

A close-up photograph of a baby lying down, smiling at the camera. The baby is wearing a green crocheted headband with a white flower on the left side. The baby is surrounded by various colorful toys, including a red star-shaped toy, a yellow ring, and a green ring. In the background, there is a package of Pampers sleep & play diapers. The text "LETTERS FROM THE MISSION 2020" is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

LETTERS FROM THE MISSION 2020

Missionary Contemplative Movement
"Fr. De Foucauld"

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EDITORIAL

I am reading a collection of homilies and speeches given by the Archbishop of Milan, Msgr. Mario Dephini. He is a man of God who is both realistic and full of hope. A man of God who is very devoted to his people, and able to understand today's cultural environment.

I quote these few lines which I feel are full of meaning: "The weakness of the people of our time is due to solitude. A person boasts that he or she is not tied to anything or anybody; so he or she feels free to believe whatever they want, to do whatever they want without depending on anything. But now they are afraid and sometimes depressed. This kind of freedom is like a jail of loneliness."

This last sentence, about freedom, is very striking since freedom and jail are opposites. Yes, loneliness or more exactly isolation is the grave of freedom. To be free we need true relationships in which we feel loved so that we are able to love.

In this current pandemic, there is one thing which causes more pain than all the other nuisances which we experience. That is the loneliness of a critically ill person in hospital who is not allowed to have his family near him. And if the person dies, the relatives are not allowed to pray near the coffin, nor to be at the funeral. This adds to the loneliness of everyone. Being bound to someone always gives life, especially during times of suffering.

All the letters in this issue tell us about the beauty of relationships. In these relationships we find freedom. And the Spirit of God "is moving over" this freedom as it was at the beginning of creation (Gen 1,3). The Spirit opens our hearts to the presence of Jesus, who offered all the days of His life, up to the cross, in order to recreate true relationships between humans and God, His Father and our Father. Through those bonds, we are offered true holiness, which we read about in the words of Fr. Andrew and Pope Francis, in the last pages of this issue.



FATHER ANDREA GASPARINO (1923-2010)

He was born in Boves and entered the diocesan seminary of Cuneo when he was eleven years old. He studied theology during the second world war.

He was ordained a priest in 1947 and was particularly sensitive to the problem of the orphans created by the war and of the boys from poor families. After four years as an assistant parish priest in a mountain parish, he received the bishop's blessing to begin gathering street children.

La città dei ragazzi was founded in this impoverished environment relying completely on God's care. A few years later the first vocations arrived, the first sisters who together with the Father represent the "roots" of the Community. However in the heart of Fr. Andrea a missionary passion begun to grow. This passion was sustained by prayer and very soon afterwards, (on the 11th of February, 1959) this prayer took on the form of continuous adoration, which has been continued by the community ever since.

Two years later the first mission was founded in the favelas of Brazil, then in Madagascar and Korea... and gradually in the different countries where the fraternities are today.

Throughout his life Fr. Andrea was tireless in training the youth, the poor, and families, in prayer and in a passion for the least among us. Coming to know the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, towards the end of the 1960s, was a blessing for Father Andrea and confirmed the style of mission that the Lord had already sketched in his heart and in the life of the first missionary fraternities.



CHARLES DE FOUCAULD (1858-1916)

He was a French nobleman who spent his youth without any connection to God. After a few years as a cavalry officer and a risky adventure as an explorer in Morocco, he had a radical conversion that opened him up to the desire to give his life to God.

For six years he was a Trappist monk in France and Syria, but he was consistently in search of a poorer life more similar to Jesus' life in Nazareth. He spent a few years in Nazareth. He discovered that Nazareth is not only a geographical but also a spiritual place, where God comes close to man, particularly to the man who suffers.

Charles spent the last fifteen years of his life among the people of the Sahara, in close contact with Islam. His mission, rooted in long hours of daily Eucharistic adoration, aimed at being a testimony of Jesus, through friendship and sharing with the poor.



PRAYER

The first mission of the Community is prayer centred around the Word of God and the Eucharist. We feel called to prayer and we sense the need to share this gift with the poor, the youth, families and with everyone.

THE FRATERNITIES

The Community is made up of small fraternities, to foster deeper, more personal relationships.

We are aware that only faith in Jesus makes authentic fraternal life possible through the acceptance of differences, the joy of being together, and mutual forgiveness. Fraternity is a place of inner growth and mission.

TOGETHER WITH THE POOR

Our mission among the poor, in which we try to create bonds of true friendship with them, starts with prayer and with a fraternity life among ourselves. In giving and receiving we often experience the mysterious presence of Jesus.

THE MOVEMENT

The Community is recognized by the Church, at the diocesan and pontifical level, as a Movement. In fact, many laypeople, young people, adults and families, who share a spiritual harmony and an evangelical sensitivity for the poorest and a contemplative prayer, walk and collaborate together with consecrated brothers and sisters.



CONTACTS

Albania:	ramondalla@yahoo.it	(00355) 587 20185 - Gostime
Bangladesh:	frattootpara@gmail.com	(0088) 041 810891 - Khulna
Brazil:	frat.vila@gmail.com	(0055) 21 24533323 - Rio de Janeiro
Ethiopia:	misfucad@ethionet.et	(00251) 118957362 - Addis Abeba
Italy:	info@centromissionario.org	(0039) 0171 491263 - sisters - Cuneo (0039) 366 3172176 - brothers - Cuneo
Kenya:	mdfnairobi@gmail.com	(00254) 716616183 - Nairobi
Korea:	todongkorea@gmail.com	(0082) 55 7527665 - Chinju
Madagascar:	frativato@moov.mg	(00261) 2022 48898 - Ivato
Russia:	fraternitymos@hotmail.com	(007) 495 3948857 - Moscow

For other information visit our homepage www.centromissionario.org



“LED BY THE SPIRIT”

Community centre, Cuneo – Italy

August 2017

"Lord, teach us to pray". It is the disciples who make this request to Jesus, but it is also a desire present in the heart of every person. There are even times when this prayer can become a cry of the soul when we especially feel the need for deep communion with God. At the same time, in the routine of our daily lives, we can try to resist the need to stop, to take time, to be silent and to do our part to enter an atmosphere suitable for prayer. Then this question arises in the heart: "Who will help us to enter into this vital but demanding dialogue called prayer?"

Truly the Holy Spirit who dwells in us is the source and the guide of our prayer! *"It is not easy to speak of the Holy Spirit: He is invisible and He is everywhere, He pervades everything and is beyond everything. All that is beautiful and positive in the world is His work, all that is done and said that is true and holy is His work "* (Card. Martini).

Yes, it is the Spirit who opens us to intimacy with God, a God still to be discovered, even if we have already spent a long time with Him. He opens us to the surprise that God is, always different from what we dare to imagine, a God who gives, gives, gives more than we think; who acts, works, and cares, more than what we notice.

So it is necessary to begin our prayer not alone, but by allying ourselves with the Spirit; invoking Him, asking for His help, and letting Him guide us. Invoking Him for a long time, with all our heart, being careful to fill our words with desire, expectation, and honesty. The Spirit, for His part, is looking forward to being able to open us up to the encounter with the Lord and works in us so that we can be active in prayer. He encourages us to put what we are into the hands of God and brings about the prayer of children in us.

