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#generativity

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Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice
Via Ateneo Salesiano, 81
00139 Roma
tel. +39 06872741
fax +39 0687132306
www.rivistadma.org
editor@rivistadma.org
dmanews1@cgfma.org

Director responsible

Mariagrazia Curti

Editorial board

Maria Helena Moreira
Gabriella Imperatore

**Collaborators
on this issue**

Mara Borsi, Giulia Paola Di Nicola,
Attilio Danese, Pina Del Core,
Emilia Di Massimo, Mariano Diotto,
Gabriella Imperatore, Molinari Elisa,
Paolo Ondarza, Andrea Petralia,
Veronica Petrocchi, Eliane Petri,
Martha Séide,
Mary Terzo (translator).

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VICIS Srl

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www.vicis.it

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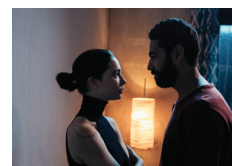
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Dossier



The end of a life cycle always leads to the decision to look at the journey made as a time of grace, opportunity, and awareness. At the heart of this year, there was the intention to generate life in the mission, in dialogue, in work, in silence, in writing, in communicating, in reaching out to others.

The invisible thread of generativity has pushed us to rethink the Salesian mission as a theological place. God is in everything. God always creates and re-creates and needs our hands and our desire. He continues to generate life in the FMA Institute by deploying the vital and divine energies present in the world, in the dreams of young people, in the boldness of the collaborators who embrace the Salesian charism, making the work of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello creative today.

Salesian generativity is a gift, a grace, a responsibility towards life which is always so threatened. Being generative makes us take a bold attitude in defending the right to life, freedom, peace, and justice, creation, work, education, health, mobility that knows no borders. It welcomes migrants to integrate them into society and to give priority to the person. This is an evangelical generativity that questions, makes us rethink personal and institutional decisions. The Gospel requires decisions consistent with the values communicated by Jesus.

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Editorial

Generative in the heart of the world

Generativity carries within itself the commitment to the sustainability of relationships with others, with nature, to live the ethics of integral ecology. The commitment to save the earth does not arise only from projects, but from daily commitments to change and care for our common home. *How do we*

personally and institutionally look after the assets that are threatened today? What choices do we make to ensure their sustainability? We are invited to pass from vigilance to vigilant love that embraces life in its fullness and defends it.

The steps taken in the FMA Institute manifest a new ecological face that challenges us, so that the harmony between desire and action is achieved through the ways of evangelical coherence.

The Magisterium of Pope Francis is marked by generativity. One of the generative ways is mercy. A mercy that touches the heart of humanity, which knows how to grasp the needs and suffering of others. Mercy leads to the centrality of life, love for the other. Gospel love becomes an expression of acceptance of diversity, overcoming social inequalities and all that threatens the other. To generate mercy, as Pope Francis says, is to generate 'concreteness'. It is touching what is lived, grasping the inexpressible, the hidden pain, the purity of children, the boldness of the young, the wisdom of the elderly, the beauty of art, the educative expressions of the daily life of the Educating Communities.

The year 2021 ends. The joy is reaped of a synodal journey created online in a network of gratitude to those who have made possible the elaboration of the DMA Magazine, a space for dialogue, reflection, creation, communication. A generative 'we' is the way to be pursued, creating synodal styles of communion and life for all, *as brothers and sisters*.

Maria Helena Moreira, FMA

mhmoreira@cgmfa.org

#generativity... educational challenge

DOSSIER



The contemporary world is in continual transformation, not only cultural, but also anthropological and it generates new existential paradigms and new languages. Every change needs an educational journey that involves everyone. There is thus a need to create an 'educational village', in which all people share the task of forming a network of open, human relationships (Pope Francis, Message for the Launch of the Global Education Pact, Rome 2020).

Gabriella Imperatore, FMA
gimperatore@cgfma.org

“
Education broadens horizons, transmits values and knowledge to build together a future of peace; to generate a dignified life for every person (Pope Francis).
”

Building together the educational village in friendship and love, in reciprocity and fraternity is, today, a challenge for humanity and an opportunity for everyone to have planetary citizenship.

We must be aware of a planetary becoming that scientific, technical, and economic developments generate. It has therefore become essential to illumine and conceive the events, their interactions, and their retroactions in which economic, political, social, national, ethnic, religious processes are mixed and interconnected that weave the present and future of humanity. There is an increasing need for education to understand fundamental and global problems,

to understand their complexity. Knowledge must interact and educate in a holistic and universal way. It is therefore vital to "educate for the planetary era". "It is necessary to propose new principles to address the different complexities that are met, in order to conceive the planetary era in its historical dimension, and therefore multidimensional, recognizing that in the current crisis a world-society is being formed that is still in gestation and that everyone must contribute to generate with attention to the formation and development of a *planetary humanism* (Edgar Morin, French philosopher and sociologist).

"The need is felt that this change is not intended only for some individuals who have influence in the world of culture and politics, but rather it is an attitude that affects everyone. Even small things can become substance and capacity, opportunities for transformation" (Carlo Petrini, *Future Earth. Dialogues with Pope Francis on Integral Ecology*. Giunti Editors, 2020).

It is necessary to promote educational processes that lead to openness, dialogue and fraternity in order to live in contemporaneity with daring and hope.

■ Educate to dialogue, to fraternity, and to reciprocity

"Regenerated humanism does not limit itself to recognizing human unity, but also connecting unity with human diversity. Humanism must consciously assume the great aspiration that runs through the entire history of humanity... it must realize the 'I' in the realization of the 'We'." (Edgar Morin, *Cambiamo strada. Le 15 lezioni del coronavirus*. Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2020).

The multicultural composition of today's societies, favored by globalization, therefore represents a great resource when the encounter between different cultures is lived as a source of reciprocal enrichment.

Education is committed to a central challenge for the present and the future. It must render coexistence possible between the diversity of cultural expressions and promote a dialogue that favors a peaceful society. This itinerary passes through some stages that lead to discovering multiculturalism in one's own context of life, to overcome prejudices by living and working together, to educate oneself through the other to globalization and planetary citizenship. Promoting the encounter between diverse people helps to understand each other reciprocally. The responsibility of the scholastic and academic world is great, called to develop the dimension of *intercultural dialogue* and *universal fraternity* in educational projects.

Education by its very nature requires openness to other cultures, without losing one's own identity, and acceptance of the other to avoid the risk of a culture closed in itself and limited. Thus, it is indispensable that the young people learn through scholastic and academic experiences, theoretical and practical instruments that allow for a greater knowledge of others and of themselves, of the values of one's own and other cultures, through an open and dynamic conversation that helps to understand differences, without generating conflicts, but rather, becoming occasions of reciprocal enrichment and harmony.

The Encyclical '*Fratelli Tutti. On fraternity and social friendship*' proposes universal fraternity which coincides with the goal of a true education that aims at building a new integral, inclusive, and transcendent humanism. For Pope Francis, education is the keystone of this new humanism, just as fraternity is what characterizes the human being who, by nature, is open to relationship and can reach its fullness only by giving itself to others and succeed to communicate with itself only in communication with others.

The confrontation arises from the need to *form oneself and to form a heart that is open* to build the human family, by now an inevitable challenge, and also to meet the *foreigners* present in every society.

■ Fraternity, gift and task

The concept of 'love' in education directly recalls that of 'gift' and 'reciprocity', dimensions that underpin education. It is a question of promoting in schools and universities, among students and teachers, among families, in the community, the two-way movement of love back and forth, which can be summarized in a twofold movement, from love received to love given, where reciprocity is not simply in its final outcome, as correspondence, but is a proactive action of the educator called to love first.

"Fraternity is not just a gift, it is also a task. It is necessary to choose it, cultivate it, promote it. In all our actions, even with small gestures and daily choices, we are faced with a crossroads; to build the culture of encounter or one of rejection, inclusion or marginalization of those who, with their diversity, irritate us and displease us. Here education here reveals all its transformative and generative potential. In fact, since it is a choice, fraternity cannot be imposed but only proposed to our freedom and responsibility. The aim of education is that of promoting responsible freedom. In order to build a culture of encounter there must be a true and proper pedagogy of

fraternity based on education to benevolence (to want the good for the other), to the acceptance of reality that is more than an idea and is measured with its diversity, to openness, and to dialogue. The appeal to be companions on the road, sharing the challenges of the journey in the confident certainty that to *educate is always an act of hope*, capable of breaking determinisms and fatalisms with which the egoism of the strong, the conformism of the weak, and the ideology of the utopian want to impose themselves as the only possible road. Making *Samaritan alliances* can then be the way to respond to Pope Francis's appeal to promote a humanizing culture" (Piera Ruffinatto, FMA. Dean of the Pontifical Faculty of Science of Education "Auxilium", Rome). The theme of education to gift and reciprocity, within the perspective of *Fratelli Tutti* means thinking about the relationship between fraternity in the strict sense and universal fraternity, between personal identity and openness to all. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the word *brother* is not there. Jesus' teaching is that it is necessary to become a neighbor. That is, it is necessary to begin to open

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What happens without consciously cultivated fraternity, without a political will of fraternity, translated into an education to fraternity, to dialogue, to the discovery of reciprocity, and mutual enrichment as values?
”

(FT 103)

"Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all!" (FT 8)



our eyes on the brother abandoned along the road, by which He means on every brother, because the 'rejected' is inclusive.

The universality of this fraternity is the only one capable of bringing out the identity of the inhabitants of the common planetary home, united in diversity and diverse in unity.



■ Educating on social networks

Education is a question of relationship, it is a "thing of the heart" (St. John Bosco, Founder of the Congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco) and the community of Valdocco is the first laboratory and educational environment to get in tune with young people, to find ways and places to meet and accompany them.

The XXIII General Chapter urged the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) to look at the digital communication ecosystem as the environment in which life grows on the foundation of evangelical and charismatic values.

The FMA are called to acquire a deeper "awareness of communication as a mission... to enter the digital world not only as users, but as people looking for meaning and as promoters of the new culture (FMA Institute, *Broaden Your Vision! With the Young, Missionaries of Hope and Joy*, Acts of GC XXIII, Rome 2014, n 47).

“

To communicate is to educate, to educate is to communicate (Don Bosco).

”

Forming ourselves and forming in the digital age is fundamental. On the Web we talk about ourselves, life and reality are told, for this reason

it is necessary to develop communication skills to respond to the needs of the contemporary context. The FMA is called to live in a continuous exercise of evangelical discernment to recognize the passage of God along the paths that humanity travels, marked by rapid changes in all fields, to promote networks of solidarity, justice, inclusion.

The Digital culture offers great and efficient communication potential. Young people live naturally on the social networks, making it their usual courtyard for meeting and sharing, friendship and aggregation between peers. The virtual is



The Digital Age is a new era in the history of humanity. Everything is changing, we are all connected always and everywhere and it is good to understand how much it is transforming.

- How to discern and take a stand in this world of accelerated change?
- In the intercommunicating context, which lifelong learning processes to undertake, which contents to promote and which attitudes to arouse?
- How can we look at the new times to form women and men who give themselves to others, where they are called to serve?
- In the contemporary scenario that closely challenges the FMA Institute, in the responsibility of formative accompaniment?
- In the digital environment, what helps to grow in humanity and in mutual understanding?

“

In the digital world there can be no proclamation of a message without a consistent witness on the part of the one proclaiming (Pope Benedict XVI).

”



a challenge that does not exhaust the profound question of meaning, especially for young people, but it is the indispensable place to reach and involve them.

The educational commitment of being with young people in the heart of contemporaneity requires channeling positively the multiplicity of channels and devices, opportunities and potential that the digital revolution offers. Living in the digital communication ecosystem requires daring and skills to give quality to life inside and outside the Internet, so that it becomes "a place rich in humanity, not a network of wires but of human people."

The Net is not a parallel world; it is part of everyday reality, where it is possible to meet even the most distant on a daily basis. The socio-relational dimension is also expressed on the Net, which has become a place inhabited by millions of people who, going beyond

their own borders, meet, express their individuality, and weave planetary interrelationships. Now is the time for evangelical discernment to ask questions of meaning and to grasp the anthropological and ethical consequences of the FMA presence in digital environments. The accompaniment of young people in formation requires a change of mentality, a willingness to unlearn in order to learn with the generation of digital natives, so that a clear and solid identity can mature. The appeal is made to the FMA and to all those who have a responsibility in the mission of accompanying young people to fulfill God's plan for them.

In the digital scenario it is essential to create content of value and truth. The conversation should be proposed on values that involve everyone, so that it can help answer existential and universal questions.

- What is the FMA Institute called to communicate to ensure reliability of the charismatic vision and mission?
- Are we capable of communicating the face of a Church that is 'home' for everyone?
- Are we capable today of walking as Jesus walked with those of Emmaus, warming the heart, making them find the Lord?
- Are we capable of becoming companions up to the encounter with Christ?

