive approach of Francis who considers people as one human family. The reflections are universal not so much because the virus is a global threat, but because the realization of the post-Covid world is the responsibility of every man and woman. Francis points out an opportunity: to dare to do good and do it better, and this is how he addresses each and every one with affection and compassion, both to the Heads of State and Governments, to act in favor of the common good, as well as to the so-called 'Invisible'



who, probably for the first time, are recognized as people, taken into consideration, greeted with respect.

The contents trace the coordinates of existence after the pandemic and question: what does Francis really want to tell us and why? Aware that you cannot allow the consequences of the pandemic, with its costs in terms of suffering, human lives, economy, prevent us from thinking that we should deepen the Pope's thought. We are aware that we cannot go back to life as before by starting again from where it was interrupted. In this perspective, the writings of Francis can become the gold thread that, summarized as "vision, commitment, action, with the support of prayer", brings to life the many questions each one carries within, personally and as a community, to help us to intercept and bring out the submerged ones of young people.

In this Easter season of renewal, let us commit ourselves to love and appreciate the magnificent gift of our common home and to care for one another.

■ ... taking new paths

The Covid-19 Pandemic is the beginning of a new era which calls for a new vision of oneself and of our lifestyle. We need to start making an impact with choices that generate new ways, above all relational, capable of taking care of each other and feeling we are all fragile, equal, precious.

And this, says Pope Francis, can be rediscovered on the basis of having experienced the absence of the Eucharist which has returned to be more available so that it becomes more a style of fraternity and charity.

The perspective that comes to light from the Pontiff's reflections seems to indicate that with the Pandemic there was the experience of interconnection between people, of determination, and solidarity, but

With the storm, the trick of those stereotypes with which we disguised our 'egos' always concerned about our own image fell away and, once again there is that (blessed) common belonging we cannot escape: belonging as brothers and sisters.

also the painful experience of vulnerability, of forced coexistence, of smart working, job loss, economic meltdowns. Every educational activity in presence has been interrupted, yet it seems that this has made it clear that it is possible to change, that a 'permanent conversion', resolute and supportive, is achievable, which allows us to face 'greater threats and with more lasting effects'

if we share a virus that infects us much more than Covid -19 is "the selfishness of particular interests", the "competition" that the coronavirus has proved even more "unsustainable". Faced with this evidence, the Pope encourages us to "remove inequalities, to heal the injustice that undermines humanity", to recognize ourselves as "members of one family, inhabitants of the one and only common home".

We can no longer return to living as if nothing had happened, post-Covid life cannot replicate the previous one, because it really isn't that way, the new era of solidarity must be inaugurated. Consequently, Francis exhorts us to experiment with new solutions, to take new paths by leveraging the courage that makes us innovative and bold to find answers to the



shortcomings that the pandemic has made evident, starting from fraternity, from universal rights, from respect for creation. These are the fundamental issues to be proposed to young people and to be lived with them in the awareness that no words can be explanatory as to the reason for the pandemic. It is urgent to narrate what happened in order to recognize it and take it as an evolutionary paradigm, in particular with regard to the theme of death which, now more than ever, needs to meet the

You have a culture, a methodology, but above all the wisdom that grows thanks to a particular yeast, the ability to feel the pain of the other as one's own.

says, is in prayer which is the way to be disciples and missionaries today, to be able to love in different circumstances with a different vision of the world and to redirect our gaze to hope.

hope of something beyond, to deal more with life. The difficult time lived, the future one, can be an opportunity to grow, and open up to an interior renewal. It requires a serious, constant commitment, implicitly asking that we live together. Its concrete fulfillment, Francis



On the way

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camilla

Dearest Friends,

I greet you with God's blessing during this *challenging* time of the Covid-19 Pandemic that makes us see beyond. We are in a scenario in which co-exist hope and suffering, loss and fear, care and death. We are distanced from our dear ones, living together, with uncertainty at all levels, faith and creativity, service and sacrifice. It is not easy to rethink a new relationship with others, sharing in the areas of digital communication, facing many 'protocols' at each moment. Life has changed!