How to be guided by the Spirit in the concreteness of prayer

Concerning the importance of being guided by the Spirit in prayer, it can help to keep in mind the three moments into which we can divide our personal prayer and express the Spirit's concrete action with verbs:

1. *The moment of the encounter.* Here the Spirit opens us to the truth about ourselves and of God
2. *The moment of listening.* Here the Spirit helps us to welcome the personal love of God
3. *The moment of "here I am".* Here the Spirit makes us enter the logic of this love

1. The moment of encounter

In the first moment of prayer, we arrive full of things we have experienced, full of strong feelings, full of words that still ring inside (words that we said and listened to, words of thanks or of anger), a whole world of emotions and situations experienced. In this way, we enter the silence of prayer.

Sometimes there is something that burns in the heart, a suffering, a concern or a great joy. Then what we are comes out in all its simplicity and the supplication or praise flows spontaneously and the encounter with Jesus is also more immediate. At other times, on the other hand, life in its daily routine may seem more confused, formless, even "flat"; there is not something that emerges in a lively way or we may even be afraid to open certain internal drawers and we seem not to know where to start. So we come to prayer without a precise orientation, a little distracted, and the risk is to remain on the surface and not let ourselves be reached by the Presence of Jesus.

In those moments it is as if we forget the Presence of the Spirit in us who "*groans internally*", who already prays for us and in us. He, however, is there and works, being "in the middle" between us and God, in that middle that scares us so much at that moment; in the middle, between our poverty and the mercy of God. And His action is that of a friend who helps us open up: open up to the truth about ourselves, as we are. And open ourselves to the truth of God, who is Love, truly only Love, a Love that is "*before*": before we decide to follow him, to ask for forgiveness, to convert to Him. "*When we were sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Rom 5,6) *The Holy Spirit thus restores our dignity as "loved creatures"*.

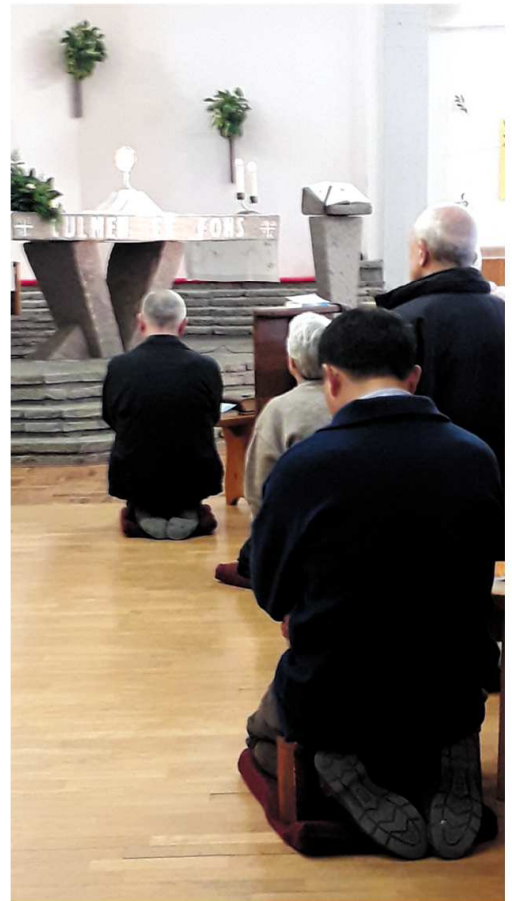
Then we can truly show ourselves as we are before the Lord, unarmed, surrendered, in the peace of this gaze. Then the pouring out of our heart and talking about what we are experiencing will be different, more confident. Then we can live precious moments, in which we let God enter into ourselves and allow Him to walk in our inner house, in our interior city; so that He can visit it, bring His gaze of love and so that He can work in us.

2. The moment of listening

Here the Spirit helps us to welcome the personal love of God "*Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the same Spirit by whom it was written*" (Dei Verbum 12).

For this reason, our need of the Holy Spirit becomes a vital need when listening to the Word of God.

When I open Holy Scripture, what is the question I have in the background? What do I expect from the Word? A temptation is to expect to hear from the Word what I have to do. Instead, the Word is given to us first of all not to





tell us what to do but to discover the love of God that is revealed right there, for me, for everyone. Here the Holy Spirit comes to help in our weakness, helping us to welcome this love of God that is given me.

In fact, God speaks, not so that I may feel judged, but God gives me His Word to give me His Presence, His promise, His hope for my life.

"God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through Him" (Jn 3:17).

"The Son of Man came to serve, not to be served" (Mk 10,45).

The Spirit opens us to this, to welcome the love of God above all.

3. My "here I am"

The Spirit helps us to enter the logic of God's love. In prayer the time comes to get involved and say my "here I am", my "yes", which is not an effort or an act of will, "to do well", but is an acceptance of the logic of love that I have met. *The logic that alone supports everything: me, my life and everything around me. And there is nothing else eternal other than this love.*

In theory, they are thoughts that can get me excited, but in practice, they require a real inner death so that they can come to life. To live love it is, in fact, necessary in certain moments "to die to ourselves", "to die to the old man, to the old woman" (cf. Eph 4:22), to certain thoughts to which we are attached, to certain habits in relating to God...

And at the same time, when we welcome this love, we enter a circle where we are sucked in with all of ourselves and find ourselves loving. "Our poverty once loved, becomes mercy" (Don Fabio Rosini). That's how it is. Not our skill, but our poverty, which we often do not accept, when it is reached by the love of God, turns into mercy. Become a heart that turns towards others with what it has received.

So it is essential to recognize that any good work comes from God and to give thanks. This causes us to continue living under the guidance of the Spirit: *"It is He who awakens action and work in you"*, says Saint Paul (Phil 2,13). Let us only worry about attaching ourselves to Him with all our strength and always starting from there: from His love!

A Nazareth called Jardim Gramacho

From the small favela of Jardim Gramacho, Rio De Janeiro - Brazil

October 2018

I have been in Brazil in the fraternity of Jardim Gramacho for 8 months. This is my first real missionary experience, that is according to the "style" of our community: with the perspective of staying for a few years, choosing to live in the most disadvantaged contexts of the countries in which we find ourselves and living fraternal life in small groups of two or three sisters.

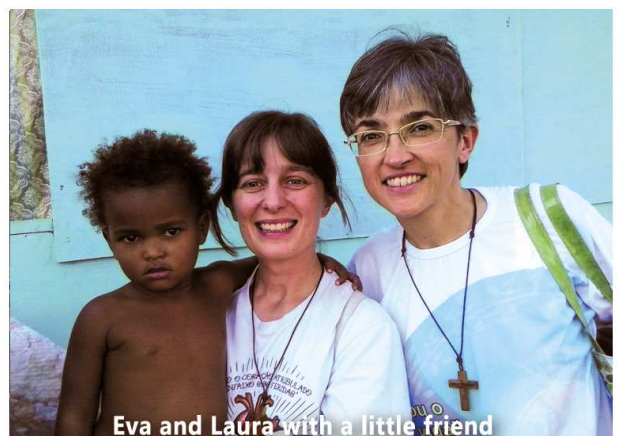
Many beautiful new gifts from the Holy Spirit who with His "divine breath" took me across an ocean and invites me to walk on new and unexpected paths. I have also faced new challenges. The first one on arriving here was the reality in which we live, that is Jardim Gramacho, a populous neighbourhood that stretches near the largest rubbish dump in Brazil. Now my eyes are "accustomed" to the scenes that present themselves every day, but which made me feel uneasy and sad when I first arrived here. Getting off the bus and walking on foot towards the fraternity I see houses built in a disorderly way, I see bad roads or dirt roads, I see garbage thrown here and there, I breathe waves of foul-smelling air... in short, it is an unpleasant picture, which impresses and gives rise to anxiety: "will I be able to live here?".