■ An invitation to hope

The unprecedented time we are living is an "invitation to hope, which speaks to us of a reality rooted in the depths of the human being. It speaks to us of a thirst, of an aspiration, of a yearning for fullness, of measuring oneself against what fills the heart and elevates the spirit towards truth, goodness, and beauty" (Pope Francis, Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. On fraternity and social friendship, Brescia Editrice Morcelliana Schol  2020, p. 52).

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are called to walk in hope in order to creatively and boldly carry out the new educational processes in the digital world, which is now the daily life of existence.

On the horizon of God, in the heart of contemporaneity, what communication challenges and impacts on formation still need to be redefined?

Do not be afraid to become citizens of the digital environment.

The Church needs to be concerned for, and present in the world of communication, in order to dialogue with people today and to help them encounter Christ. She needs to be a Church (an Institute) at the side of others, capable of accompanying everyone along the way. The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God. Let our communication be a balm which relieves pain and a fine wine which gladdens hearts. May the light we bring to others come from our being loving and merciful 'neighbors' for those wounded and left on the side of the road.

Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Communications Day (2014). *Communication at the service of an authentic culture of encounter*, Vatican City.



The FMA Institute has embarked on a path of sapiential reflection on the new existential context, offering clear principles, charismatic and operational institutional criteria to "be communities that generate life in the heart of contemporaneity" (FMA Institute, In preparation for the XXIV General Chapter, Circular n. 985, Rome 2019. "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5). Communities that generate life in the heart of contemporaneity).

The **Guidelines on the presence of the FMA in the Social Networks** are a Document proper to the FMA Institute and of great importance for every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, for the life of consecrated women and educators in a time largely marked by digital communication. The FMA Institute, aware of the profound relationship between Communication and Education, has taken on the commitment of Education as a prophetic force of the Preventive System today (Cf. *Preface*, Mother Yvonne Reungoat).

The *Guidelines* are one of the ways of implementing the FMA's Institutional Communication Plan and are intended for the formation of all the FMA, the youngest and the less young, those who have been frequenting the Social Networks for some time and those who live there to be with young people; those who harbor distrust of a still

little known reality and those who risk entering it without sufficient knowledge to make them educational spaces.

The intent of the *Guidelines regarding FMA presence on the Social Networks*:

- form to the responsibility of living in digital environments and Social Networks not only personally, but also by institutional subjects at the service of the Salesian mission;
- encourage a mentality of change and knowledge of the "norms and dynamisms of digital environments";
- educate digital citizenship to be creative and responsible interlocutors and actors, with Don Bosco's intuition to form "good Christians and honest citizens".

The Document is divided into five chapters:

1. The contemporary communication scenario
2. The root of Salesian charismatic communication
3. The challenges and impacts of communication on Formation
4. The mission of the FMA Institute in digital environments
5. Digital citizenship: rights and duties of the FMA

(Cf. FMA Institute, Sectors for Social Communication and Formation, *Guidelines on the presence of the FMA on Social Networks*, VICIS Srl, Rome 2021)



From generation to generation

Mara Borsi, FMA

mara@fmails.it

Education is not a technique, but rather generative fruitfulness. There is a bridge that must be established between the generations. And it is this bridge that is the context of an education understood as the passage of a living heritage. The legacy is always accompanied by a thrill, because it links the past and the future.

Generating is an experience that has to do with otherness, because we live in a context in which the other is fine from a distance, is fine if I can disconnect, is fine if I can assimilate him/her, pull from my side. It is okay if I can drive him/her away as an enemy who gives me back my identity, of a we against them.

In contemporaneity, the relationship with otherness is a very complex relationship. Countless followers, friends, relationships are desired, but when they become demanding, when they ask too much, they become annoying, then you give in, you disappear, you disconnect.

In generating, the other is always there. There

is the other who comes first and there is the other who is in front and who comes after, who will come later. Not only you and I of the present, of the moment, but also those of the generations to come.

■ Generation and freedom

Yoel Ben-Assaig questions the most common definition of the idea of freedom, that is, my freedom ends where yours begins. Ben-Assaig says: "in the age of sad passions, my freedom

is not what ends where that of the other begins, but rather begins with the liberation of the other, through the other."

In this sense, individual freedom does not exist and there are only acts of liberation that connect with others. Then my freedom does not exist if there is not another in two senses. The first because it is the other who frees me from myself and without this tiring, frustrating, demanding, and painful relationship many times, I cannot be free because I am a slave to everything around me, a slave to my limitations, my traumas, my compulsion to repeat, so it is the other who helps me to come out of the prison of myself. And then I cannot be free if the others around me are slaves, just as I cannot be happy if the others around me are suffering. Therefore my freedom has the freedom of the other as a condition, not as its limit. It is the other who expands my space, does not restrict it, does not make it suffocating.

■ The alternative to stagnation

Generativity is the only alternative model to stagnation which is the repetitive sterility that characterizes contemporary decadent Western society. The term stagnation comes from Erik Erikson's psychological theory, which referred it to the development of the individual personality, but which can be applied to the reading of the social world. Erikson said that when you are young, when you are a teenager you take everything, you are hungry for experience, intensity. Then when you become an adult you begin to give. Or rather, there are two alternatives. Either remain in a state of perennial consumption of the reality that we have around us, and this is the

state of stagnation in which we simply reproduce a system. Or we become generative, that is, we get involved, we decide to give beyond. After having taken and continued to take, it is decided that it is time to give and a virtuous circuit is inserted without which society is stagnant.

St. Augustine also indicated that human society tightens in unity by giving and receiving reciprocally. If this vital circuit of giving and receiving is broken, focusing only on consuming and taking, one cannot hope to build a social, united world, a world in which to be together. So generativity is the ability to stake one's freedom beyond oneself, thus becoming capable of generating. There is no third way between generativity and stagnation. Generativity is an anthropological paradigm, it is a matrix that can set very diverse processes in motion in different fields.

■ Transitivity and deponency

The two modes of generative action, according to Chiara Giaccardi and Mauro Magatti, are transitivity and deponency.

Transitivity is an opening backwards and forwards. It enables us to receive the heritage of those who preceded us, to receive the other who makes us fruitful in some way. However, it is also an opening forward that translates precisely into this passing of tradition, life, experience through us so that it can go beyond us. And this transitivity is also an inter-temporality which is what was interrupted in the 'time out of joint' of contemporaneity, where only an instant disconnected from the other is valid. Transitivity is receiving and giving, but it is also before and after, past and future, inheritance and promise, fidelity and hope. They are all constellations of meaning that have to do with this dimension in which we are protagonists, but in which, so to say, everything comes first and everything also goes beyond ourselves.

In contemporaneity, on the other hand, we are used to intransitive forms of action in which something is done to return a profit, in which we do not think about who will come next. We

exploit a situation to maximize the advantage in the instant. I don't care who comes next and what world they find themselves living in. Here transitivity is this awareness of inter-temporality which is the condition of responsibility, which is the condition of gratitude, and which is the condition of hope.

The second mode of action of generativity is *deponency* which is the only alternative to power. Deponency is not impotence, it is not resignation, but it is awareness that our every action is mixed with activity and passivity. To ignore the inherent passivity of our every action is to fall into the delusion of omnipotence that makes us blind. Not knowing the active dimension leads to resignation, cynicism. In the end everything is fine, nothing can be done, we might as well maximize. Deponency is the only antidote to the model of power and is a positive alternative model because it avoids the temptation of resignation and impotence.

■ The four verbs of generativity

Desiring, giving birth, caring, and letting go are the four verbs of generativity. We can apply these verbs to different spheres: to the sphere of family life, to the sphere of the business world, to the sphere of politics, of education. These are four anthropologically constitutive movements, which characterize human beings, because the human being is the only one who desires.

The person does not have an instinct that says what to do, however, there is desire that helps to continually transcend contingent conditions, the distress of the given, and that makes us want, that makes us tend towards something greater, and that is what keeps in movement.

Bringing into the world is a necessary act because if one continues to desire without ever translating this desire into making something exist, in betting one's life on something, one remains abstract, in the world of clouds. Bringing into the world is always an exciting act because it makes something exist that was not there before and this is also a sign of power, of the ability to make something exist, to realize, to create something.

But once again, it is not enough because if you do not take care of what has been brought into the world, this thing dies, goes out or becomes stunted, it becomes something else. And **taking care** and making it last is the most tiring movement that has to do with time, and not only with the instant, but it is also the movement of reciprocity.

It is important to be aware that by taking care of the other, of something else, we take care of ourselves. In the reciprocity of this movement, which is a movement of contact, of contiguity, of familiarity, of habit, we cultivate our humanity.

The last verb is fundamental and is to **let go**. It is a tiring movement for everyone because when something has been made to exist, we are sorry to let it go because we are afraid that it will then become something else, that others will not know how to make it last, that without us this thing will

die. And this is true for mothers who do not let their children go, and thus never really bring them into the world, but it is also true for politicians who do not give their place to someone else, to any person who has a leading role, who performs a command function, and who thinks that he/she cannot leave because they are there for the good of others.

Perhaps staying there and staying there with another role, supporting a young person, teaching what has been learned, passing the baton. Thus, this is the movement without which even the one who is born is destined to die.

From the educational point of view, the reflection is serious, and even before that, the anthropological foundation is questioned. *What kind of educators do we want to be? How do the verbs of generativity challenge us on a personal and community level?*

THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL ON THE TRACKS

"Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it"
(Confucius).

That morning our school wagon looked like a circus, and the teacher Ernesto, the director. The week before, the teacher had offered us an alternative science lesson. He had given us a task. The little ones had to carry a particular flower and leaf. He wanted them to try to be original, not to collect the specimens they saw every day. He had asked us middle ones to bring a pet. "*Alive, students, let's not be savages*" he had specified. The older ones would have to choose a fruit or a vegetable.

I was thrilled. Animals fascinated me very much. But I only managed to catch a small monster from the pond. "*Gentlemen, ladies please*" teacher Ernesto intervened. There are many ways to see this animal. Like a being without legs, deformed, colorless or . . . like a promise. "*A promise?*" Valeria asked. "*Exactly, a promise. When I look at Antonio I don't just see a child always with torn pants and bleary eyes.*" The wagon was filled with laughter. An eraser flew and hit the respondent's head.

"I see a future farmer or an expert horseman, perhaps even

a judicious foreman, a good dancer, an affectionate father" said the teacher Ernesto with conviction.

He walked over to another desk, and put his hands on it. "*And when I look at Maria, I see an elegant girl, a perfect gardener and cook, like her mother and grandmother.*"

"So Ikal, when I look at your animal, I don't see the monster it is. I see the Triton that it will become."

I shrugged as my companions continued to tease me. To me the word Triton meant nothing. Only many years later did I discover that it is a very ancient animal, an American comic book character, and even, the Greek god of the sea depths.

The teacher then asked us to get in line to go to the woods. Once there, we would free the animals and finish the lesson. Only two of us did not immediately obey the teacher.

"*Valeria?*"

Standing, my friend stared at the teacher. "*Valeria what is the matter?*"

With great seriousness she managed to ask: "*And when you look at me, teacher, what do you see? What will I become?*"

He closed his eyes for a few seconds.

"You, Valeria, will be whoever you want to be. Whoever."

(Ángeles Doñate, *La scuola sui binari*, Feltrinelli 2020)

Generators of 'family'

Giulia Paola Di Nicola - Attilio Danese
danesedinicola@prospettivapersona.it

In the tragedy of the pandemic, the symbols of a Christian and Catholic culture have returned to the fore even in a society struggling with a long process of secularization of consciences.

Everyone can see the decline in the number of practicing Catholics who once filled the churches, and not only due to the consequences of the Coronavirus. The process of secularization began some time ago and concerns all the Churches, although this occurs to varying degrees in Catholic (less), Protestant, and Orthodox countries. In fact, the downward curve of practice and trust in priests and in the Church is more evident in the western countries of Northern Europe. In Scandinavia,

the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, the frequency is less than 10%; a little slower in France, Germany, Ireland. In Italy, the 'practitioners' have dropped from 33% to 27% in ten years, and among young people (18-29 years) they are only 14%. It can be argued that there is compensation for the fact that practitioners are more fruitful than non-believers and that 52% of immigrants (from Latin America, South Africa, the Philippines) claim to be Christian.

There are many reasons for this crisis. Looking at families, certainly the multiplied needs of contemporary life are heavy and diminish the time available for Mass, meditation, prayer. Contemporary cultural models require greater hygiene in the home, care of the body and clothing, telematic skills, almost continuous online updating, the ability to perform office tasks previously reserved for those in charge, such as filling in forms for the children's school, for taxes, and for the various tasks of the bureaucracy. We no longer live in those villages with the Church at the center, where the faith of the parents and the absence of other stimuli for socialization made the Mass the center of unity for outside the family interaction.

Today the rites end up appearing boring, ineffective, anonymous. While 'outside' there is a world to explore with friends and with whom to share experiences, impressions, comments. In the Church we meet strangers who speak of love and perhaps do not greet or jostle on the communion line, people who will see each other again on the following Sunday and a parish priest who is in a hurry to reach the additional parish that was entrusted to him in the absence of priests. Not to mention the anonymous coin poured into a container, hiding from the eyes of the neighbors and wondering how and what it will be spent on.