Which steps to inaugurate this 'new normal'? The challenge of living this new scenario stimulated creativity, invited us to come out of ourselves, and to grow in solidarity, in caring for everyone and for Creation. It is a time that challenges us to give a new meaning to the generativity that GC XXIV proposes to us.

I ask myself what attitude does the Chapter theme assume as a new sign of the times?

I don't know if you agree with me but I think that since March (at least in Italy), from when the virus began to circulate, there is also a 'grace virus' that walks among us, *synodality*, gift of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis announced the theme of the ordinary Synod of 2022 on the theme: **"For a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission".**

Therefore, how to be a synodal Church, a synodal Institute? The synodal attitude builds communion in all the Educating Communities, favors participation that includes everyone, and stimulates us to be an outgoing Church and Institute with a strong missionary impulse.

I am happy that the Institute has already taken this journey into consideration in the preparation for the coming GC XXIV. It will be important to assume this synodal practice in every community where

with the young we question ourselves and we undertake unprecedented paths of the Spirit, with new experiences of mission. This practice is a 'symptomatic virus' because it needs to accomplish a change that is visible, credible, and consistent. It is said that the world needs to learn to live with Covid-19 and I think that we can also learn to live with new synodal relationships.

I leave some questions with you that I also ask myself. *What would Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello say in this time of (post) pandemic as we prepare for the General Chapter? How can we think of a synodal practice that leads us to conversion and to take on the newness of the Spirit in relationships and in the mission?*

We wish you a good journey towards GC XXIV. Until next time!

Words of Camilla



Salesian Marian Spirituality

Mary, Teacher of Proclamation

The word that Mary addresses to the servants and disciples of Jesus, *Do whatever he tells you* (Jn 2:5), reveals her depth in touching the mystery of Jesus. This word is almost a 'spiritual testament' given to her children. Mary communicated the essential, opening hearts to Jesus, who alone has 'the words of eternal life' (Jn 6:68).

Mary therefore leads us to follow Jesus, to obey the Word, and to consider Him as the absolute reference. *Do whatever he tells you* pronounced by Mary is an exhortation matured from personal experience.

The word enters the heart and life of the interlocutor only if it originated from the heart and life of the speaker. Mary, an expert in trusting God's Word, can now help others do the same. Her faith is contagious: the *fiat* lived in depth becomes the convincing *facite* (do) addressed to others.

For the Educating Communities, called to be a sign and expression of God's foreseeing love among young people, the image of Mary at Cana is particularly illuminating. Only a profound understanding with God and a wise understanding of the world and its needs can give efficacy to educational action. The *facite* addressed to young people is preceded by the confident prayer "*They have no more wine*" and always springs from the personal *fiat* in adherence to God.

Abandoned completely to God, engaged in constantly advancing on the 'pilgrimage of faith', Mary became slowly and deeply in tune with God. Through her living faith and 'keeping all things by pondering them in her heart' (Lk 2:19/51) she arrives at a strong understanding with Jesus, to know how to spontaneously discern His will, to feel the heart of God beating within her.

The Salesian educational mission is similar to that of Mary: to raise questions of meaning, to educate to the faith, to lead young people to Jesus, so that they can be attracted by him. However, it is necessary that each be attracted, happy, passionate, tuned to the heart of God. "*One cannot be warmed - says St. Ambrose - who is not close to the burning fire: and one cannot be warmth for another who does not have Christ for self.*" Mary arouses faith in others from her obedience in faith.



▲
Blessed Virgin Mary
Our Lady Help of Christians
Thailand

For reflection and prayer:

- How does Mary teach us to be signs of the Father's foreseeing love?
- Does our filial relationship with Mary renew the courage to educate to the faith in the different contexts in which we are called to evangelize?

“The **Preventive System** is light and strength for walking together cultivating *the synodal style*:
the sacred sense of the human person,
joyful and cordial welcome, gratuity,
proximity, co-responsibility, integration.”

(Mother Yvonne Reungoat, *Synodality as a way of life*. Circular n° 988)



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