Our fraternity is right there in the middle in what they call here "la favelinha", a brick house with a beautiful garden in front of it. The first visits to families who are cared for by the sisters impressed me very much: going into an area full of wooden and sheet metal shacks, the heart tightens on seeing families and an infinity of children in such precarious and miserable living conditions. And I really do not want and I cannot get used to this situation of great injustice and suffering, although living here no longer arouses negative feelings in me. Why not?

Because as the days pass something else prevails over the external world which has an immeasurable value and quality. They are the people and lives that I meet and whom I will meet here: women and men who suffer, struggle, believe and entrust themselves to God and live the hardships and conflicts with extraordinary strength and dignity that teach me. Children full of vitality and enthusiasm, who run barefoot, fly kites, and shout and laugh happily, and are capable of turning waste found in the landfill into a toy. They are the young people who engage in study and work and keep alive the hope that something will change, that the future will be better. They are the small Christian communities in whose celebrations, prayers, songs you hear(,) the "tired and oppressed" hearts vibrate as they go to refresh themselves, to resume life and courage at the Source.



Children from the Morro



Eva and Laura with a little friend

So gradually the picture is filled with faces and relationships and the colours become alive, warm, and that world no longer frightens but becomes familiar, becomes home. Yes, now I feel "at home" because I realize that I "live" good relationships of closeness, trust with many people and I am grateful for the wonderful way Brazilian people welcome and create friendships that has made it very easy for me to integrate.

I am grateful for our call to live in these "peripheries" of the world, I am grateful that our mission begins in a very simple and ordinary way with living the fraternity among ourselves and with those whom we meet, with a presence of prayer and intercession for our people, with the desire and commitment to be a small seed, a humble sign of the Kingdom of God in that Nazareth which for me today is called Jardim Gramacho.

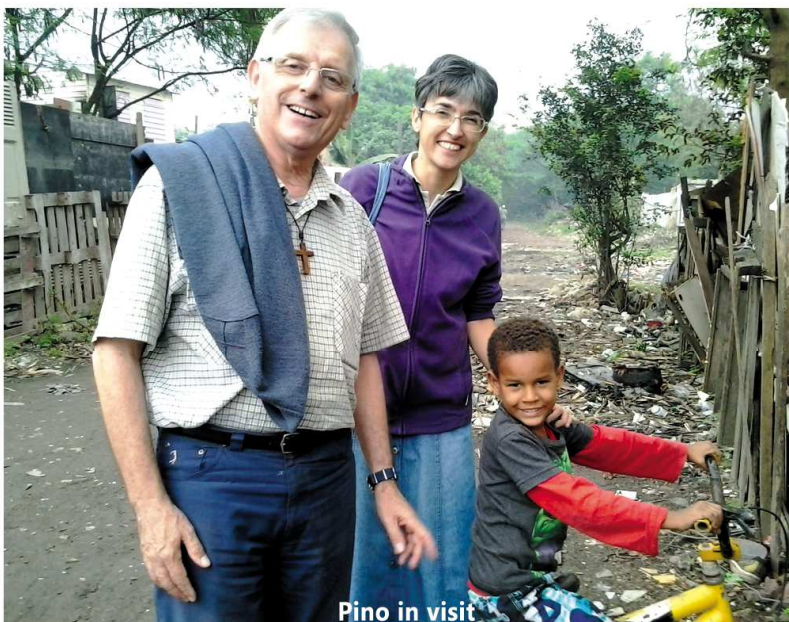
sister Laura



playing a Jardim Gramacho



Jardim Gramacho



Pino in visit

A REAL PEARL

For a couple of weeks, Piero and Fabrizio visited a PIME missionary school in the Amazon to learn more about this reality in Brazil.

October 2019

Pope Francis has understood that indigenous minorities if helped, can still defend themselves from our model of consumerism and the culture of waste.

In the synod of the Amazon we are seeing again what we saw in the synod for young people, a great interest in listening to the base, to give a new face to the church and to discover the dignity of peoples who can teach our civilization a simpler and more humane way of life.

In the synod for young people, there was a huge audience, especially through social networks. At the synod in the Amazon synod, on the other hand, there was a listening experience through concrete meetings: meetings and consultations of more than 87,000 people linked to the indigenous reality who shared their life and their history.

We need them, we need the message which their lives give us.

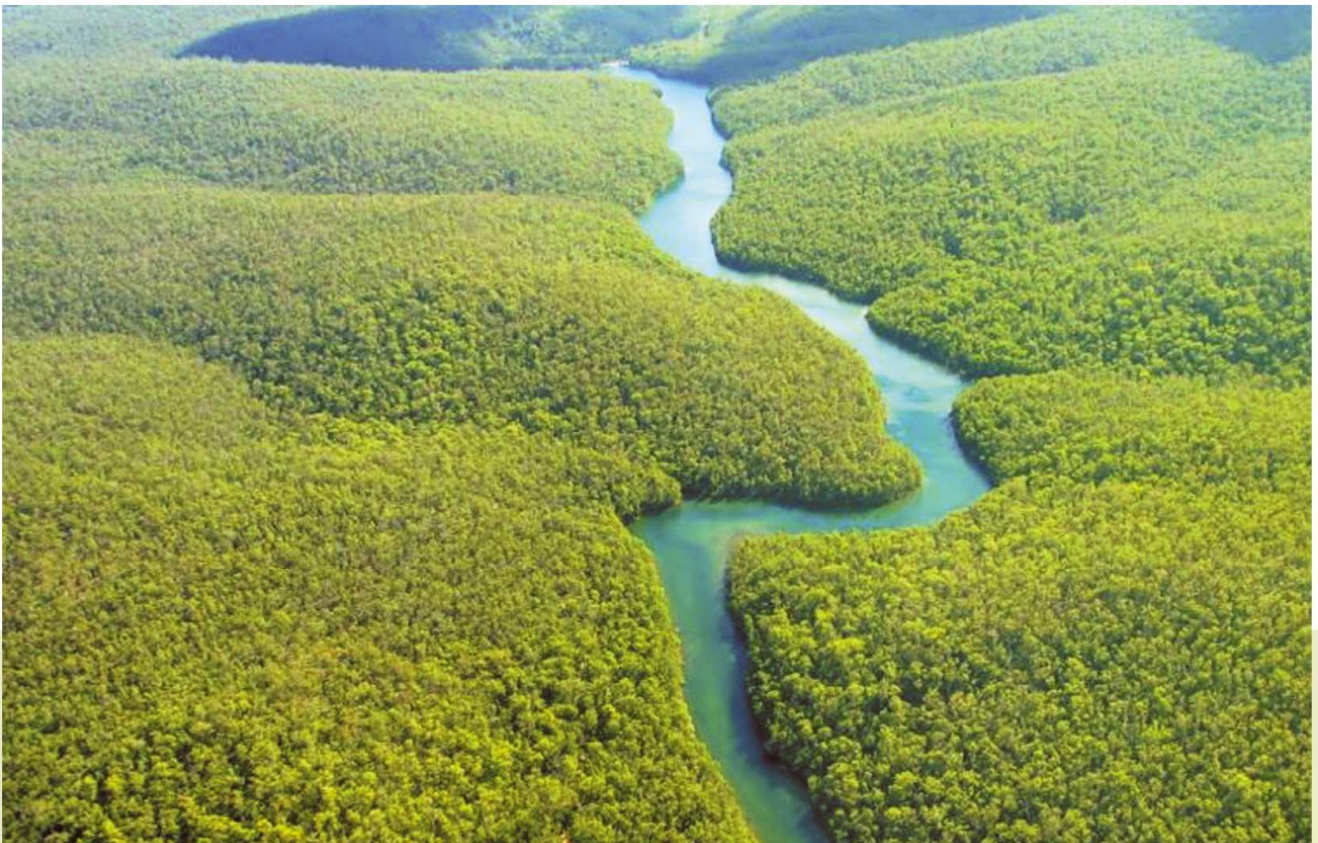
During the visit to an indigenous school in the Amazon, I was with a kind indigenous boy, a young man with a deep and clear gaze. I called him "a pearl", when I spoke with a teacher and she immediately confirmed this: "Yes, Genivaldo is a real pearl...".