Today, when it is difficult to build in the family

***"Believers need to find spaces to dialogue and act together for the common good and the promotion of the poorest"* (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, n 282).**

***"Seeking God with a sincere heart helps us to recognize one another as traveling companions, truly brothers and sisters"* (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, n 274).**

a friendly, trustful, free atmosphere, we cannot expect that it is enough to gather for each one to respond, to welcome others and expose oneself. This needs rooted attitudes and strong motivations to go against the current in contemporary society. We also assist at closures of places of worship, at parish mergers, at the new experimentation of 'parishes' in the workplace, at lay people who assume new tasks. *But is this enough?*

If we attribute the development of secularization to relativism, linking it to the laceration of doctrinal compactness and consumerism, we think about strengthening the faith by defending the doctrine of the Church. If, on the contrary, close to Pope Francis, "the signs of the times" are gathered, then new ways of communicating are studied to interpret the Gospel by listening to the needs of the new generations, to use digital platforms and social networks, to manage Dicasteries, to enhance the more relational and community aspects of ecclesial life, to recover the alliance between women and the Church. Doubtlessly, women have been traditionally, the soul and strength of Catholicism, educating children to the faith, accompanying them to Mass and to Catechism. *Perhaps doing this while the husbands, as I. Silone ironically notes, satisfy the mandate by sending their wives to Church, while they remained chatting in the churchyard or drinking and playing in the tavern.*

Secularization, feminism, the 'revolution' of 1968, geographic and work mobility, achievements of science and of technology have changed everything. Women manage to reach top positions in civil institutions, while in the Church they are often faced with a male hierarchy that holds rigidly to the organizational and structural power of the institution and the spiritual one, with leadership roles for the male gender and for the female gender. To all this is added the explosion of sexual, economic, and political scandals, which



have exposed a doctrinal preaching that is often inconsistent with behavior. Speeches, messages, and homilies are carefully examined. There is growing distrust, diffidence, suspicion towards not a few of the representatives of the Church who explain the Word, formulate high moral rules and judgements, and then are revealed as 'sinners'.

Yet it cannot be said that declared atheism increases and that God, expelled from public places and narratives, died in the silent cry of souls. Families have needs that often do not find satisfaction in church, with people who, despite sharing the same creed and praying with the same words, are not perceived as 'close'. Anonymity and loneliness, even in the din of virtual squares, feed the thirst for meaningful communications, including physical proximity, especially in times of the coronavirus. The rapid and unexpected changes in science and technology,

which shake traditional culture, religious or otherwise, confuse, but the testimonies of life believed to be credible remain attractive. Faith is hardly mentioned in public places, on social media. The deepest questions, which are the universal ones of the *why* and *for whom* of one's existence remain stifled. The sharing of the faith passes through those face to face communications in which coherence, the affective dimension, solidarity are based on reciprocal and credible exchanges. Deep human relationships, the sharing the way of feeling and living faith and souls, generate communion and love.

The places that foster friendship are rarely parishes and large gatherings that kindle short-lived enthusiasm and fires. P.G. Gawronski wrote: "Life

cannot be kept on the sidelines of the Church, only commented on, judged, or forgiven by the clergy. Christians need to explore, reflect, and talk to each other about their being Christians." It is easier to establish meaningful relationships 'between two or more', face to face, when the relational climate is considered worthy of opening up to the other in those informal places where people of various beliefs meet. Perhaps we do not speak of God and distrust the etiquette of faith, but we share the frailties and help each other if necessary. Only then do doubts, insecurities, confidences relating to one's life paths, including experiences of faith, come to the surface

"The Church is a home with open doors, because she is a mother"... a Church that serves, that leaves home in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation" (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, n 276).

and prevail over certainties. The challenges of the contemporary world require people capable of generating meaningful relationships, face to face, in all environments and in small groups in which it is possible to verify the consistency, the excellence of individuals, the credibility of the narratives. Without relationships, without feeling within oneself the appeal that comes from friendly voices willing to share life experiences, there is no warm current (to quote I. Mancini) which is the soul of fraternity and the presupposition of Christian communion.



Educate to 'generativity'... for a formation open to change

Pina Del Core, FMA
pina.delcore@gmail.com

In the current era of transition characterized by complexity and uncertainty, by future scenarios marked by change both in people, lifestyles, and value systems, and in the logic and paradigms that guide culture and political choices, is there an alternative possibility of dealing with such unstoppable processes that have also affected consecrated life and its formative paths?

Many find an answer to the question in the concept of *generativity* that in recent years has aroused considerable interest in all fields of knowledge. Perhaps this is because the term is often used as a synonym for creativity, flexibility, innovation, generation of the 'new' in a world that is constantly changing.

The term *generativity*, which has now become very common, has become increasingly widespread in the human sciences: *generative thinking*, *generative learning*, *generative communities*, *generative leadership*, *generative welfare*, etc. These are just a few ways of talking about generativity.

In times of crisis and educational emergency, *generativity* can become a paradigm, a new way of thinking about the human sciences, in particular pedagogy (DARIO Nadia 2014). It is an approach to education and formation that is not 'new', but rather connatural to it. Looking at formation in *generative* terms means first of all seeing with new eyes the reality that is born and reborn at every turn of existence and of history. It means fulfilling the task of making people capable of living in an open and flexible way, ethically and socially sustainable, oriented towards the future, able to plan their future by getting out of the narrow alleys of individualism or presentism and above all able to take care of life and others.

■ The need to educate to generativity

In the contemporary context, *educating to generativity* is a question and a need. However, we wonder if this is still possible in the complexity of our societies dominated by individualism, by the search for personal well-being, by narcissistic self-referencing rather than by the aptitude for giving and solidarity in personal and social relationships, in politics as well as in the economy.

Educating and forming to generativity can be a response to the dominance of technological and nihilist capitalism, now so pervasive on the cultural, social, political, economic, and even on the level of relationships, from institutional to interpersonal ones,

in private life as in life public, in work as well as in the vast field of formation and education. *How can we then use the great generative potential present in science, technology, politics, and economics, in social organizations, especially in educational institutions, and in all those spaces of culture that have the task of elaborating the future, including the internet and new media?* The generative power potentially present in these areas of the human and its development can and must re-emerge. However, it is necessary to create the conditions, identify, and implement *ad hoc* formation courses that allow people and communities to promote those attitudes and skills that are indispensable for generating long-term learning, actions, and planning, which in turn form flexible subjects, capable of adaptation and care, and above all, willing to change.

■ Educating and generating: the generative force of the educational relationship

There is a very close link between *educating* and *generating*. What, in fact, is the *educational relationship*, if not a *generative act* in which a profound link is established between motherhood/ paternity ('beyond' the biological one) and the experience of being children.

Generativity and *offspring* are intertwined to the point of freeing the generative capacity of the person precisely in the act of recognizing with gratitude that he/she has been generated and receiving/accepting the condition of offspring.

A first important step in educating to generativity therefore consists in recognizing that you have been recipients of a gift. Having been generated to life is an indispensable premise for developing the ability to give and to generate others for life. This is evident in the *parental relationship*, a 'hospitable space' for taking care of the other, a place for learning about 'responsible care' and therefore of adult and mature generativity. The *educational relationship* by analogy realizes the symbolic dimension of generating, taking charge of the growth of the other. For this reason, attention must be shifted from a subject projected onto the self, who considers self the center of the world, to a subject that is part of

it (belonging). We do not build ourselves alone, rather we are formed by others, by reality, by history, by culture, and by education. In this way, the thrust towards the future can be recovered, learning to anticipate and prefigure it, opening up to new possibilities of maturation beyond the limit of time, placing oneself in a world and in a network of relationships that are in turn generative, which activate life processes through subsequent generations.

The centrality of the educational relationship, as a privileged place for generative relationships, is the cornerstone on which to base education and formation. It is an ethical task of great responsibility, a precise moral task that pushes educators to 'humanize the other' by making them autonomous, free, and aware, capable of facing life and its unforeseen situations by giving meaning to their actions.

Who will be able to promote generative relationships, a privileged space for the development of generativity? The generative attitude present in people called to carry out the service of authority, as in a synodal process, gives rise in those entrusted to them behaviors and attitudes of openness to comparison with others and with reality, the ability to collaborate and share decisions and actions in view of common goals to be achieved in the light of a clear vision of life. And this without exercising a role of authority that imposes its own vision on others but offering itself as a guide, orienting and motivating towards shared goals that are consistent with the values deriving from the common mission.

■ The urgency of a generative leadership

There can be no authority other than generative, especially in this time and in the Church of

today. If over the centuries, particularly in some cultural contexts, the exercise of authority has sometimes been transformed into an exercise of power, control, and/or command, with the unfortunate consequence of experiences of abuses of authority. Evangelical logic and the very concept of *authority* (*auctoritas* from the verb *augere* means *to grow and make grow*) question every form of functional logic or power, especially in those who are called to coordinate, animate, and serve, to take care, and generate processes of growth and innovation in people and communities.

In complex contexts, all the ineffectiveness of an *authoritarian leadership* that is inadequate to the dynamics and cultural and relational needs emerging from people and organizations, corporate, ecclesial or religious, has been shown. And it is no longer conceivable precisely following the crisis of authority at every level, generated by a culture that would like to eliminate any form of authority in the name of a misunderstood freedom and a logical ideal of equality and indistinctness of roles and tasks.

A *generative authority* is capable of guiding, motivating, and inspiring, encouraging, trusting, and approaching people with great respect. But above all, it knows how to take care of the interests and growth needs both on a personal and vocational/professional level of each individual. By adopting a *generative leadership* model, it is possible to:

- build a collaborative environment where there is sharing of responsibilities and tasks in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect with the strength of a cohesion that comes from the experience of belonging;
- promote the evolution of positive interactive behaviors by creating conditions for the autonomy of people and contexts capable of fostering generative interconnections and reciprocal sharing;
- channel the commitment and energies of collaborators towards unitary and shared objectives, urging the creation of scenarios full of meaning and therefore motivating;
- help people to develop the ability to adapt to change, as well as those of intuition, which

allow us to be ready in the present for the future. Anticipating the future in fact, allows the reorganization of energy for growth, giving rise to attitudes to change.

Proposing *generative leadership* is a crucial cultural and educational challenge today. And the moment is propitious for the *relational anthropology* that is at the basis of the Salesian educational charism to be concretized, against a radically individualistic anthropology that is there for all to see. In fact, it is in the unique interweaving of our relationships, those that are given to us and those that we know how to nourish over time that our unique and unrepeatable individuality takes shape and grows.

Here are some ***steps or formation courses*** to develop and promote generativity:

1. *Put 'we' before 'I' more firmly*, to get out of individualism and open up to a dimension of solidarity in the belief that personal well-being passes through the realization of the well-being of the community and not vice versa.
2. *To give back to the community a key role of motor and guide of a new rebirth*, so that by offering a common framework of meaning, it will know how to guide and direct the meanings of educational and pastoral action in relation to others, in sharing and co-responsibility, being all interdependent as people, as an environment, and as an educational institution present and operating in an area.
3. *Rediscover the ability to grasp the resources present in people and the environment*, enhancing them and betting on them, also on the 'residual' resources or those not yet fully expressed. Believing in the regeneration of dormant or inhibited skills and creativity, creates 'space' and desire for new daughters and sons.



Allied citizenship for a sustainable future

Sr Martha Séide, FMA

mseide@yahoo.org

In the context of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, against the background of the Global Educational Pact launched by Pope Francis, in continuity with the Encyclicals on the common home and universal fraternity, the citizen alliance is highlighted as an indispensable condition for a sustainable future, investing in education.

■ In the heart of the interconnected world

"There are no passengers on the 'Land Boat'. We are all members of the same crew." This phrase by sociologist *Marshall McLuhan* coincides perfectly with the expression "*We are all in the same boat*", with which Pope Francis describes the accelerated exploitation of the planet and the worrying situation worldwide at the time of the pandemic. The crisis generated by Covid-19 has highlighted the weaknesses of societies, the fragility and limitations of the current development model with a whole series of consequences, often harmful, that mark every area of existence. In this interconnected world if a planetary catastrophe is to be avoided, it is urgent to change course. It is necessary to rethink lifestyles, the way of being in the world, the relationship with the earth's ecosystems, and with other human beings. The cry of the earth calls to make a covenant, to embrace fraternity and solidarity as new strategies for building a sustainable future.

■ Citizens allied for change

The urgency of change for a sustainable future is not a recent fact, but it was accepted unanimously and decisively in 2015 when the governments of 193 member countries of the United Nations signed "*The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" (SDG) which includes 17 objectives and 169 milestones. The preamble reads: "We are determined to mobilize the means necessary to implement this Agenda through a *Global Collaboration* for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of enhanced global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all parties involved, and all people." This statement suggests the depth

of the global commitment. In the same year, with the publication of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis renews his call to join forces for change. "The urgent challenge of protecting our common home includes the concern to unite the whole human family in the search for a sustainable and integral development, since we know that things can change" (LS 13). This implies a path of self-awareness to be personally involved and a new universal solidarity to collaborate, each according to their talents and resources. In fact, the awareness that the future of humanity and our planet is in our hands and in the hands of the new generations makes us responsible for the commitment to pass the baton to future generations by acting in the name of sustainability (Cf. OSS 53).

■ In the sign of sustainability

Sustainability is a multidimensional, dynamic, and adaptable concept to a plurality of areas: environmental, socio-cultural, economic, legal, and political. The term dates back to the report by the Norwegian *Gro Harlem Brundtland*, published in 1987, entitled "*Our common future*". According to this Report, sustainable development "allows the present generation to satisfy their own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own." This definition allows us to glimpse the ethical-social dimension, guided by the principle



of intra-generational equity (equal access to resources for all citizens) and intergenerational (same opportunities for present, past, and future generations). Thus sustainability must be understood in a holistic way so that the balance between economic development, social progress, and environmental protection can lead to an improvement in the quality of life for all while keeping the carrying capacity of the ecosystems that support us within natural limits. In this sense, ensuring the sustainability of development implies an active participation of citizens and a greater awareness and responsibility on the part of the entire community. For this purpose, *ad hoc* formation is essential because investing in education means investing in the future.

■ Education is the way to invest in the future

To build a more sustainable future, according to the SDGs, the new generations need knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that empower them and transform them into authentic agents of change towards sustainability. To this end, Education for Sustainable Development is essential for acquiring these skills. As stated in Goal 4: "By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development through, among others, education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and the enhancement of cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development" (SDG 4.7). It must be recognized that the pandemic has also had a negative impact on education and has slowed down the process towards achieving this goal. This is why it is urgent to rethink education oriented towards sustainability as a vision.

Educate to sustainable development

The literature on education for sustainable development is very rich and widely developed in national and international organizations as well as in the field of multidisciplinary and

global scientific research. An exploration on the web is enough to become aware of existing good practices. Education for sustainable development takes the form of an education called to form autonomy, enabling people to build the tools they need to be productive and creative, continuing to learn, to solve problems for a peaceful coexistence, to think about the future by taking care of the actions of the present. "When nations guarantee access to such education for all and throughout their lives, a silent revolution is set in motion: education becomes the engine of sustainable development and the key to a better world" (*Rethinking education* 2018, 34).



In this perspective, sustainability education must be set across the board to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for the new generations and offer continuous learning opportunities for all (cf. SDG 4). In other words, educating for sustainability requires an updated reference framework of ethical and democratic principles that can inspire educational projects capable of generating responsible citizens capable of promoting the common good, respecting their own and others' rights, improving the living conditions of their own community and those further away. In this sense, education for sustainable development refers to the concept of

integral education, which takes into account all the dimensions of the person and of life in order to achieve equitable and sustainable well-being. That is why it is urgent to rebuild the global educational pact.

Global educational pact for a sustainable future

To achieve the goal of education for sustainable development, the Pope's invitation is more timely than ever. There is a need to establish an "education village that generates a network of human and open relationships, fostering creativity and responsibility. This village must put the person at the center, foster creativity and

responsibility for long-lasting projects and form people willing to put themselves at the service of the community" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps at the Holy See*, 9-01-2020). Only in this way can we hope for a sustainable future, where educational institutions are promoters of the culture of encounter, fraternity, justice, and peace that is so much needed today.

Migrants, not numbers but brothers and sisters

Gabriella Imperatore, FMA
gimperatore@cgfma.org

Since his first trip to Lampedusa, the Pope ‘never got off the boat.’ The image expresses the mission of the universal Church in favor of the most vulnerable, of those forced to flee from wars and poverty in the largest movement of displaced persons and refugees in recent history. The Church continues the mission in solidarity with displaced persons.

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in exodus



The whole history of humanity is traversed by mass displacements, blending, movements, and rearrangements. Migrations have always represented the paradigm around which humanity has shaped itself, the engine of all progress, all advancements, all modernity. Values, principles, and behaviors are built on the basis of the stimuli that are received and the examples that are intercepted.

Migrations are part of everyday life; they are an opportunity for growth for everyone, as individuals, as a society, as an economy, as a community. This is why we need to change the way we look at migrants and the world, wear new lenses, establish the right interconnections to understand this reality, welcome these energies in motion, get to know them, share, open doors, and build bridges.

The outgoing Church is ready to meet everyone, without any distinction. It is a pilgrim Church that takes to the streets and walks with an attitude of openness,

“Hope is what moves the heart of those who leave; it is also what moves the heart of those who welcome, the desire to meet, get to know each other, dialogue”

(Pope Francis).

“Make it possible for people to express themselves fully through their skills and talents; sharing the same hope”.

sharing, and solidarity with all humanity, especially with the most vulnerable people.

■ Being people-bridges

Migrations are part of the global dynamics. We need to work together to build a more habitable and prosperous world for all. Today, as huge masses of people are forced to flee their homes and families due to persecution, violence, natural disasters, climate change, and poverty, it must be recognized that migration

is also a natural human response to crises and a testament to the innate desire of every human being to be happy and to enjoy a better life.

It is therefore essential to build bridges, cohesion, promote positive exchanges and, above all, welcome those who are looking for a better future. We must set out to reach migrants, commit to embracing their poverty and suffering, to relieve them with the conviction that they are not numbers but rather people with names, stories,

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Share the journey...

Share the journey, is the title of the global campaign inaugurated on 27 September 2017 by Pope Francis with the invitation: “*Brothers and sisters, we are not afraid to share the journey! We are not afraid! We are not afraid to share hope!*”

The goal is to create meeting spaces for migrants, refugees, and local communities, promoting the culture of encounter and mutual knowledge, through initiatives carried out by *Caritas International*, with support from FAO, UNHCR, and other world organizations. Four years (2017-2020) marked by different moments: *Share the Meal*, to join forces with other faiths and sharing a meal around the world between local communities, migrants, and refugees; *Global Solidarity Walk* to walk a million kilometers with migrants and refugees, talking and creating bonds of solidarity with them. The Holy Father

is a source of inspiration for the campaign, encouraging to *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate*; four verbs that the Pope, in the Message for the World Day of the Migrant and Refugee of 2018, indicated as responses to the challenges posed by contemporary migrations and which express the urgency of having to support rights humans, to allow people to express themselves through their talents and promote them, never forgetting the need to defend the dignity of the person.

It is a duty to welcome and give hospitality to migrants e refugees fleeing injustice, suffering, violence, and poverty in search of a dignified life and work to transform borders into privileged meeting places, building bridges of love and care to facilitate the integration of migrants and ensure their well-being and dignity. (<https://www.caritas.org/four-years-of-sharing-the-journey/>)



and dreams, seeing in them Jesus Christ who as a child took refuge in Egypt with His parents. "Migrants are not primarily migrants, but people with a history, a memory, a land, and an inalienable dignity. Each of them has a path, an intimate pain that haunts them, and each of them has a hope, to be considered a person, to be called by name, to be welcomed, and recognized. We must therefore speak of people in migration who ask us to share their journey and to share the land and the world we have in common with them." (Rev. Msgr. Bruno-Marie Duffé).

■ Towards an ever greater "we"

The increasingly visible presence of migrants and refugees in ecclesial societies and communities today undoubtedly represents one of the decisive challenges to the ideal of unity that the Church is called to build, rebuild, and live daily. "The future of our societies is a future in color" says Pope Francis in the communication campaign for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which is celebrated on 26 September 2021. The focus is on living together in harmony and peace, to build a future enriched by diversity and intercultural

relations. "Each is a grain of sand and together we can form a beautiful beach, a true work of art."

Local Churches do tireless work. Many migrants volunteer to support others. They don't have a

paid job, but they use time for others in a meaningful way.

Hope comes from Christian communities who find energy and inspiration from

welcoming people of other faiths and cultures with confidence. Surprising friendships are born from these encounter experiences that create new opportunities for migrants to integrate. "This heart knows that migrants and refugees do not come to usurp our lifestyle, but rejoice in how they can enrich our society." (Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, 4)

Overcoming selfishness and taking care of everyone by remembering the parable of the Good Samaritan is essential for rebuilding the human family in all its beauty, recognizing the other as wealth, rich in those talents that make others uniquely different.

It is vital to spread a new culture on a global level, a living culture of personal encounter, a new vision of welcoming the human person in the migrant. This is the only way to realize the common dream of an ever greater "we", of a single house, of a single human family.

"Open the door and share the bread; to care for and support human rights".

The good does good

Paolo Ondarza

paolo.ondarza@gmail.com

Hope House is a residential structure that welcomes fathers who are separated or who have interrupted their cohabitation, who are in serious socio-economic difficulty, and who therefore need specific aid and social promotion interventions.

An initiative of the Congregation/Society of the *Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul*, born in Sardinia by Sr. Anna Cogoni, formerly in charge of the "Center for welcoming women in difficulty". "I saw the emergency standing next to women, because even wives can hurt a husband, depriving him of the opportunity to see their children. For many fathers, paying a monthly allowance of over a thousand euros means falling into poverty." The commitment of the *Daughters of Charity*, Sisters at the service of wounded men, is related to the economic and social crisis of society. Separated men are part of the least and for this reason they are worthy of attention and care. The aim is therefore to promote the growth and integral formation of the person, freeing him from the state of moral and material need through global accompaniment, education to autonomy and self-sufficiency, with a gradual, personalized journey that privileges paths and activities falling within the sectors of social assistance, education, and individual education.

■ Sr. Anna, how and when was the idea of the Hope House for separated fathers born?

"The Hope House was born in 2013 with the aim of contributing to give first answers to the hardship of separated fathers 'poor and unemployed', without any income or welfare assistance. The residential structure is a "Campidanese house" with four rooms, kitchen-living room, two bathrooms, large gallery, with a vegetable garden and a flower garden. It is located in the town of Flumini in the municipality of



Quartu Sant'Elena in Sardinia (Italy) and has an availability of 7 places, currently 5 for anti-COVID security reasons. Our intervention is characterized as 'temporary and free hospitality' aimed at giving the necessary time to rebuild human relationships, search for needed employment, training, and/or income measures. Purposes that translate into regaining one's dignity and autonomy of life."

■ **What do you offer guests and how are they expected to behave inside the house?**

"The management of the House is ensured by the service of volunteers who take care of its functioning with the involvement of the guests in forms of self-management. This mode is preparatory to the assumption of responsibility and community work. A significant instrument is the House rules which govern hospitality, define their rights, duties, and collaboration. *Hope House* is a true experiential laboratory. It is a continuous bet because it is based on the free welcome and commitment of volunteers, on solidarity contributions, on the self-management of the Guests. During the seven-year activity, 75 guests were welcomed, most of whom left the House with employment prospects and income allotments. Due to its operational characteristics, the intervention of the House is subject to critical issues and management precariousness that require the commitment and the ability to solicit solidarity from individuals and institutions. A constant commitment is aimed at encouraging collaborations with Associations and Entities interested in the processes of social reintegration of the guests with possible outlets for work and professional training."

■ **On a social level, the crisis of man - woman relationships is felt in an increasingly tangible way, which reverberates on trust in the family reality. What considerations can be made?**

"When I think about the crisis of the family, my experience makes me believe that the constantly evolving cultural changes affect the life of women and men who struggle to

find values and reference models for family and community life. It seems to me that the ecclesial community struggles to adapt to changes and to find languages and instruments for new communication tools for the spiritual enrichment of women and men."

■ **In what direction should the Church's action be oriented?**

"The orientation of the ecclesial community could be summarized in three points: reception without preclusions, because situations of precariousness and hardship following a family conflict can affect every class and state of people. Throughout this period, we have accompanied professionals, men with great responsibilities, ordinary workers, etc.

After the welcome, accompaniment is important to help them become aware of the current reality and, through a personal and community journey, to reconstruct their present and future. Furthermore, it is good to empower a life in the name of truth for a witness of authenticity, with a journey of interior healing, the inner journey characterized by a gaze on the beyond, aimed at seeing oneself as a *new creature*, where silence, prayer, and self-confronting are the necessary tools for a real *rebirth*."

■ **Many men separated by reason of their existential condition risk falling into despair. Who are these fathers?**

"Every family situation that degenerates and creates division and estrangement leads to 'despair'. Any man struck by trial and suffering is not free from despair. The house has hosted many men in despair; men who entered the tunnel of inner and physical suffering, seemingly without a future; who had lost the profound 'sense' of their existence and of their mission of fatherhood; victims of family situations degenerated over time or unexpectedly. It is not easy to find oneself suddenly, upon returning from a business trip, with the situation of one's family suddenly changed and destabilized, so one precipitates into 'solitude' in an instant."

■ **The wounds that these men carry inside are material, economic, but also psychological and spiritual. How to help them rebuild their self-esteem and start over?**

"The wounds need an initial 'listening' that reveals the concrete situation of the person. The climate of faith they breathe in the community is not an 'escape route', but a help to read one's personal and family dimension with new eyes, sure of being looked at and admired by Someone greater. One cannot do without a true therapy of charity to heal wounds."