We were talking together the two of us, and I was trying to have the words "Our Father, your kingdom come..." translated into his language, Sataré Mawé.

"Our Father..." you say: "Ui ywot...".

"And tell me, Genivaldo, how do you say My Father?". He replied: "It is said in the same way... In our language, it is impossible to distinguish mine and ours... We have only one word."

Fr. Fabrizio



JESUS IS RISEN

From Bangladesh, Fraternity of Joseph para

November 2016

Dear brothers, sisters and friends,

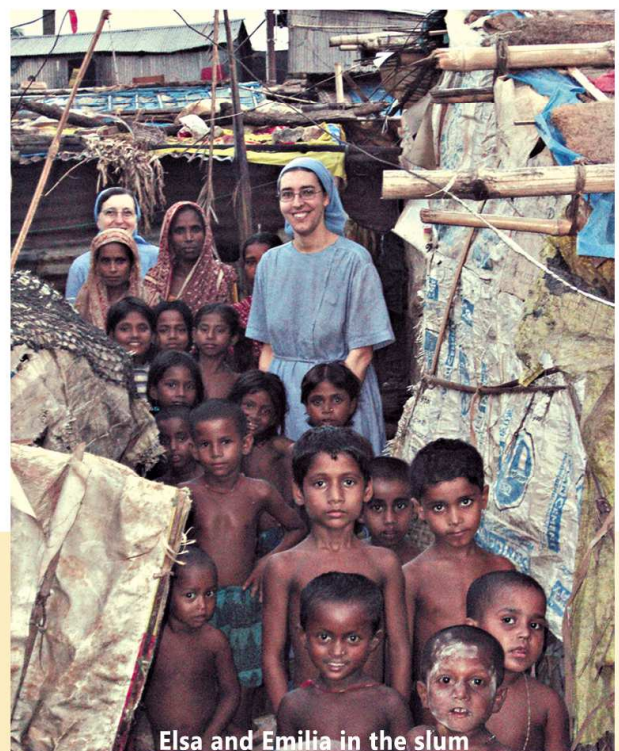
this time I am being helped to write the letter by the great faith of one of our grandparents from Joseph para. His name is Gibon, which in Bengali means "life": he is very thin, very old and sick, and also a little shy... his love for the risen Jesus and his prayer have touched me many times this year. As a fraternity, we help his granddaughter with the expenses of studying at college, since her mother has left home, her father is not there and the grandfather takes care of his grandchildren.

Every two or three months he comes to the fraternity to bring his share of the tuition and that meeting always has the power to renew my faith.

Grandfather Gibon, like many old people, loves to tell me about his life, about the war, his friendships with the bishops and with all the missionaries who have passed through the parish and then, almost naturally, he speaks about his prayer life with me. "Every morning, at three o'clock, when I wake up, I begin to recite the whole rosary: the first intentions are for the Pope, then for the bishops, for the religious, for families, and for peace. As I pray I take the Bible in my hands and open it to the page of the story of the Risen One, which I find thanks to a bookmark that Prerona, my granddaughter, has left there. You know, sister, I can't read, but I know that that page is the most important of all Scripture; all the strength of our faith is there: Jesus has risen"

And while he repeats it to me, and he repeats it every time we meet, his eyes fill with tears, they light up and his wrinkled face becomes full of life, that same life of the Risen One who he loves so much... and I let myself be infected.

Yes, this year we are especially in need of this faith that makes us believe beyond death, that makes us look for signs of life despite everything. Our country has been hit by multiple terrorist acts that have spread fear and caused deep sadness in all of us.



Elsa and Emilia in the slum

Prominent personalities, and religious leaders, have been receiving death threats for a long time through letters and messages on mobile phones. Foreigners, people of different religious minorities, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists, free thinkers, bloggers and writers, university teachers and Muslims from different backgrounds have been brutally killed, as well as Shiites and those related to the Sufi movement.

First individuals were attacked, then mosques and temples, until the culmination of the massacre of July 1st at the Holey Artisan Cafe, in the diplomatic area of Dhaka, where twenty hostages died including nine Italians, seven Japanese, three Bengali and one Indian. Those who knew how to recite some verses from the Koran were saved, for others, there was no hope.

Blood, shock, horror... deep sadness, immense pain for the victims, for their families, for the whole nation where, until that day, a good religious coexistence had reigned... It is like a large and heavy boulder on our heart and on that of many.

"Who will roll the boulder away from the entrance of the tomb?" But looking they saw that the boulder had already been rolled away, although it was very large ... "Do not be afraid! You seek Jesus the Nazarene, the crucified. He has risen, he is not here ". (Mk 16, 3-6)

These words, shared by grandfather Gibon, marked a turning point in my heart: I felt a strong call to look for signs of life even in the harsh reality of violent death.

With Sabi, we committed to be more thankful for the gift of life, to be more attentive to serving life when we meet the poor, and then the desire to pray incessantly for terrorists sprung up in us ... yes, with compassion that could only come from the Spirit, because they are young lives ruined by brainwashing and dragged into the world of evil.

We experienced the power of the prayers of the whole community and friends for us and it consoled us to believe that we are all in the hands of God, all of us ...: the victims of the attacks, even the terrorists and all those involved in this fanaticism.

Faraaz, a twenty-year-old young Bengali who returned to Bangladesh to spend the summer holidays, from university in Atlanta (USA) where he was studying, was a great witness. On the evening of July 1, he had gone to the Oley Artisan for a dinner with two friends who were classmates, Asinta, an American citizen of Bengali origin and Tarishi, an Indian citizen whose family lives in Bangladesh. When the terrorists knew of their citizenship, they refused to release them. He would have had a chance to be saved, but he chose not to abandon his friends and was killed. By sacrificing his life he showed that love for others is greater than hatred and has left a great sign of hope in our hearts and for the whole country.

Now the situation seems to be more peaceful and we are thankful. However, we cannot forget the wounds caused by so much violence and we continue to look for signs in daily life that remind us that good is really present in the heart of man and that God the Father continues to hold the world in his hands and that he guides it well.

I greet you with deep affection also on behalf of all the sisters,

Sister Elsa

AROUSING A CHAIN OF CHARITY

From the Fraternity in Nairobi

December 2018

Dear all,

I am thankful for this opportunity to reach you all with this family letter, on this first Sunday of Advent.

I was touched by a call heard during the homily of the mass: the priest told us that in this Advent we are called to grow in love for those who live next to us. I asked myself: "Sarah, who is 'your neighbour' whom I should love?" This question burnt inside me and made me think about our friend Agatha who knew how to take care of Brenda and Salomon.