■ **Has the pandemic aggravated the situation?**

"The pandemic has certainly exasperated family and personal situations from an economic point of view due to the precariousness or loss of work, but above all due to the tensions and conflicts that followed. The number of fathers who asked for help has multiplied, finding no consolation in loneliness and despair."

■ **As a Vincentian, what prompted you to engage in this area?**

"The specific vocation of a Daughter of Charity, under the banner of the charism inherited from St. Vincent de Paul, our Founder, is a call to serve men and women in a state of poverty, poverty understood in its deepest meaning, as a lack of the

meaning of one's own existence. The Vincentian motto *charitas Christi urget nos* (Christ's love urges us) summarizes in an exemplary way how much we live daily in relationship with others. There is an urgent need to revisit our 'vocation' to offer those we accompany a witness that manifests the signs of the Divine. Therefore, those whom the Lord calls us to serve become the measure of our state of life as a consecrated woman."

■ **What can your experience offer to the debate on the role of women in the Church for the achievement of co-responsibility and synodality between men and women?**

"Not forgetting that in the entire history of the Church, even today, the most important person is a woman, the Mother of God. The life of women in the ecclesial experience has always been characterized by the uniqueness of their *feminine genius*. On these solid foundations, women worked and made the life of the Christian community beautiful and glorious. The assumption of roles by women, therefore, is not a simple request or claim but the encouragement of characteristics and traits typical of female uniqueness. The man-woman relationship is a communion capable of creating community in the diversity of roles. I recall the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians 3: 28, 'for you are all *one in Christ Jesus*,' if only we could live this dimension as an ecclesial community."



Give meaning to life

Redazione DMA

editor@rivistadma.org

How young people respond to Pope Francis's appeal as to why and for whom to live by promoting dynamics that give meaning to life and transform it in a positive way.

One of the hardships in the society of wellbeing is the *fatigue of living*. Young people feel lost and insecure in the face of the future. They live as strangers, like those who do not have a home and do not even look for one. "I'm looking for meaning to life even if life doesn't have it," sings Vasco Rossi. But why waste time looking for what is not there? The singer-songwriter Vasco does not explain it. Yet it is precisely this search that distinguishes the person from other beings. No one can stifle the *why*, sooner or later, it reappears as an unavoidable question. There are situations in which the will to live is no longer enough, you need to know why it is worth facing life, this life with its incurable contradictions and with its wonders and beauties. These are the moments when *it would take a friend*, someone who

knows how to say, without too many words, why life has meaning. It is here, in the folds of daily history, that the light of hope should be turned on. This is the challenge that increasingly imposes itself. Educating today does not mean simply giving rules, but teaching the *art of living*, an art to be learned day by day, with joy and resilience. It is not just a question of understanding what to do, but *why* to commit oneself and, above all, *for whom*.

■ Courage

"Lord, I ask you a favor: please, don't stop challenging me.' Challenges of horizons that require courage... I really like this Jesus who disturbs, who bothers; because it is Jesus alive, who moves you inside with the Holy Spirit. And how beautiful a boy/a girl is who let themselves be bothered by Jesus. And the young man or the young woman who does not allow their mouth to be closed easily, learns not to stay with their mouth closed, who is not happy with simplistic answers, who seeks the truth, seeks the deep, goes out to the depths, goes ahead, ahead. And they have the courage to ask themselves questions about truth and many things..." (From Pope Francis' talk to young people of the Diocesan Mission of Genoa, 27 May 2017).

There are many children and young people of a generation that wants to change the world. Education, ecology, solidarity, all commit themselves and act daily for tomorrow, because they are the future but also the present. They come from all over the world and fight by putting themselves out there to defend their ideals. "Parents must stop thinking that a child should just play or, at the most, tidy up the bedroom", affirms Gilles De Maistre, director of the documentary "We are the future" which tells of eight children who found the courage to face their battles for a better future. From India to Peru, from Bolivia to Guinea passing through France and

the United States, their names are José, Arthur, Aissatou, Heena, Peter, Kevin, and Jocelyn. They never felt they were too young, too weak or too isolated to resist injustice and violence. On the contrary, thanks to their strength of character and their courage, they have changed things by introducing debates and involving more and more children. Exploitation of human beings, child labor, forced marriages, environmental destruction, extreme poverty... They are involved on all fronts. Little as they are, they very quickly understood inequalities and injustices, both because they suffered from them themselves or because they witnessed them.

José Adolfo, a seven-year-old Chilean boy, created an ecological bank that allows children who bring recyclable waste, to open their own personal bank account. In fact, for this trash they receive

a voucher that they can use to buy products directly from the bank or receive real money. Then there is the very tender and courageous Arthur, a ten-year-old French boy, who sells his paintings in Cambrai and with the money raised buys basic necessities with his mother, which he then distributes to the homeless. Idrissa Bah in Guinea fights the practice of arranged marriages of child brides. Aissatou, twelve years old, is following in her footsteps and is committed to the struggle against violence against women and to support her struggle, she organizes awareness-raising initiatives in schools and markets.

In New Delhi, 11-year-old Heena distributes the Balaknama newspaper, which is written by children who live and work on the street, organizes meetings and readings for the illiterate young people that Heena teaches. Kevin, Jocelyn, and Peter, aged 10, 12, and 13 respectively, denounce the exploitation of child labor in Bolivia. They are part of the group of

"We are all fighting to be able to have something for the future: to heal children, alleviate everyone's suffering and turn it into joy... it is important to have the idea; it may seem crazy, but then the project becomes reality... Together, We Can!"



child laborers, mainly employed in mines and brick factories, who created a union to defend and protect themselves from abusive employers (Source: We are the future by Gilles De Maistre - Documentary - <https://youtu.be/HfJAInPfmBo>).

Talent

“... the expectation of the Lord’s return is the time of action — we are in the time of action — the time in which we should bring God’s gifts to fruition, not for ourselves but for Him, for the Church, for others. The time to seek to increase goodness in the world always; and in particular, in this period of crisis, today, it is important not to turn in on ourselves, burying our own talent, our spiritual, intellectual, and material riches, everything that the Lord has given us, but, rather to open ourselves, to be supportive, to be attentive to others.. Have you thought about the talents that God has given you? Have you thought of how you can put them at the service of others? Do not bury your talents! Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart, the ideals of service that make your talents fruitful. Life is not given to us to be jealously guarded for ourselves, but is given to us so that we may give it in turn. Dear young people, have a deep spirit! Do not be afraid to dream of great things!” (Pope Francis at the General Audience of Wednesday, 24 April 2013)

The school is made by young people, for young

people, and therefore their voice must be listened to and their talents valued. The road to achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda is long, but young people have the opportunity to be the protagonists of the future and to be able to change it.

The students of the *FP Dual - Hairstyle II year course*, participating in the *contest* organized by the Italian Center for Salesian Women's Professional Formation (CIOFS-FP Italy) on the knowledge of the *Development Objectives of the 2030 Agenda*, chose objective 12 and creatively promoted its awareness and observance.

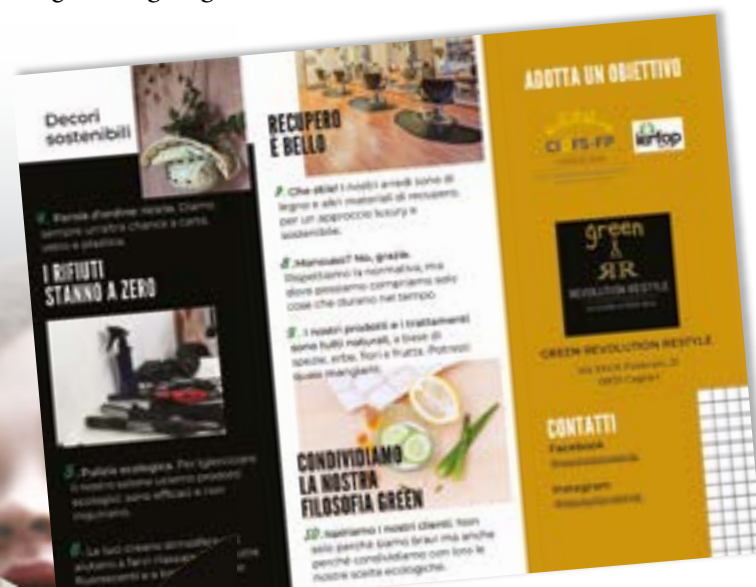
Animated and guided by the Italian Teacher, they explored the objective *"Guaranteeing sustainable production and consumption models"* and imagined how the *Hairdresser salon*, the *virtual-salon Revolution Restyle*, could be, if it were organized and set up according to 'development goal 12. “We

have chosen to be responsible and prefer sustainable production and consumption models. What does it mean? It means generating value for the earth and for ourselves.”

And thus they developed an attractive and graphically well-designed advertising *brochure*, where the *Salon* has become

GREEN Revolution Restyle, respectful of the environment and attentive to the use of clean energy, water waste, and the recycling of paper, glass, and plastic, the use of recycled materials, and ecological and non-polluting products because *"the change begins with us!"*.

"Go beyond groups of friends and build social friendship, seek the common good, sit down and talk" (Francis, Christus vivit, n. 169).



Forestry education to promote a sustainable future

Veronica Petrocchi

veronica.petrocchi91@gmail.com

"Today, forestry technicians face some of the greatest challenges of our times in the field of sustainable development. Throughout the world, forests and forest managers are at the forefront, from the fight against climate change to the prevention of future pandemics of zoonotic origin," confirms Viviana, a young Apulian forester who for years has been promoting the ecological culture in her territory.

In many regions of the world, few young people are still interested in pursuing a forestry profession. A major survey conducted by the *Global Forest Education Project*, managed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

(FAO), the International Organizations of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), and the International Organization of Tropical Timber, highlighted some of the obstacles encountered when trying to intercept and train a new generation of forestry workers. The only one of its kind, the survey collected information on the institutions in which forestry education is taught



and the methods and quality of teaching, from primary and secondary schools, to technical-professional courses and university faculties in some regions of the world.

It found that in most regions, especially in the global South, primary and secondary schools do not always provide students with adequate education in trees and forest systems or sufficient motivation to continue their studies and pursue a professional career in the forestry sector. In the study programs, the treatment of topics relating to forestry sciences is sometimes incomplete, both in the scientific-technological

Education is a fundamental step in order to safeguard natural resources for future generations (José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General).

disciplines including natural sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and in the social and humanistic fields. Too often, even minimal contact with the forest is lacking, even in the case of students who live near such environments.

Viviana comments, "It is no wonder that many young

people are completely unaware of the benefits offered by forests and the importance of managing the forest heritage in a sustainable way." The survey also revealed that in many areas of the world young people tend to consider forestry as an unappetizing career with little social prestige. Therefore, as can be seen, the forestry sector continues to have an image problem.

Many associate it in a reductive way to the simple cutting of trees. It is not always easy to understand that sustainable forest management represents a first step towards the prevention of deforestation and environmental degradation, as well as a fundamental step

towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, also related to the issues of hunger, poverty, decent work, energy, health, and climate.

It is clear that there is need of a Copernican revolution in the field of forestry education. To get this renewal started, over 1000 forestry education experts participated in the International Conference on forestry

education, during which solutions were examined that allow for the provision of quality forestry education. The road to take is clear; more forestry sciences must be integrated into the curricula starting from primary school, in order to sow interest by directing the new generations to attention and sensitivity for the "care of Creation".

Viviana is convinced that "To protect forests, young people must be taught how a forest ecosystem works and what important contributions it makes to the fight against climate change, the maintenance of a healthy planet, and the sustainability of human activities," and she suggests "to start from primary school, organizing outings in the territory that offer children inspiration, or simply explaining to them the functioning of trees and forest systems starting from the ecology of the school yard."

FAO, with the support of Germany, is carrying out a pilot project that provides for the implementation of targeted forestry education interventions for children and young people aged 9 to 12, starting with a three-year cycle of innovative and interactive lessons in Tanzania and the Philippines.

With the collaboration of the German Forest Protection Association "Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald" (SDW) and nationally renowned pedagogists, FAO is developing teaching modules adapted to local conditions for teachers and pupils focusing on the German method of forest pedagogy, or *Waldpädagogik*, which focuses on experiential learning in nature to promote understanding of sustainable forest use.

Young people, whether they belong to a forest community or live in urban areas, must be aware of the multiplicity of professional profiles related to the sustainable forestry sector, from policy makers to app developers, from entrepreneurs to satellite image analysts, from pilots of drones to entomologists.

A cultural, environmental, and educational project to believe in to "guarantee that all children and young people know the forests and are aware of their importance for our planet and for our livelihood, is not only possible, but absolutely necessary."