Agatha had long heard, in the usual gossip of the slum, about a shack in the valley where there were two... "little monsters". Several times she had wondered what mothers meant when they spoke of "little monsters". Then one day, gathering her courage, she went with a friend to visit that family.

She was received with distrust by a girl. While they were exchanging a few words in the darkness of the shack, Agatha realized that something was moving behind a curtain. She asked to look and finally saw the truth: two small children, Salomon and Brenda, dirty and smelly were looking at her with amazement.

The two children were disabled: she was mentally limited and he was physically impaired. They were both left a little to themselves, secluded alone in the hut for most of the time.

Brenda's mother has to go looking for work every day to bring home something to eat, Brenda's sister, who is Salomon's mother, who faces a life without a future and without hope, seeks relief in life at the bottom of the valley...

Agatha started to act: "the children must be seen by a doctor!".



"They must be washed! They have to get out of that wet, muddy, lightless hole". However, her zeal did not thrill the mother and her sister at all.

But Agatha defied their criticism and took the children to a medical examination herself.

It turned out that Salomon is an intelligent child, but having crooked feet it is not possible for him to stand and move on his knees: but surgery was possible!

Brenda on the other hand is brain-damaged, but has a chance of improving her movements.

Now I can't tell you everything in detail, but I can tell you this: Salomon underwent surgery

Brenda now has many friends because, in addition to regularly going to physiotherapy, always accompanied by Agatha, she comes to the meeting for the youngest children every Sunday. Sitting on the mat, as beautiful as a queen, she smiles and claps her hands while the other children sing and dance.

Agatha's love has sparked a chain of charity because now many want to help this little girl by being close to her. Children are the first to give her affection and joy, not to mention our novices and all of us, who look to her as a true miracle of love.

Do you want to join this chain too by offering your prayers for Brenda and Salomon?

I greet you with joy and great affection.

Sister Sarah



in the yard at Mathare



fraternity



activities in fraternity



party in fraternity

A "SPECIAL DESERT" FOR FAMILIES

Community centre, Italy

September 2019



Dear all,

it's been a few weeks since we finished the second edition of the *desert for families*, here at the *Città* (the centre of our Movement) in Cuneo. So I'll tell you two quick impressions about this experience. Already last year with a group of families who attend the monthly meetings of the community we decided to spend a few days together here at the *Città*. And this year still other families asked to participate.

We were about thirty adults (if we count the families) and there were about forty children. You can, therefore, imagine a beautiful liveliness and an atmosphere that was not exactly silent! In particular at meals where someone considered using earplugs(!). So was our experience just a so-called *desert*? We justified ourselves by saying that we can think of the desert as the moment when the people of God, with their children(!), leave their security in Egypt to go towards the freedom of the promised land. And as Dt. 8 tells us these forty years will be an opportunity to "know what's in the heart" and find out how "man lives from what comes out of the mouth of the

we said that it's okay to keep this title, "*desert for families*," because the centre is not the silence itself rather the search for new freedom for us... we hope that this justification is not too thin.

In these days together, we stopped to reflect on *how to live prayer in this moment of life*, in which children take up so much space, and in which there never seems to be time to stop and be with God. We started from the idea of the "cry" of joy, and also of the struggle of which the psalms speak, to reflect that each of us has a cry linked to what he is experiencing at this moment of his life and it is precisely this cry, and not any other, which is called to become prayer.

On the second day, we stopped to reflect on what is the precious pearl that God has entrusted to me and then to my family? *What did we feel was so precious that it made us say: "This is where it is worth giving my life; here, this field must be bought!"*

This reflection arose from a very concrete question of some of these families: in this new ecclesial context inaugurated by the Council, where it was clarified that all Christians are

called to live perfection in love starting from baptism, how should we live it in the family? Or even more concretely: what additional thing is my family called to experience... the reception of a child? Caring for a relative? A new openness in the dialogue between wife and husband? We told ourselves that there is nothing additional which is valid for all, otherwise, charity becomes idealism, and we also risk making comparisons between families which can be harmful. Instead, there is *our additional thing*, and it is precisely for this reason that it is important to listen to the precious pearl that God has entrusted to each one.

All the participants expressed deep gratitude for the possibility of sharing their journey of actual faith with each other, in an atmosphere of respectful listening, and also for coming to understand how our Christian faith can touch the centre of daily challenges.

In the afternoon, in the moment of sharing, the couples were able to open their hearts and listen to each other. For those who live in the family, this is an immense gift, because it is difficult for these occasions to be created in their day to day lives. Today here in Europe the family is very busy carrying children around, dad and mom go to work, there is time for errands and for shopping... so in these community moments, there is room for the possibilities that otherwise it seems difficult to achieve. Sharing, praying together, meeting with people with whom you can share the faith.

We greet you with affection and thank the Lord and these families for the communion and friendship we have experienced in these days.

Fr Christoffer,
also on behalf of **sister Marianna**



*Letter from the fraternity in Mosca - Russia**February 2018*

The poor person is not so much "one who does not have", but it's more a matter of "what he is not".

It was the morning of January 7, 2017, the Orthodox Christmas. In the church of San Giovanni, a large group of young people were preparing lunch, the famous "Christmas lunch" that the Community of Sant'Egidio offers to the homeless every year. There was a lot of work and everyone seemed as busy as ants transforming the interior of the church in an instant into a real restaurant with tables, chairs, benches, tablecloths, dishes etc... My job was to stay at the central door and prevent the entry to those who were not working including the people who would later be guests at lunch. The cold was intense and even near the door, several drafts of air made me move constantly and stamp my feet so as not to freeze! Here I met Mariam. She was leaning against the wall, motionless, with her head covered and a wearing a long, heavy skirt. She did not talk to anyone and I wondered if such a woman should be inside or outside. Gradually I realized that she was a beggar used to begging at the entrance of the church and so she had the right to be inside. Even though the only part of her face that I could see were the dark and bright eyes of a young woman, something in her gaze struck me, something different, very sincere, good without malice.

We started talking and she told me that just outside Moscow she had four young children and a husband who could not work because of diabetes. They had moved here from Tajikistan years ago and had intended to settle down but things had gone wrong... With people like these we are often led to question everything, we ask ourselves: "is it true? Is it just a made up sad story?". She very precisely listed the ages of the children, their dates of birth and shoe sizes ... in the end, we exchanged phone numbers intending to talk again. When I called her a few days later I discovered that she could not reach the metro station indicated by me because she said clearly: "I can't read". Another blow for me.... How I asked myself, is it possible not to know, how to read in 2017? Yet it was so. Mariam who is 28 years old can neither read nor write.

We still managed to agree to meet and to get her some food. The next step was to go and see her about a week later. Another rather shocking discovery because it was not easy to see that four small children and two adults could live in such a hut, without running water, without any of what is normal for a minimum comfort. It was a single room with a carpet in the centre and some mattresses on the edges, a sofa and bags of stuff piled up on the walls, a bin transformed into a stove in which pieces of pallets burned, no window in order to shelter from the cold, rugs and blankets had been hung even on the walls. Entering this sort of hut, we really didn't believe our eyes; we hardly found a corner to sit even though there were only the two of us. What they called "home" was in reality the tool shed, that usually is put up near the vegetable gardens and serves as a storage room for various things, an out-of-the-way place along the railway 40 km from Moscow.

To us accustomed to the metropolis it was really a step back in time, walking in the deep snow on a rough beaten path full of holes with half-collapsed fences all around and stray dogs who looked at us suspiciously! The most beautiful thing was undoubtedly the children, three girls and

a boy, the two bigger ones who were 4 and 5-years-old, then the little girl of 8 months and a baby of 2 years. As always in front of strangers, they were a little intimidated, but after ten minutes they resumed their games on that carpet filling the room with voices and screams.

For a few months, we continued to meet Mariam to give food and some times we went to see the whole family in the meantime looking for some solution to their situation. Finally one day she called us as she was scared as saying that the police had raided the house, had checked documents, and had taken away her husband with the three oldest children because their documents were not in order. From that moment on, things started to get worse and the four of them returned to Tajikistan. Mariam found herself alone with the 8-month-old baby.

I tell this story now because it has remained in my heart: I have often thought about the courage of this mother, her ability to love, her strength. She often called me not to ask for anything, but only to find out how I was and to promise me that she was praying for me five times a day. With the help of some dear friends, we were then able to help her and the girl leave too; it wasn't easy to get everything and some anxiety tormented us until the day of departure; we asked ourselves: "will she arrive in time? Will she pass the checkpoints? Will she manage to find the right gate? etc etc..." Mariam surprised us, she was there with her red dress typical of Tajikistan, long and elegant, even the little girl looked like a queen, no trace of the beggar we had known months before... We said goodbye for the last time with tears in her eyes she said: "I will never forget you" and, since I still had crutches, she told Paola to help me!

Mariam did not leave empty-handed, but with a small sum that allowed her to buy a piece of land and build herself a room to live in.

It would be nice to still be able to help this family from a distance at least to send the children to school because illiteracy will force them to retrace their parents' path, a path towards insignificance because the poor perhaps is not so much what he "does not have", but what "is not"!

I conclude by remembering Carla who taught me a lot about love for the poor. She was always ready to reach out, never indifferent even when the only possible help was a greeting or a smile, but it is precisely these gestures that help.

sister Anna Maria



OPENNESS LEADS US TOWARDS THE FAITH

From the fraternity of Turin - Italy

February 2018

As in all the other fraternities, here in Turin (in the area of Santa Rita, where we have been for almost two years), we have a school of life made up of the people around us and of their daily lives. Even a simple greeting with a smile makes us understand, once again, the great value of the welcome that our neighbours have offered and continue to offer us.

In turn these people were touched by our somewhat "unique" presence in the condominium. So partly moved by curiosity and partly by amazement, some came to visit us. It is a great joy for us to be able to open the front door to anyone who wants to come in. We are amazed by the simple and concrete faith of those around us, especially when they learn of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist in our chapel.

One of our neighbours is Susanna, a young mother who lives next to us; she told us: "Now when I pass under this window I stop and make the sign of the cross and I have also taught my son that here is the presence of Jesus so we say a prayer".

Another neighbour, Alberto, who lives in front of us, is seriously sick. One day he confided to us: "In the morning when I can get up and see the light in your chapel I join your prayer, this gives me strength knowing that you are praying for us". And we really try to be faithful in bringing everyone we meet into our prayers and we seem to respond in this way to their trust.

How do you pray?

I think of Silvia, a young disabled girl, who needs help; I go to her twice a week to help her take a shower and to walk. Since we met she has always asked me about prayer, because every time we meet she says to me: "I would like you not to come just to help me walk, which I need, but also to tell me how you pray and to pray together; and I would like you to bring me to your place, to see how you pray. "

From that day on, whenever possible we enter a nearby church, pray together and exchange commitments on prayer. I'm learning a lot from Silvia and her continuous desire to put prayer first.

In the big city the poverty of loneliness

Here in our daily mission, both in prison and in visits to people in their homes, we learn about love for the individual. We find many elderly, lonely and sick people around us. We come to know of them by word of mouth. By going to visit the houses, we discovered that loneliness is the great poverty of this area of ours.

In this sense, also being able to "bring God", through the mission of bringing Eucharistic communion to those who cannot themselves come to church, truly teaches us to rejoice and taste the beauty of being a gift, and it is also a great lesson of faith, which we receive, seeing the expectation and the desire that people have to receive Jesus in their own home.

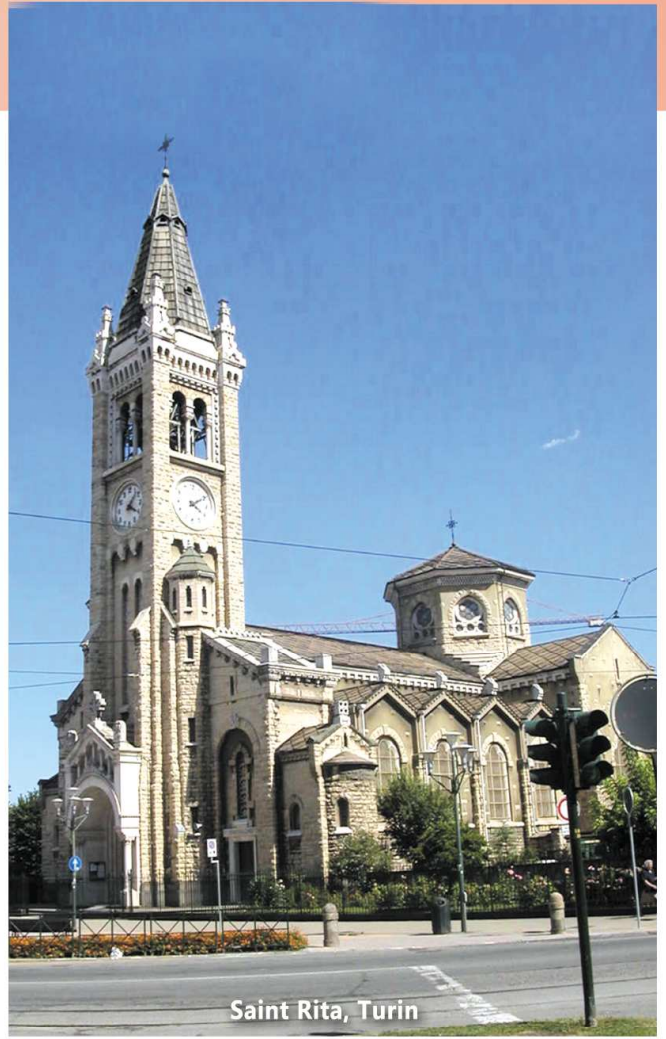
And this is also my wish to all of us: to be ever more generous in giving ourselves.



Sister Jacquie



Jaquie and Rinuccia



Saint Rita, Turin



the chapel in fraternity

JESUS PRECEDES US IN OUR JOURNEYS

Letter from the fraternity of the brothers of Genoa

October 2018



We are moving towards the end of this first year of the new fraternity of us brothers in Genoa. The community has already been present in the city for 35 years through the shelter for the homeless in via San Bernardo, managed by a large group of friends and the fraternity of the sisters in via Canneto il Lungo. Many deep bonds built over the years through the schools of prayer which Father Andrea started also connect us to the city.

We have experienced what Mark 16.7 reports in the encounter of the angel with the women who came to the tomb: "Go and tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you to Galilee; there you will see Him as He said ". We are part of this story and we are reaping the fruits of the fidelity of all these years, but also trying to continue to recognize the steps of the Lord who precedes us.