The example of Glasgow: 18 million trees in 10 years

In the Scottish town, ten trees will be planted for each inhabitant. The goal of the crucial COP26 climate summit, to be held in November and which is organized by the UK and Italy, will be to minimize short-term emissions and cancel them over the next two to three decades, since the limit of 1.5 °C increase set by the Paris summit in 2016 is being exceeded. Glasgow itself is very exposed to climate change. It is one of the most humid and rainiest places in the UK. With climate change, it could suffer in the coming years from more and more abundant and violent rainfall, which could cause serious damage to infrastructures, the territory, and the environmental ecosystem.



Generative digital communication

Molinari Elisa, FMA
e.molinari@cgmfa.org

Digital communication is an opportunity for education, evangelization, and the educative mission with and among young people. Through words and languages, life and culture are generated, relationships are built, evangelical, cultural, and charismatic values are spread, experiences of solidarity citizenship and social transformation are experienced.

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communicate



The term *lockdown* seems to come from filmic, apocalyptic language. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it has now entered our usual vocabulary. It means blockade, isolation, and defines an emergency procedure put in place to protect citizens from an attack, in this case an attack on health. It forces you to remain confined to your homes, to limit contacts with the outside, to avoid possible contamination. Yet the need for relationships, to communicate, has not diminished at all. On the contrary, personal and collective initiatives have emerged with creativity to continue to feel alive, so as not to 'cut the threads' with the world and friendships. Carola and Vittoria, two very young

Communicating is starting from a situation of distance, of difficulty in understanding each other, and trying to reduce this distance (Chiara Giaccardi).

tennis players from Liguria (Italy), kept in touch with tennis strokes, a shared passion, between the roofs of their houses. The video of this surprising gesture that went viral, was shared on the social accounts of the great tennis players, including the Swiss champion Roger Federer, who was greeted with emotion by the girls, once the *lockdown* was over, right on those roofs. The desire to maintain ties 'took the wings' of digital communication, leaving a small Ligurian town, to reach the world and tell everyone how the creativity of young people can break the isolation between people. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxm8RZiIsO4>)



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We know that closeness is not a sure sign of successful communication; one can be close and not communicate, distant and maintain an intense communication. The philosopher Heidegger states, "A small distance is not yet closeness. A great distance is not yet remoteness." For this, it is necessary to ask oneself about the nature of closeness and distance and, consequently, about the communication methods suitable for bridging a distance and for establishing or maintaining a relationship. For Carola and Vittoria, rackets and tennis ball were the *medium* to keep communication active, which was not limited to them. Those unusual movements on the roofs attracted media attention that resulted in unexpected reactions and narratives. In fact digital communication, understood as a set of activities for the production and dissemination of content through digital technologies such as PCs, tablets, smartphones, and other devices, unlike communication with traditional media, is participatory and inclusive. Users are not mere spectators, but they become *spectators*. Our life is 'onlife', in an environment pervaded by the digital that shapes us and to which we give shape, where everything is connected. We are immersed in an interactive space that is not neutral and indifferent, from which we cannot completely escape. We must inhabit it and make

ourselves promoters of a virtuous construction. From a pastoral point of view, the *lockdown* represented and represents a challenge. The intensification of digital communication and the use of social networks to get close to children, teenagers, young people, and families is driven by the desire to relieve the fatigue of isolation and to make up for ordinary activities, restoring a presumed normality. The response to an emergency, however, risks turning into an exploitative drift, if it is not followed up in the construction processes of the 'new normal' that recover the positivity of online experiences and lead the community to take shared steps. Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, highlights the two sides of the coin, "*the media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of the unity of the human family which in turn can inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all... We need constantly to ensure that present-day forms of communication are in fact guiding us to generous encounter with others, to honest pursuit of the whole truth, to service, to closeness to the underprivileged and to the promotion of the common good.*" (FT 205). If it is not self-referential, but is concerned with reducing distances, reweaving ties, mending the social fabric, enriching the environment with values and experiences useful for the common good, digital communication becomes generative. To maintain educational relationships, a 'race to the latest social media' is not necessary to colonize the spaces occupied by children and win their attention, but the implementation of processes that last over time and trigger dynamisms that continue beyond the tools and people. This does not exclude the presence on social channels, meeting places inhabited daily by young people, in which to bear witness that involves in the experience of faith. "*The good news of the Gospel has spread throughout the world thanks to encounters from person to person, from heart by heart. Men and women who accepted the same invitation, 'Come and see', and were struck by a 'more' of humanity that transpired in the gaze, in the word, and in the gestures of people who testified to Jesus Christ.*" (Pope Francis, *Message for the*

55th World Communications Day). Encounters that do not disregard the reality in which people live but which, following the example of the encounters of Jesus, depart from it and understand it, to read together and give meaning to what one experiences.

In Netflix's *Homemade* series, in which directors from all over the world have made short films on the theme of the lockdown, the episode by French director Ladj Li tells the scenario of one of the French departments most affected by the pandemic through the eyes of Buzz, who from the window sends his drone to resume life on the block. The narrative is intertwined with the typical day of the teenager; the swipe of the thumb on the *smartphone* to check social profiles, push-ups on the arms to keep fit, sharing tasks with a friend. On the PC screen, the filming of the Paris *suburb* appears, the people on the terraces of the large popular buildings, the silence, the orderly lines to collect food, the social conflicts, which provoke a question, key to reading the episode. "*If these are difficult times, for whom are they so?*" At the end of the short film, we read the director's thanks to

the boy for allowing respect for distancing with his drone. In truth, Buzz gave more than one technical support. His physical presence was not neutral, as he observed and guided the device with precise choices. In the film, it is noted how young people live immersed in a single environment, without barriers between daily activities, friendships, and interests, of which they become protagonists and co-creators. The educational appeal is to listen and establish relationships with them in which the primary concern is not so much to inform, transmit content, propose activities, but to be close; a *meme* in Facebook, a story in Instagram, a video in Tik-tok, a tweet. Perhaps they do not convey the completeness of a topic and do not exhaust the Proclamation, but they help to become travel companions, arousing the desire to go deeper.

The multiform languages of social networks can open up to variegated communication possibilities which, inserted in educational and evangelization processes articulated in gradual phases, generate life and strengthen values that lead to choices of service and active citizenship.

In making young people protagonists and co-authors, the role of the educator consists in supporting, accompanying young people in shared paths, involving them for example in the documentation of community life, through stories created by them through social media, helping them to mature a reading of reality that reveals a sense of belonging and depth of values. Michael Magone, initially presenting himself as the '*general of recreation*' who had learned '*the profession of doing nothing*', under the gaze of Don Bosco and immersed in the educational ecosystem of Valdocco, grows in virtue and becomes an example for others. The only distance that Don Bosco maintains is the educational distance, with which he allows the young person to take his steps and accompanies his moral and spiritual growth. If they were still here, Michael Magone, Domenic Savio, and the other young people from Valdocco could be what in Germany they call *#sinnfluencer*, '*influencers of meaning*', leaders who with their posts on social media and their life choices guide young people to the good and to hope.



Mornese. Outgoing community, with young people

Eliane Petri, FMA
petrifma@gmail.com

The missionary spirit was emphasized in Mornese. Many FMA wished to leave for the mission *ad gentes* and in her Letters, Mother Mazzarello repeatedly mentions her desire, that of the sisters, and even of the girls to leave for the missions (Cf. L 4,11.14; L 5,9). A few years after the Foundation, the community breathes deeply the missionary spirit that guides it to bear witness to Jesus Christ in their homeland and in the World.

It was a common and ingrained conviction from the beginning. "A daughter who enters with the intention of thinking only of her own soul is not capable of fulfilling the duties incumbent on the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians" (Cf. *Report of the first meeting of the Superiors*, Mornese, August 1878, in *Orme di Vita* D 93). A concrete exemplification of missionary awareness is Mother Mazzarello's Letter 37 that reveals the face of two communities in

missionary outgoing, of fruitful women who, from a strong experience of Jesus, source of living water, and from the strength of the Spirit, receive the ability to generate life around them.

The community of Carmen of Patagonia: the fulfillment of a dream

The letter is addressed to the sisters of the community of *Carmen of Patagonia*. The community was opened in 1880, in the land that Don Bosco had so often dreamed (MB X 54). Fr. Costamagna was the first Salesian who attempted to venture into that land, gradually beginning

to catechize the populations. The work of the missionaries was to be supported by the sisters for the care of women and children. Thus it was that Sr. Angela Vallese, Sr. Giovanna Borgna, Sr. Angela Cassulo, and Sr. Caterina Fino were the first FMA and the first religious to arrive in those lands among those populations. The newspaper of Buenos Aires, *South America* of January 13 announced the expedition as follows: "... it will be the first time since the world exists, that we will see sisters in those remote southern lands..."

The work of the sisters will be so precious for the evangelization of the land of Magellan, that "without the sisters in the conversion of the Pampas and Patagonia, the Salesian missions would have followed the same fate as those of the previous missionaries" (CAPETTI Giselda, *Opening the furrow: Mother Angela Vallese, first among the first missionaries of St. John Bosco*, Turin, LICE-Berruti 1947, 77). Four Sisters reach Patagonia. But it is the whole FMA Institute that revels in this missionary joy. The *Cronistoria* describes with emphasis the first news from Patagonia and the realism of Mother Mazzarello's life. "Yes, we enjoy their triumphs, notes Mother, but do we think of their sacrifices to get there? We are thrilled to follow them, but in the meantime, what are we doing to help them sustain themselves amidst so many dangers that will certainly surround them? Souls are not saved only with words and impulses, but with mortification, self-denial, and solid virtues, my dears! Who wants to enter the race? Who wants to prepare for the missions with the means that the Lord sends us here in our homeland? To those who answer "me, me", Mother proposes: "So, *brichett à la prøva!*" (Piedmontese proverbial expression, an exhortation to prove one's abilities with facts). Let's start by making our self-love have a good Lent and by giving blows to our most visible defects and those most contrary to the duty of edification. I will help you, you will help me: all willing? -All! all of us, dear Mother! " (*Cronistoria* III, 147-148).

There is an interesting detail in the same letter. Mother Mazzarello rejoices with the sisters who have just arrived in Patagonia because they already have a student and twelve girls who come to catechism class. They are happy because they have



to work a lot for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The missionary spirit that animates the FMA is the evangelizing joy of reaching and involving young people so that they feel loved and, in turn, become witnesses of the saving love of the Lord for others. To be a community in "missionary outreach with the young" is to help them discover that a vocation is always a mission and to answer the radical question: "Who am I for?" (CV 286).

■ The Community of Mornese-Nizza Monferrato: to leave Mornese for "the good of the Institute"

In communicating the news of Nizza Monferrato, another community in full missionary outreach, Mother Mazzarello speaks of a "thorn in the heart". She is referring to the closure of the house in Mornese. It is a great suffering for her and for the first FMA to have to close this house. This suffering is understandable: every corner of the house and of the village is full of lived experiences, of the dearest affections; her land, her parish, her people, her parents, her girls, etc. It is a detachment that hurts and makes the heart cry. But she, despite her suffering, understood that everything was for the good and for the expansion of the Institute. At the center of discernment there is the mission, and it is worth sacrificing everything for this, crossing new horizons, detaching oneself from what had already been built to transplant the charism. The fruits are already visible and she herself describes it, "We are all here in Nizza Monf. [Wrong], we are a good number; between boarders, postulants, and sisters we are one hundred and fifty. I am not going to describe the house because it would be too long. We have a nice big church, devout and well made. Now they are making a wing of the house for the boarders and we hope that it will be prepared soon." One expression is noteworthy. "After all, our homes here in Europe are always growing." So, if there is the "thorn in the heart" (the experience of pain and the cross), the joy (resurrection) stands out for the opening of so many new houses. It is the joy of the mission.

Fr. Egidio Viganó speaks of *transplanting the charism* from Mornese to Nizza Monferrato, then to France, America, the 5 continents, as

a 'perfecting gesture' by Mother Mazzarello. "Opening to transplanting, to detachment, to death is thus inserted by Mother into the spirit of Mornese as her perfecting and conclusive way... Mother Mazzarello thought of the Institute more than of herself" (VIGANÒ Egidio, *Rediscovering the spirit of Mornese*, in *Acts of the Superior Council* 301 (1981), 39).

■ Missionaries of joy and hope where we are...with the young people

Mother Mazzarello teaches that being an "outgoing community" is not something merely geographical, of leaving one's own land and going to other places, but it is an interior attitude of openness and responsibility in bearing witness to Jesus and making Him loved more and more. In this context, every small gesture of service and love has a missionary meaning. "There is no need to go on a mission to be a missionary; and you missionaries, if you do not live continuously with the thought of earning souls and merits, of making use of all the means to truly be all of the Lord and of souls, what missionaries will you be? Therefore let us promise to make use of these little things to make ourselves more and more true daughters of Our Lady, and also of our good father Don Bosco" (*Cronistoria* III 318-319).

Being an outgoing community means being ready to give our life where the Lord calls us, thus becoming a sign and expression of the Father's love for young people. Each one, in the 'here and now' of the mission must find a way to communicate Jesus that corresponds to the situation in which she finds herself, together with the young people. If some time ago the word 'mission' evoked above all distant lands and people who left as missionaries, today it is increasingly evident that the 'mission land' is everywhere, and those called to be 'missionaries' are all Christians, because they are baptized.

Educators are called to be "a mission on this earth" (EG 273). The most beautiful mission is to awaken the missionary sense in young people, to form courageous young missionaries, in love with Christ, capable of witnessing the Gospel everywhere with their own lives.

Musical emotions: between technique and brain

Mariano Diotto, SDB

m.diotto@iusve.it

Evoking emotions is the main strength of music, therefore, we shouldn't be too surprised that the songs can move us and make us feel a lump in our throat. Music causes emotions that can be experienced by the listener in a positive or negative way, as a slow musical style leads to calm, reflection, meditation, and at the same time for some, it can become boring. Thus a fast pace can make the body vibrate or bring it to inertia. The variations experienced by a listener can be traced back to the *musical culture*. This is born and develops according to the context in which one grows. Everyone builds an infinite number of connections in their minds, a network of bonds that constantly guide every choice and every emotional judgment.

In music there are emotions that are able to be triggered regardless of one's personality, the genre that one listens to or the culture to which one belongs.

■ Musical techniques

Researchers Katherine Cotter and Paul Silvia of the University of North Carolina, and Kirill Fayn of the University of Sydney developed research to investigate the emotions that people feel when music causes crying for example.

Crying is a complex and articulate human behavior that can be traced back to a variety of intense experiences. It can be caused by suffering, such as when attending a funeral, but also by extreme happiness, such as at a wedding.

What emotion do most people feel when they are





moved to tears by music? It turned out that some technical and compositional characteristics of music are continuously associated with the production of strong emotions in listeners. The combination of sincere lyrics and a powerful voice complete the performance, sending

reward signals to the brain and triggering strong emotions.

Lyrics like *Someone Like You* by **Adele**, *I Will Always Love You* by **Whitney Houston**, *Allelujah* by **Jeff Buckley**, *It Must Have Been Love* by **Roxette**, *The Winner Takes It All* by **Abba**, *Imagine* by **John Lennon**, *Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word* by **Elton John**, *The Sounds of Silence* by **Simon & Garfunkel**, *Listen* by **Beyoncé**, *Love is a Losing Game* by **Amy Winehouse**, *Nothing Compares 2 U* by **Sinead O'Connor**, *My Heart Will Go On* by **Céline Dion**, *Heal the World* by **Michael Jackson** or *Without You* by **Mariah Carey** have become the emblem of this emotional magic formula.

Before 2000, Professor **John Sloboda**, a British psychologist and lecturer at Keele University, conducted an experiment asking music lovers to identify the passages of songs that unambiguously provoked a physical reaction in

them, such as tears or goosebumps. Research participants identified 20 'tear-jerking passages'. From the analysis of the musical properties of these passages, Professor **Sloboda** found that 18 contained a musical device called a *support*. The *support* is an ornamental note

that contrasts the melody just enough to create a dissonant sound. In 2007, **Martin Guhn**, a psychologist at British Columbia University, scientifically explained that this sound device generates a tension in the listener and when the notes return to the expected melody, the tension is resolved and it feels good. In fact, the chills reach the listeners in these moments of resolution. The more supports are found next to each other in a melody, the more a cycle of tension and release will be generated. This emotional succession causes an even stronger reaction, and it is then that the tears begin to flow. This is what happens when we listen to *Say Something* by **A. Great Big World** and **Christina Aguilera**, *Let Her Go* by **Passenger**, *Stay With Me* by **Sam Smith**, *Impossible* by **James Arthur**, *Piece by Piece* by **Kelly Clarkson**, *Time to Say Goodbye* by **Andrea Bocelli** and **Sarah Brightman**, *A Thousand Years* by **Christina Perri**, *You're Beautiful* by **James Blunt**, *Perfect* by **Ed Sheeran**, *All of Me* by **John Legend**, and the recent, *Shallow* sung by **Lady Gaga** and **Bradley Cooper** or *Dancing On My Own* by **Calum Scott**.

■ The tear-jerking formula

Research on the subject continued and Professor **Guhn**, with colleague **Marcel Zentner**, used some pieces of music that reliably produced the chills, such as **Felix Mendelssohn's** *Piano Trio* and **Samuel Barber's** *Adagio for Strings*. They were thus able to measure the physiological reactions of listeners: heart rate, sweating, and goosebumps.

The passages that provoked an emotional reaction shared at least three characteristics. The pieces of music started slow with soft sounds and then suddenly became filled with stringed instruments such as pianos, guitars, violins, double basses, and harps. They introduced an unexpected entry of a new instrument or a predominant harmony by moving up an octave or echoing the basic melody. Furthermore, all the passages contained unexpected deviations in melody or harmony. In fact, music is more likely to arouse chills when it includes surprises in terms of volume, timbre, and harmonic pattern.

If we think of *I Will Always Love You*, there is the entrance of a sax that introduces the last verse, and then stops the music for a few seconds and Whitney Houston's voice rises in the final chorus by one octave. The same happens in the final bridge of *The Winner Takes It All* where the music becomes slower and then the voice of Agnetha from Abba explodes.

The emotional effects of music are produced with different mechanisms by the notes, the rhythm, the instruments, and the use of the voice. The effects of the rhythm are simple and basically depend on the speed of the music. Times of less than 60 beats per minute have a calming effect, while from 80-90 beats per minute upwards the

effect is exciting. This emotional response occurs because the drums, contrabass, and electric bass recall the sound of the heartbeat.

In all cases, it is the brain and other cerebral circuits of emotions that react spontaneously and irrationally to the implicit messages contained in the songs. In fact, Professor **Robert Zatorre** and his team of neuroscientists at McGill University studied that emotionally intense music releases dopamine, also called the neurotransmitter of happiness, as a pleasant reward in the brain, similar to the effects of food. All this makes you feel good and motivates you to repeat the behavior and, therefore, to listen to that tearful song again. It can be said that the more emotions a song provokes, whether it is poignant or uplifting, the more you yearn to hear it again.



Atlas: The soul's ascent

Andrea Petralia

andrea.petralia95@gmail.com

"On top of the mountain are all dreams. Inside a closed room, on the other hand, there is their loss, from the Dolomites where you look away in the dark." Atlas is the feature film by Ticino-based filmmaker Niccolò Castelli who, playing on the continuous contrast of light and darkness, tells the difficult emotional journey of a young woman struggling with terrible pain.

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It is a project that required a long gestation period, about six years, and is inspired by the jihadist attack on the *Café Argana* in Marrakech on 28 April 2011, in which 17 people, including three Swiss children, lost their lives. Allegra, the protagonist, lives a life full of passion in Lugano, a Swiss town in the Canton of Ticino, between her family and a group of friends including her boyfriend *Benni*, her friend *Sofia*, and her boyfriend *Sandro*. Together they have fun at concerts and, above all, they climb the many peaks of the surrounding area. Allegra one day suggests trying something more exotic by climbing the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. There, the four will find themselves embroiled in a terrorist attack that will change Allegra's life.

Atlas is a mature drama about the elaboration of mourning and the relationship with the other, the different, and is structured as a delicate character study of a young girl still growing. The signature is by Niccolò Castelli, a director who has the merit of giving an original setting to a story otherwise already seen. In fact, he shoots the documentary in the city of Lugano, merging geographical and cultural elements with Allegra's life and growth path. Climbing is at the center of the film as an objective correlative of Allegra's struggle, but there is also the lake, which the girl often remembers having mistaken for the sea as a child, and the trains she works on, with the flow of different lives.

Loss, guilt, and rehabilitation thus enter into dialogue with the themes of the closure and protection of a community, between a father who views the outside with suspicion, and the stories of characters like *Arad* (Helmi Dridi), a young Muslim refugee who with his music and his scars represents the possibility of rethinking prejudice. These suggestions appear in the background of the narrative that focuses on the face of the protagonist (*Matilda De*



Angelis, actress at her most mature test), focusing the lens on her, often with a hand-held camera, scrutinizing all the suspicions in a serious and exciting portrait, which at times recalls the approach to the same theme in *Mikhaël Hers'* extraordinary *Quel giorno d'estate*. The technical realization is of considerable importance, in particular the photography and editing, which enrich the dramatic component with a contemporary and international breath, for a well-shot film that is not afraid to cross borders. The climbing sequences offer breathtaking moments and are treated by Castelli with the same sacredness that *Allegra* reserves for them. They are not just a metaphor, but a full world in its own right.

Allegra, the leading protagonist played by *Matilda De Angelis*, is 25 years old and part of a generation accustomed to thinking on a European scale, moving with ease between nations and meeting peers from distant cultures. Through the Erasmus experience, of course,

but also with curiosity stimulated by the ability to access much more information than in the past. However, De Angelis's generation is also the one that has grown up in a world that has experienced difficult moments due to terrorism. *Bataclan*, the Parisian venue was the scene of the 13 November 2015 attack, in which an ISIS commando killed 130 people, mostly young or very young, who were attending the *Eagles of Death Metal* concert.

Passionate about climbing and music, she finds herself in Morocco when she is the victim, with her partner and a couple of friends, of a terrible terrorist attack. She is the only survivor. Although her body, even if wounded, is gradually healing, the trauma that torments her seems inexorably to consume her. Fear and the desire for revenge are her only feelings and they push her towards a world of loneliness and misunderstanding. *Allegra*, impervious to efforts of her family and friends to alleviate her suffering, absolutely wants to face alone a personal trauma that everyone seems to want to

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share. The protagonist of *Atlas* has to go a long way towards some sort of acceptance, a struggle against herself in search of a glimpse of light in a sky darker than the night. And the only way to renew her pact with her life is to be reborn, to offer herself a new chance, to trust the relationship with the other. The unexpected encounter with *Arad*, a young refugee from the Middle East, will allow her to confront the ghosts of the past, with a trauma that she is unable to rework. Trusting someone she doesn't know, facing life again with the positivity and freedom that lived in her, seems an unattainable goal for Allegra. And this is precisely her goal, the possibility of gaining more freedom by managing to get out of her own perspective and going towards the knowledge of the other.

In *Atlas* you can hear the protagonist's breathing and accelerated heartbeat, you can feel what she thinks from her gaze. The filmmaker follows her, shares her fear, anger, frustration but also her confidence in the future, before the attack. In the feature film, past and present often intersect and, thanks to the editing work of Esmeralda Calabria, the different temporal planes overlap in which the before and after create two different, autonomous figures, detached from each other, even if they have the same face, the same body, the same voice. Castelli is attentive to the geographies of the landscape, the mountains, the streets of Lugano, the

"Atlas is an attempt to understand how it is possible to overcome our fears in meeting and opening up to the different" (Niccolò Castelli, director).

routes on the trains where *Allegra* works. The criticism points out the lack of attention of the secondary figures, starting with the parents of the protagonist and her friend Giulia. Arad's character is also a bit blurred, as is the attempt to reflect on the condition of immigration.

Matilda De Angelis almost alone leads the narration. Her elaboration of grief is engaging and direct. That of the other characters is less so, starting with the restrained suffering of *Neri Marcorè* in the role of Sofia's father. The

Director shows a mastery of the cinematographic medium capable of crossing borders, combining great ambitions with a desire to dig deeply into the psychological level, with moments of great intimate drama that make use of the acting talent of the protagonist and the rest of the cast. Today, this story seems to say that there

is a way to smile again, and it is the construction and reconstruction of the relationship with the other. After all, without the other you don't climb a peak and when you climb, you just put your life in the hands of someone who assures you.

Atlas is the evolution of the discourse started in the first Castelli film, *Tutti DOWN* of 2012, but without the choral setting, put aside to make room for the suffering of a person whose uphill path in a physical and emotional sense, greatly renders more precious the cinematographic offering from the Italian canton of Switzerland.



The row call of Alessandro D'Avenia

Emilia Di Massimo, FMA
emiliadimassimo@libero.it

What if the roll call were not a simple list? What if pronouncing a name meant making the bearer exist a little more? Then the answer 'present!' would contain the secret to courageous adherence to life. This is the school that Homer Romeo dreams of, at the center of the novel "The Roll Call" by Alessandro D'Avenia.

Forty-five years old, with sunglasses always on his nose, Homer is called as a substitute teacher of Science in a class that has to face the final exams. A classroom-ghetto, where the desperate cases of the school have been confined. The challenge seems impossible for him, who has gone blind and does not know if he will ever again be able to teach, and perhaps even to live. Not being able to see the faces of the students, he invents a new way of making the roll call, convinced that to save the world it is necessary to save every name, even if it is a girl who hides an un-confessable wound, a rapper who lives in a family home, a nerd who comes into contact with others only from behind a screen, an abandoned daughter, an aspiring boxer who dreams of becoming like Rocky... Nobody saw them, yet the professor who can't see us can see them.

■ What's in a name?