Somehow we too, like the disciples closed in the Upper Room, needed to leave the safe place, to turn away from the usual things to dare, to raise our eyes and take new paths, to let ourselves be surprised and amazed by this His presence.

They have been months which included dreams and fears, trying to let ourselves be challenged by the world that we encountered to understand His invitations for our new fraternity.

The beginning of the new fraternity would not have been possible without the help of the church of Genoa, the prayer of the Community and many friends, the situations experienced, the meetings, the telephone contacts that made us step by step experience how the Lord is close to





us and it shows us the way to go and often how to move. And all this was done in His unique way of getting close: not in a striking way but in a discreet style sometimes even elusive. This search that continues often challenges us because it requires an exercise in faith that asks us to go to the essentials.

We are currently settled in Val Polcevera, sadly remembered in this period by the collapse of the Morandi bridge. We reside in the municipality of Rivarolo, not far from the parish church of Santa Croce, at the premises of the Don Lino ai Broxi association. If I wanted to describe the area in which we live I would do it with various images: hills and valleys, agriculture and industry, residential areas and popular neighbourhoods, people who have their roots here and immigrants some of whom have been here for a long time and some who arrived recently.

"There you will see Him as He told you". What we experience are very real steps such as setting up our home, moving around but also many precious human relationships in the shelter, at the Caritas canteen, moments of prayer and training where individuals or groups also come together. We experience a strong desire for fraternity. It is a reciprocal giving and receiving by sharing time, commitments, ordinary life, joys and efforts.

Having to find out what our Galilee is, brings us new energies. The last opportunity was the summer camp lived with the community of San Giovanni della Costa di Rivarolo and with some young friends who joined us.

We continue to experience the unfailing care of God, His Providence in the premises that have been made available for our future accommodation, at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Garbo. We have already started the first renovations. It will be a place where prayer, service and fraternity can be united and from which new doors can be opened.

Personally, a deep sense of gratitude and joy is accompanied me for what we experience, for the great support that we receive and for what awaits us. Thank you, Lord, for this story which we must continue to discover, for this future to face and that is proving to be "good news" for us and hope for others.

Giorgio and brothers from Genoa



the church of Garbo

GOING AGAINST THE CURRENT

A testimony from the fraternity of Albania, written by a volunteer friend

October 2019



volouteers of Sebino

The extraordinary missionary month 2019 is now upon us; Pope Francis asks us to renew the ardour and passion for the apostolic activity that has always characterized the Church and its history starting from that ancient command that we find in the Gospel of Luke 10.3: "behold I am sending you ... ". These words have helped the Church to walk the streets of the world in the company of people, to stay young and to experience the present as an opportunity for meetings, dialogue and evangelization.

Among the many mission stories, today we bring you to Albania, more precisely to Fermë and Malasen, two districts of the municipality of Cërrik, in the prefecture of Elbasan, where since 2014 real sprouts of hope have grown. At the time of the dictator Enver Hoxha, Fermë was a peaceful agricultural area which, however, with the fall of the regime, collapsed under the blows of the misery that violently hit this community; most of the inhabitants were in fact forced to sell their piece of land to survive, thus depriving themselves of their only

guarantee of income and of their inheritance. Today Fermë is populated by various discriminated ethnic groups, above all by the Roma, who live together every day with the difficulty of integrating into the Albanian social fabric. In this environment, Behije Balla's mission came to life. Behije is a woman who embodies the desire for redemption of an entire population. She too is a Roma, who is also a victim of marginalization which over time becomes a mouthful difficult to swallow. Five years ago Behije, better known as Zeka, decided to go against the tide like any brave person who respects herself, with the aim, indeed, the vocation, to guarantee a better future for her people. She does this by donating himself, her family completely when facing any difficulty that arises. Today alongside Zeka there is Terezinha. Together they have created some groups where the young people of the neighbourhood can meet, be educated and deepen their human formation away from the pitfalls of poverty,

pitfalls of poverty, drugs, and crime that, together with numerous other disorders torment the growth of these youth. Young people are not the only focus of Zeka and Tere's mission. In addition to the future, we must also think about the present, and so there is the Center of Mother Teresa in the Malasen district; a place dedicated above all to poor families but wants to be home for everyone no matter what the circumstances. Naming the centre after Mother Teresa is by no means accidental. This missions reality bases itself on the small Albanian saint's charism, namely of a church that is close to those who suffer.

This year the boys from Fermë and Malasen together with the Volunteers of the Sebino, had their first real summer camp, after a few years of tryouts. We have seen, experienced and

touched the first results of a journey guided without a shadow of a doubt by God's providence, which already sees young people in the area doing their best for the little ones, for their peers and for their own community.

Fermë and Malasen are therefore a young witness of missionary activity which is neither more nor less than the manifestation, that is, the epiphany and the realization of the divine plan in the world and in history: with it, God, through its mission, carries out the history of salvation. Through the Word of God and preaching, with the celebration of the sacraments, it makes present that same Christ who is the author of salvation.

Michele O.



Zaveria, Lulu and Maria Teresa



meeting



during the first mass



folcloristics dances



WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER?

"Giving and receiving means reaching friendship with the poor and through this friendship the communication with God is made easier".

"Often the poor know how to give better than we do" p. Gasparino

Korea and Ethiopia, March 2020

Dear friends of the Community, we greet you from Korea and we are happy to share something of our life here.

We want to start with this question: *Where is your brother?* Young people, who come to our fraternities for the school of prayer or come with us for the service of the poor, replied: "I found my brother where the Lord sent me."

On this page, we share some interviews with young people in Korea who are closely connected to the fraternities. We asked them this question: *"How do you experience the welcoming of those who are different and of the poor friend (of migrants as well as of children of the little school, an after-school service that takes place in the fraternities)?"*.

Veronica

In the beginning, when I started the service to the children of the school, I greatly wanted to help them, but over time I realized that I received more love than I gave. The hour spent with them gave me great joy. From that moment I felt a growing desire inside myself to become a primary school teacher, to help children living in a poor environment. I then enrolled again at the university of education. I am grateful to have found my vocation through the school.

Angelica

I go to the migrant centre on Sunday and stay with the children for an hour while their parents attend mass. It strikes me a lot how, despite being small, they know how to convey affection and sometimes the older ones share their snacks with the younger ones. Their hearts already know what it means to meet the other, how beautiful! And so I eagerly await Sundays, it seems to me that Jesus, who loves children

so much, is present among us. I experience a little of the Kingdom of God with them, because I see the goodness of the Lord in with

Now let's listen to the testimony of two Korean girls who had an experience in the fraternities of Ethiopia with our sister Lia from January 4th to February 2nd. They are Esther and Giuseppina.

It was a dream to have an experience on a mission together with some young people and it came true just this year. We listen to their gratitude for this opportunity.

Esther

Since I was a child I wanted to go to Africa, it was a dream that I cultivated. After returning from Ethiopia, I realized that God called me there to let me know how much He loves us and how He is always with us.

We have met many people who have big problems and difficulties in their life. In the beginning, it was not easy because of the differences of culture, language, mentality, habits.... but perhaps the main reason for the difficulty to understand others was not all of this, as much as my heart, which was a little closed at the beginning. Then people reached out to me and I felt their welcome.



Their simplicity, courtesy and affection touched me a lot, all this made me feel the love of Jesus in a lively way and the encounter with Jesus living in them opened my heart. The more time passed, the more I wanted to communicate with them. Unfortunately, we had no common language; but I still started to say what was inside me with all my heart in Korean. I felt that they understood deeply what I wanted to express. And with this language of the heart, I too could understand them. The friendship grew gradually. I thank God for this precious treasure that I found in Ethiopia. I still have a lot of nostalgia for the friends that Jesus gave me.

Giuseppina

When I was offered this experience on a mission, I lived my daily life in an oppressive way and I was very focused on the things of the world and on me. At the same time in my heart, there was this profound desire: I wanted to understand the life of Jesus better. I asked myself: "maybe I will meet Him in a new way in Ethiopia?". Before leaving, I was a little afraid but at the same time, I thought that this invitation could really be the voice of the Lord, in response to my thirst for God and to my questions about the meaning of life.

Then when I met the malnourished children, the poor mothers of the feeding-centre, a lot of compassion came out of me and I tried to give what I could with all my heart, even though I could not talk to them. I was close to them, (we



talked to each other) and I tried to understand their way of life. And in time I asked myself: "Am I really living in love?" Because I realized, it is one thing to want to approach the poor as an ideal, it is another to really get involved. In fact, if on the one hand, I stood with them with joy, on the other I realized that there were also judgements in me and I had mixed emotions. From this I understood my poverty better and, accepting myself as I was, I truly felt closer to each of them in the name of God. So when a leper grandmother hugged me, I felt great joy. And every time a child who came to the kitchen greeted me with a smile and with affection, I felt that life is a continuous blessing and a miracle. Now I feel that a new mission begins, here where I live, from what I am, united to Jesus.

Lia

How can I express the richness of this experience on a mission? We have received so many gifts! Every day we experienced the joy of meeting people and the wealth that comes from diversity. Then I am also convinced that the Lord called us and made us stay together in Ethiopia so that we could know ourselves more and learn to give ourselves as we are. We have experienced that God is with us despite our weakness when we want to live in unity, every time we open our hearts to listen to others. We have also learned that this unity among us is built and grows when we kneel together before God, to pray wholeheartedly for a poor man who experiences great suffering.

Even today we found our brother and sister where the Lord sent us!

Sister Lia



HOLINESS IS GRACE AND CONCRETENESS

Father Andrea



Holiness is always concreteness

Do you want to choose the path of holiness? Here are four safe paths after you have decided to let your brothers help you.

1. Learn to pray! Without prayer, you will not take a single step in holiness.

Commit to an orderly prayer schedule.

Ask the Lord to help you find true prayer. Get used to the prayer of silence. It is the prayer of silence that educates you to depth and concreteness.

Be constant and punctual in your prayer, as a mother is accurate in meal times for her baby. Always remember that the Eucharist is the inexhaustible source of holiness for you too.

2. Learn to feed on the Word of God.

Learn to feed yourself, not just read.

Not even studying is enough. Knowing is nothing if you can't feed yourself. Learn to listen, to pray, to dig deeply in the Word of God. Learn to take it in you, to put it in practice.

Attend a serious Bible course which truly trains you and spend some time every day with the Word of God.

It is your second Eucharist.

It is the sap of prayer. The sapless flower does not stand. Prayer without the Word of God does not live.

3. Learn to meet the poor.

The Lord, whom you meet in the Eucharist and in the Word, awaits you in the poor.

Repay the encounter of Christ by looking for

the poor, looking for Christ in the poor.

And don't look for the poor person too far away.

There are those who seek the poor far away and do not know that they have someone poor next to them every day.

Start with the poor person in your home. There is always someone in the house who needs you. Start there!

Then go out to the poor person waiting for you outside the door of your house. Don't stop with charity at home.

The poor person is your third Eucharist.

And if there is a neglected poor person in your parish, you are responsible together with all the others, you cannot wash your hands and be indifferent.

4. And learn to live in joy.

If you want to walk towards holiness live in joy, live giving joy to everyone.

Mother Teresa said: "If you want to change the world, smile at each other more often."

And I tell you: do you want to change your family? Start smiling more.

It brings joy to everyone everywhere.

Joy is the fastest way to communicate with people, it is the way to shorten the distances between cold or divided hearts.

Pray for our community, so that it will be full of the joy of God, capable of transmitting God with life more than with words.

Pray for me too.

May the Mother of the Lord bless you one by one and "make you saints".

YOU TOO ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS

Pope Francis



The letter on sanctity by Pope Francis is also a depth of evangelical prophecy. Prophecy, we know, always disturbs us, but hides a profound joy because, if we welcome it, it brings us out of our lethargy.

14. To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.

15. Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23). When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: "Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better". In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God's love, "like a bride bedecked with jewels" (Is 61:10).

146. Contrary to the growing consumerist individualism that tends to isolate us in a quest for well-being apart from others, our path to holiness can only make us identify all the more with Jesus' prayer "that all may be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (Jn 17:21).

"Gaudete et Exsultate", nn. 14. 15. 146

... that is holiness ...

Gaudete et Exsultate - Pope Francis

... being poor of heart

n.70



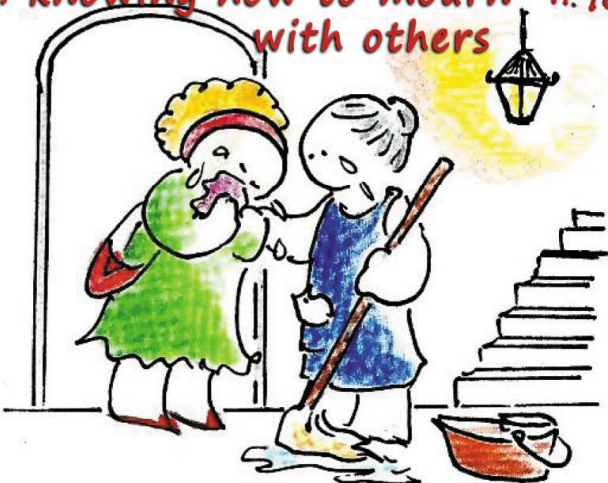
... reacting with meekness and humility

n.74



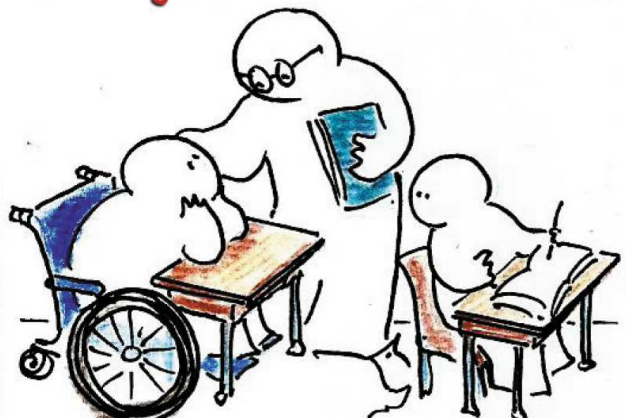
... knowing how to mourn with others

n.76



... seeing and acting with mercy

n.82



... sowing peace all around us

n.89

... accepting daily the path of the Gospel



event though it may cause us problems

n.94

“LETTERS FROM THE MISSION”

Letters from the Missions

2020

Contemplative missionary movement
“Fr. De Foucauld”

Corso Francia 129
12100 Cuneo
Italy

Editor:
Ezio Bernardi

Editorial staff:
Anna Pendenza, Paola Turrini,
Pino Isoardi, Christoffer Andresen, Gianna Benfatto

Translator:
Joseph Chaney

Contacts:
0171.491263 – Office
cittadeiragazzi@centromissionario.org

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