"We all struggle from morning to evening to ensure that our name is pronounced properly. We look for it everywhere, in a job, in a relationship, in the news, in



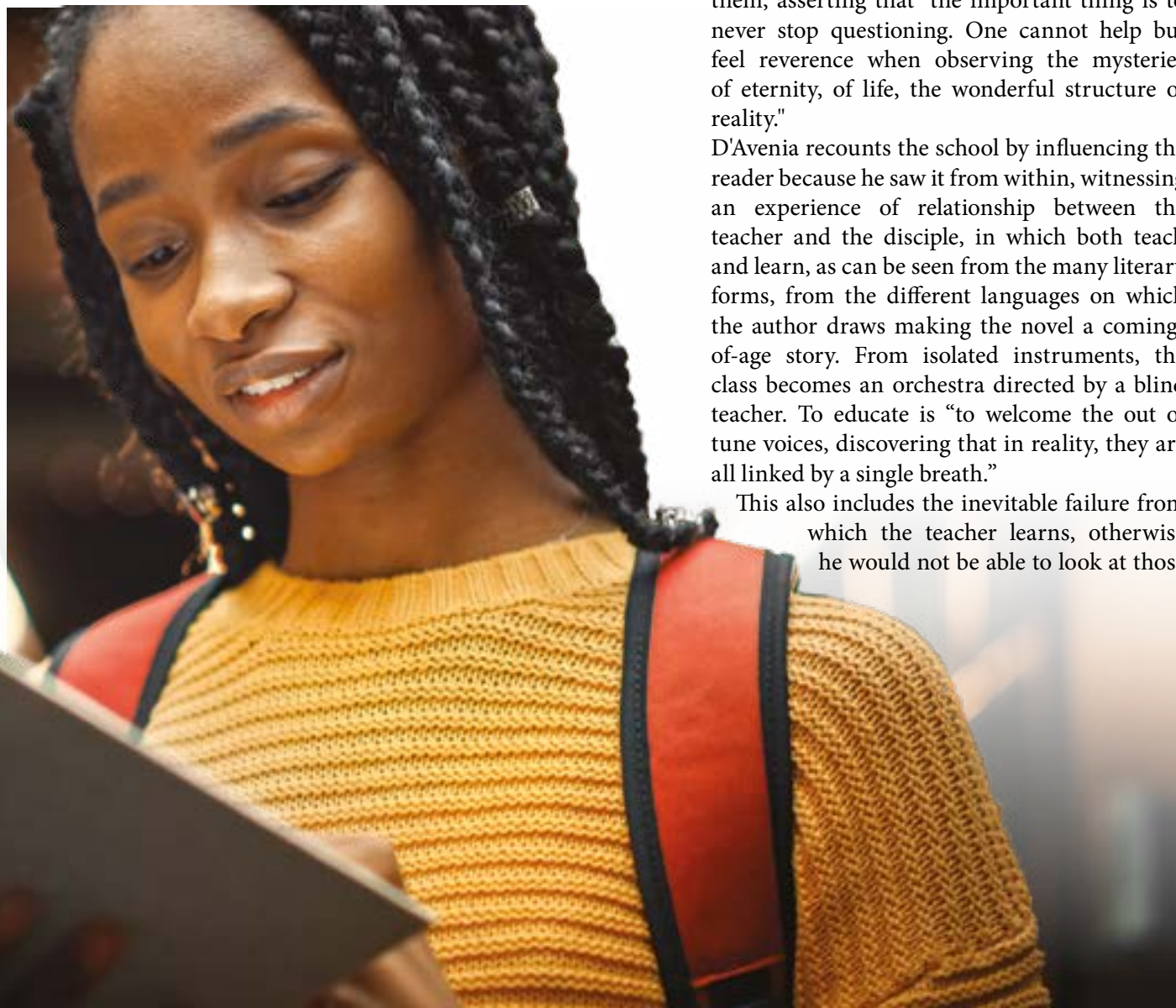
a dress, in a record, in a passion, in violence, in ambition, in addiction and destruction, in domination and pleasure, in a grave, and in choosing something or someone to belong to. Because this is having a name, having something or someone to keep it safe." Alessandro D'Avenia's novel could be summarized in this statement, in the evocative power that is felt both when a person's name is pronounced and when one hears one's own. This is the experience that a class of officially labeled students lives like the desperate people of the "Fifth D".

The protagonist of the novel is a Professor of Sciences, Homer Romero, who became blind due to a rare disease, but despite this, he decided to return to teaching. Blind, like his famous Greek namesake, Homer has learned to feel reality through the senses, in particular that of touch. "I stroke the open register with my fingertips until I hear the handwritten names in the left column, as if I could learn them by heart by touching them." Homer is not a traditional teacher; he does not conceive of school as ideas only nor does he believe that formation is aimed solely at future professional success. He is extremely interested in really knowing the students, in guiding them in their growth process so that everyone becomes



"Faces are like maps, they contain all the geography of the soul, places that need to be given a name and a story".

what they are called to become. The roll call is the privileged tool that favors the change of the relationship between the teacher and the pupil. Homer performs this task by giving it a profound meaning, dedicating ample time to it, making the pupils pronounce their own name so that they can tell each other by defining what characterizes them, as if they had to "describe a mineral in its essential manifestations: physical conformation, crystalline structure, origin, properties." In this way, one learns to know the students, to understand their sufferings, dreams, and desires since the roll call takes place throughout the



school year. This allows noticing the evolution of the personality of young people from which the darker sides emerge, and which, according to the professor's wisdom, turn into opportunities, become an essential conviction. "We waste most of our time and energy hiding, but underneath, we want to come to light. We are made to be born, certainly not to die."

■ What makes vision possible

The gradual maturation is not only of the students. Homer evolves over the course of the year, not only by learning how young people are and how they live, but also through the explanations in which he encourages everyone to question themselves about the world around them, asserting that "the important thing is to never stop questioning. One cannot help but feel reverence when observing the mysteries of eternity, of life, the wonderful structure of reality."

D'Avenia recounts the school by influencing the reader because he saw it from within, witnessing an experience of relationship between the teacher and the disciple, in which both teach and learn, as can be seen from the many literary forms, from the different languages on which the author draws making the novel a coming-of-age story. From isolated instruments, the class becomes an orchestra directed by a blind teacher. To educate is "to welcome the out of tune voices, discovering that in reality, they are all linked by a single breath."

This also includes the inevitable failure from which the teacher learns, otherwise he would not be able to look at those

young eyes which, as in the relationship between the sailors and the sea, "They make life and from life they are made." Failure is not hidden by Homer. He teaches that "the day comes for everyone when life shows itself for what it is: a betrayal. Not because it actually betrays us, but because it strips us of all the illusions with which we have betrayed it." In fact, if the students are fascinated by the new teacher, they are not the principal, nor the colleagues nor the parents. Anchored to the traditional school, they do not share the novelty of the roll call. A revolution has begun in young people and will be a point of departure at the end of the year of which it will principally remain "to have kept the names, nothing else, because every name we save is a piece of the world that we save and, if only we took the time to listen to them, to these lives, who knows how many of them we would save." The novel about school and adolescents is of particular relevance based on how young people lived during the pandemic, but it is more so in that they seem to remain constantly unheard, particularly within the school, yet they express in various ways the desire to tell each other. "In recent years, it is they who have forced me, sometimes in a painful way, to look where I did not know or did not want to look, because I had my ideas, my beliefs, my hypocrisies," underlines the Author.

Underlying the novel is Plato's "Myth of the cave", an allegory of education for which the Greek writer uses fire to represent knowledge, truth, with men on the wall, and the shadow that sees his interpretation, teaching that only by facing the truth from the bright side, only by climbing over the wall and exiting the cave, can one be able to see the actual reality of things and be free to look at the world with the eyes of truth. This is the lesson taught by the blind professor to the point of being able to free the students from a cave, the one inhabited by the shadows of their self-image, from the never revealed secrets of one's heart and history, leading each one to the light, starting a revolution in education that prompts us to ask ourselves, "How much love do we need to have a face?"

Time of...

Dear Friends,

How are you? I'd love to hear from you. I imagine that everyone is making a good journey every day and maybe, if we understand what generativity is, I'm sure we have many significant experiences to tell to each other.

Time passes and God continues to realize Salvation Stories in our realities. Therefore I would like to invite you to reflect on what helps us to look to the future with hope, because God "makes all things new" always.

The passing of the days leads us to recognize the stages that end in our life, but which in turn give way to the newness of the others that follow. Today I look at my life and also that of all of us, thanking God for the years that allowed us to share the mission as an Educating Community, collaborating in missionary evangelization *with* and *for* young people, along the path of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Next year we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of presence in the Church and in the world. And thus, the FMA Institute will continue on its journey of holiness.

In this context of celebration, we await the realization of GC XXIV, in an eschatological attitude as Saint Paul expresses it, "...put all things under his feet. For in putting all things under him he made no exceptions. At present, it is true, we are not able to see that all things are under him, but we do see Jesus, who was for a short while made less than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he submitted to death; so that by God's grace his experience of death should benefit all humanity." (Hebrews 2:8-9). In this passage, we have a 'now' and a 'not yet'.

The FMA Institute had started the process of preparation for the XXIV General Chapter, but when we thought we would carry it out in 2020 and then in May 2021, the situation of the pandemic led us to

live the experience of the 'not yet'. It seems that God, in the pre-Chapter journey, made us grasp the profound meaning of being immersed in the heart of contemporaneity. It is a world that lives the joy of solidarity in the search for more dignified paths for all, and also a world that "suffers the pain of childbirth", offering us the opportunity to be life-generating communities in the face of the culture of death that seems to prevail.

How has our gaze broadened towards the future of the world, of the Church, of our families, of our Educating Communities?

Dear friends, another stage of the magazine closes and while awaiting the challenges that GC XXIV will leave us, I invite you to continue building a "future of hope" with the certainty that God is among us. This certainty encouraged Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello in the construction of an Institute for the benefit of the young. We continue to embody the Charism from the hand of Mary Help of Christians who continues to do "everything" and who invites us to do everything that Jesus tells us.

Let us pray for the fruits of GC XXIV and for the challenge of living these difficult times as a possibility, with a heart full of hope.

Word of Camilla



... towards the 150th of the FMA Institute FMA

The red thread of Mary Domenica Mazzarello's entire life is her constant *'taking care'*, a typical dimension of femininity and generativity. Taking care is welcoming life and placing oneself at its service unconditionally. It implies the free and responsible choice to undertake a path that gradually leads to cultivating attitudes and practices to promote the person in all her/his dimensions. A path that is renewed, is regenerated precisely in the encounter with the uniqueness of the other, as happens in the episode of the *little girl with the worn out dress*.

"On a walk in May to the Rocchetta Shrine in Lerma, Mother Mazzarello gave a beautiful example of charity towards a five or six year old girl. Seeing her dressed in rags, badly covered, and suffering, she immediately made her part of the provisions. Not knowing how best to cover her, she asked her sisters, *"Would the one among you who has the best petticoat, give it to me?"* As soon as she has it, she sits on the grass in the meadow, handles the scissors, cuts a dress, distributes the various parts to the sisters so that they can sew them. She herself sews with the quickness that was her characteristic and, in the meantime, she questions the child about the Catechism and teaches her to recite the prayers. When the little dress is finished, she puts it on her, takes the remnants, makes a small package, and gives it to her saying, *"Take this home and give it to your mother who will use it to patch up your dress if it should tear."* Then, having learned that the child had siblings, she adds two or three loaves of bread and some cheese, telling her, *"Now go home, and you will eat this with them."* And she happily sends her to her parents.

In the evening when she returned home, she told the whole community about the walk. She said, *"Today on the way we met a poor little girl all dirty and in rags... she really moved one to compassion. And how much I enjoyed seeing that the sisters ran to caress her with affection and charity..."*" (Cf. Macconco Ferdinando, *St. Mary D. Mazzarello Co-founder and first Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, Turin, FMA Institute 1960, I, 407- 408).



Mary Domenica Mazzarello is attentive to every situation, to every encounter that asks even in silence, for help, listening and care. Her attentive gaze, paying attention to the other, makes her as close as possible to the child's experience. Main, however, does not only put herself at the service of the child. Her educational method is based on co-responsibility and on the educational purpose pursued thanks to a dialogic community dynamic and a plurality of relationships.

Since its inception, "the Mornese School is configured as a 'house of education' ... The ultimate goal of the integral formation of young women is pursued with responsibility and unity of purpose by all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and by the other adult presences who collaborate in the same mission according to their particular role" (Cf. Ruffinatto Piera, *The educational relationship*. LAS)

The educational practice of Mary Domenica and of every FMA is to take care of the young people by proposing an itinerary of growth that leads each to become an open, welcoming, and supportive human person.

In the current social context, the feminine imprint of educational care is one of the urgencies that young people need the most. 'The worn-out dress' can be seen on many young people today. Existential threadbare clothing, ruined, and worn out in many places that requires an educational intervention to make it new again.

We believe that EDUCATION
is one of the most effective ways
to HUMANIZE the world and history.
Education is a question of LOVE
and RESPONSIBILITY
which is transmitted in time
from GENERATION to generation.

*(Video message of Pope Francis
for the Global Compact on Education)*



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco

