da mihi animas.

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POVERTY
AND SAFEGUARDING
THE CREATED

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Giuseppina Teruggi

... this is the title that Godfried Danneels, a Belgian Cardinal, chose for a publication on the theme of ecology. It is a reality that provokes the attention and reflection of many people. The theme of the World Day of Peace 2010 brings out the importance that the Church gives to it. Pope Benedict XVI places in relationship the protection of the created with the value of peace: *If you want to cultivate peace, guard the created.*

In the aforementioned book, the author emphasizes how, in the face of the upheavals in nature, the Church does not refer only to a sense of horizontal belonging, but reads it in a vertical relationship. The cosmos is a gift from God who has created it for love; for this reason every believer is called to undertake our journey of “ecological conversion”.

For us as FMA this means simply dealing with a journey that is part of the “journeys of conversion to love” proposed by GC XXII. We are challenged, rather, to reawaken in ourselves a more open view in understanding and living consecration, in particular the commitment to poverty and the educational mission, to form the younger generations to values that cannot be disregarded.

In the *Encounters* section interesting suggestions on the relationship between poverty and the integrity of the created are offered. The urgency of maintaining a quality environment is indispensible for protecting the poor, who more than anyone, suffer the consequences of dysfunction (desertification, climate changes, lack of the availability of water...) As educators, we are aware of the urgency of guiding young people in a preventive view to the sense of justice, social equality, solidarity, and responsibility that is also a challenge for freedom as an operative choice for good, not only as individuals, but by everyone. Ecological conversion is a process that involves the young people themselves and the entire life community. Education is a concrete way of living in contact with nature, education to beauty that is the way to contemplation of the marvels of the immense garden: the cosmos, imbued with life, light, song, colors, flights, and perfume. All is concentrated on the marvels that God has given his children!

The dream of immersing themselves in nature could become a reality also for young people, being “in harmony with the rhythm of life, learning from the cycles of time, listening to the pulse of the universe, loving nature, protecting it and discovering in it the presence and power of God...”as Joan Chittister wrote. There is, then, but a brief step to recognizing that “Mother Earth and her ecosystems are our dwelling place.”

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Povertà e salvaguardia del creato
Poverty and Safeguarding the Created

Anna Rita Cristaino

The present ecological crisis has ongoing consequences for everyone, but especially for poor countries and the poor of every country. This approach to the care of creation for people living in poverty is a matter of survival. The return to nature and its laws is an assurance of life. For the Church and the Consecrated Life in particular, this implies increased awareness and need for ecological conversion, leading to new lifestyles and a new spirituality of creation.

The Health of the Earth

There are many signals that reveal the health of the planet to us: extreme climate change, hurricanes and more and more frequent storms, desertification and rising sea levels. But soon it may be even worse. Today all this is compounded by a very disturbing phenomenon: mass migration.

In addition to wars and poverty, which unfortunately push millions of people to leave poor countries to seek their fortune in richer nations, there will be added phenomena such as drought, aridity of the soil and shrinkage of habitable land, especially in hot places like Africa, which will force even more people to leave their homelands.

In Papua New Guinea, for example, the inhabitants of the Carteret Islands were recognized as the first environmental refugees. A few thousands people watched as their land literally was flooded by ocean tides, which left behind only destruction. The people were then forced to migrate to other shores, and were recognized by the United Nations as the first population having to migrate due to global warming.

Still further according to the UN, which calculated the phenomenon through the IOM, International Organization for Migration, this is not a new phenomenon. In 1990 there were 25 million refugees who, because of pollution, desertification, drought and natural disasters, had to leave their homelands. Today that number has doubled.

There are several phenomena that contribute to the escalation of the crisis. In the first place there is the relationship with energy resources. These were exploited without posing the problem of their exhaustibility and their renewability. Then there is the phenomenon of waste disposal. Nature has often been seen as a large bin for garbage of all kinds. It is important in the perception of the crisis to realize that these problems have local applications (the territory around me) and global (if I care for my piece of the world, I do something good for the world). Therefore, when dealing with environmental problems we talk about interconnections, the ability to take into account both the local and global dimensions. It is necessary to know how to see the interweaving.

The environmental dimension originated largely in the behavior of humans, because there was a type of evolution in human behavior with regard to the environment. We no longer adapt to the environment, but adapt the environment to ourselves. And this is not without consequences. We witness a disconnection between historical times and biological times. In fact,
man accelerates all his activities in rhythms that follow those of production, the market and consumption. While nature has its time recalling the changing seasons, of day and night. But man in his interventions that are at times not farseeing, can change the biological rhythms influencing them and bending them to consumption requirements. Safeguarding Creation, from the perspective of the poor, calls for social environmental justice more than a generic protection of nature or a more efficient use. By its nature there is the material basis of livelihood of communities, protecting nature, defending themselves and their survival.

INTERVIEW

In his message for World Day of Peace 2010, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “Humanity needs a renewal of culture, it needs to rediscover those values that constitute the solid foundation on which to build a better future for all”. The pope hopes for “the adoption of a development model based on the centrality of the human being, on the promotion and sharing of the common good convinced that the degradation of nature is closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence.” And finally encourages “education to an ecological responsibility that safeguards an authentic human ecology.”

We asked Prof. Simone Morandini, a few questions that introduce us to a theo-anthropological reflection in issues related to poverty and the safeguarding of the Created.

May we speak of poverty in safeguarding the Created?

The combination of poverty and the protection of creation, in my opinion, is a key constituent, while a few years ago the two dimensions were considered to be almost opposite, as though attention for the Created was a kind of luxury for the rich, now we realize clearly that it is precisely those who live in fragile economic situations that most need stability and environmental quality.

What type of impact does the environmental crisis have on poor nations with respect to the richer nations?

Environmental crisis means many different things to different areas and the impact is also very different. We think, for example of that macro-environment that is climate change: a truly global phenomenon, which is reflected in different ways, but is important in different contexts, in different areas. Think of two situations that are both significant. On the one hand there are areas threatened by desertification in Africa: What does climate change mean? A dramatic advancing of the desert, a reduction in water availability that in practice, often means for many people a transition to the status of environmental refugees because of the impossibility of continuing to live in certain areas. On the other hand we think of coastal regions, small Pacific Islands, or for example Bangladesh, which are already highly susceptible to flooding, and for which climate change means rising sea levels, endangering their possibility of living in their own land.

The impact on wealthy nations is different, in a less dramatic way, since they have greater resources available for adapting to climate change. Even here, however, we have a modification of life conditions, a displacement of climate related incidents and an impact on agriculture and the spread of disease.

These situations that are also found within countries with great economic means, strike first in the poorest classes of people, both on the global level and in the various local contexts. The instance of protecting the created, of maintaining a quality environment, is fundamental for protecting the poor.

You speak of the theology of creation in an ecumenical environment, could you tell us, in synthesis, what this deals with?

Unlike our spiritual experience in modern times, from the great fathers of the middle ages, or the Church fathers even before the middle ages, this was a very dear concept. The idea that every approach to God, every spiritual, theological approach could not be
disconnected from a reference to God, i.e., a reference to the Being, to the One who gives us something as real as the house where we have the possibility of living. The other great fundamental idea is that Creation is the place where we are called to live before him, the place where we live our spiritual dimension, the place in which the Son of God was incarnated and where the Spirit breathes. The new fact is that today we find ourselves living this type of theological and spiritual tradition in a context in which the stability of the Created is no longer perceived. The Created appears to be exposed to a threat connected to human behavior, a threat that on the other hand reverberates even on the very possibility of the good life of humanity itself.

Then we continue to ask ourselves: What does thinking of the theology of creation mean today? How can we insert this tension today into the experience of the Created offered us on the one side, and this threat that touches the existence of many people? It is a question that many believers place within different Churches giving place to a deep, positive ecumenical interaction.

You speak of the wisdom of creation and a more spiritual relationship of believers toward the Created.

There is no doubt that one of the components of this attitude that we need to recover is to re-learn how we look at the world around us and take in the beauty, seeing it as the space where the glory of the Trinity is manifested. Our being highly urbanized people has detached us from looking at the world around us, leading us to favor the important human dimension of faith, more than the knowledge of a God who speaks also of the interaction among human beings within a world.

We must get used to thinking about all this, this human dimension of faith in the context of more extensive reference to the Creation.

You spoke of ethical distinctions, both in an anthropocentric and not anthropocentric sense, linked to a journey of ecological conversion. Do you want to explain to us what that means?

I believe that on the one hand the idea of ecological conversion expresses a general time that certainly exists for all believers but is of interest not only to the ecclesial world. For that which regards the discourse on the different forms of ethics, we are on the level of developing a reflection on this fundamental challenge. I believe that we must be very careful because on the one side the Christian experience is an experience under many anthropocentric aspects: men and women are the privileged interlocutors of the Creator, those to whom the word of the covenant had been addressed, those who are called to responsibility. This does not mean, however, -and this is an important reference that we must grasp- that only men and women are endowed with value, and only they have the obligation to...
work ethically. This wonderful fact is certainly that of a house given to humanity but it is also a splendid reality that deserves to be protected for its intrinsic value. In this sense those instances that we find as isolated-or of one type or another, anthropocentric vs, non anthropocentric ethics-I believe must be integrated in a new way. We must, therefore, protect everything around us for future human generations because of the responsibility that we have in their regard, but also because it is a good reality, endowed with value, a space for life interwoven and articulated in the global ecosystem.

Therefore can the ways in which people treat the environment influence the ways in which they treat themselves?

Yes, this was also emphasized by Benedict XVI both in _Caritas in Veritate_ and in the last message for the World Day of Peace. We are beings who have been placed within the created, within the fabric of relationships characterized by a rapport with oneself and with God and none of these dimensions can be thought of in isolation. The way in which we think of our rapport with God influences the way in which we treat the environment around us, but also the attitude of domination that we frequently assume in comparison with the cosmos, have led us to build an image of man detached from cultural reality, almost as being raised to the level of the Creator. We need to regain the complex idea of the person as a singular part of the created ecosystem, a singular part with characteristics that are absolutely specific and that lead us, therefore, to a reinforcement of responsibility.

You speak often of the concept of sustainability. Is there the possibility of individual and local participation in the safeguarding of creation?

I believe that the idea of sustainability is a great idea, one of the fundamental horizons toward which the future of humanity is directed. We need to build a society that is capable of satisfying the needs of the present generation without precluding the analogous possibility for future generations. It is something like that which Benedict XVI also reminds us when he says that we have a very serious duty of leaving a patrimony for future generations, a land that can be inhabited and cultivated. This is obviously a macro-objective, an objective that challenges different responsibilities. It challenges the responsibility of politicians, be it on the local, national and international levels, it challenges the world of science and technology called to develop technologies that are "green" and sustainable, it questions the responsibility of business to implement such ideas.

It challenges the responsibility of everyone as a citizen. We personally are then challenged also as consumers to weigh our choices in the global ecosystem in terms of energy consumption in terms of taking raw materials. Clearly, not all choices have equal weight; there are some that guide sustainability, others, instead, have a greater environmental impact. I believe that the renewal of life styles for which the ecclesial community is presently working basically means: first, carefully considering our needs to see if they are really necessary or if some cannot be challenged, and on the other hand, meeting the needs which we really deem to be necessary in an efficient way so as to impact the environment as little as possible.

What do we need to take into consideration in the educational field?

I think that first of all it is necessary to accustom people to grasp how the Created is profoundly included in this dimension as a reality that is good, wonderful, to be rediscovered in some ways in the experience of Francis of Assisi, by modernizing the language and forms that are most meaningful for our time, for example including also the scientific dimension, consideration of biological life, the network of ecosystems, the splendor of the life which are tributaries to our existence. One must learn to perceive the threat, namely that our existence as human beings, the future of the earth in the first place, for future
generations, the same fabric of life, which are jeopardized by foolish behavior and that which is not farsighted. In this way, I think we can get into an educational action capable of giving rise to the idea of responsibility that knows how to cultivate an attitude which, in the face of a contradictory reality, feels compelled to act in order to make the positive dimension prevail over the sense of threat.

Simone Morandini, who received his degree in physics from the University of Florence in 1985, teaches mathematics and physics at Liceo Foscarini Venice. In 1997 he received his Ph.D. in Ecumenical Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas - Angelicum in Rome with a dissertation on the Theology of Creation Research Council of Churches. Since 1998 he has been a professor of ecumenical theology at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies "San Bernardino" in Venice, and from 2008 professor of theology at the Theological Faculty of the creation of Triveneto. Since 2001, he has been responsible for the Coordination and Ethics, Philosophy and Theology at the Fondazione Lanza of Padova (http://www.fondazionelanza.it/). He is also a member of the working group for the protection of creation, the National Office for social problems and the work of the CEI. He has many publications on the subject.

We are invited to look with love at the variety of creatures, at a land that is so rich, to discover that the gift of the Creator, manifest in themselves something of himself. This spirituality of creation can be nourished by many elements from the Christian tradition from The Eucharistic Celebration, in which we give thanks for the fruits of the earth that becomes for us the bread of life and spiritual drink.

(5th Day for the Protection of Creation September 1, 2010)

A MODEL FOR LIFE
Decalogue taken from the writings of St. Francis of Assisi

1. Be a person in creation, a brother among brothers.
2. Embrace all created beings with love and devotion.
3. You have been entrusted with the land as a garden use it wisely.
4. Take loving care of man, animals, herbs, water and air so the land does not remain deprived.
5. Use things sparingly because that which is dissipated will not be around for the future.
6. You have been given the task of revealing the mystery of food: because life feeds on life.
7. Untie the knot of violence in order to understand the laws of existence.
8. Remember that the created not only reflects your image, but that of the most high God that brings meaning.
9. When cutting the tree leave a shoot and a branch so that life will not be truncated.
10. Walk with reverence on the stones because everything has its value.

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Why Francis?

Man of the serene gaze

Graziella Curti

During the night of May 9, 1879 Don Bosco had a dream where a person having the appearance of St. Francis de Sales appeared. It was “a man with a serene gaze, breathing all gentleness.” And it was precisely the characteristic of gentleness that struck the cleric John who would later choose him as the patron of his work.

The pearl in the forest

It was the year 1835. At Chieri there were two seminarians who had the same surname, Bosco. To distinguish between the two they decided to give themselves a nickname. One said “I will be Bosco Nespoli’ and by this he wanted to indicate a wood that was hard, knotty, little pliable. And our Don Bosco responded “I will be called Bosco di Sales, i.e. salice a wood that is sweet and flexible.” This was an episode that some biographers hold to be a prevision of the future, i.e., of the spiritual itinerary that the cleric would travel throughout his whole life to be like Francis De Sales in loving kindness. In fact among the proposals taken before John’s priestly ordination we read: “Charity and the sweetness of St. Francis di Sales will be my guide in everything.”

The biographical Memoirs recall other episodes that confirm Don Bosco’s process in being close to the holy bishop of Geneva. Especially significant is his decision to found a Congregation that would have as its patron Sr. Francis De Sales and to inculcate in his collaborators and the young people his spirituality.

Very moving in this proposal is a manuscript that we still find today in the Camerette of Don Bosco at Valdocco. It is the memorial that the cleric Rua left describing the historical encounter that marked the birth, not yet official but sacred, of the Salesian work. “On the evening of January 26, 1854, we gathered in Don Bosco’s room. Present were Don Bosco, Rocchietti, Artiglia, Cagliero and Rua, and we received the offer to make this proposal, with the help of God and St. Francis De Sales, to try to exercise charity toward our neighbor so that we could later make a promise and then, if it would be possible and convenient, to make a vow to the Lord. From that evening on, the name Salesians was given to those who proposed it and would assume this exercise.”

In this simple and at the same time essential promise, we see the evident influence of St. Francis De Sales’ sanctity, who placed love for God and others lived in daily relationships at the root of their life practice.

Teacher of loving kindness

Why did Don Bosco choose Francis De Sales from among the many saints who were known in his time and in this geographical location? The historian Pietro Stella writes: “It was natural that the Salesians were questioned and questioned themselves on their name”. How was it that Don Bosco named his foundation after the Bishop of Geneva? Was there a spiritual affinity between the two saints? Don Bosco himself answers the question in the Memories of the Oratory writing
between 1873-76 about the same Oratory: “It began to call itself after St. Francis De Sales for two reasons: 1) because the Marchesa di Barolo had it in her heart to found a Congregation of priests under this title and with this in mind had commissioned a portrait of the saint that is still in the entry of the same locale; and 2) because our ministry required great meekness we had placed ourselves under the protection of this saint, so that we could be able to obtain from God the grace to imitate him in his extraordinary meekness in winning souls.”

Therefore, the choice was dictated more than by a simple imitation, of a precise will to bring to reality his spirituality and his educational method. At the Oratory the Holy Patron was frequently invoked, his feast day was celebrated as a solemnity, and in 1852, the first church constructed by Don Bosco in Valdocco, was dedicated to him. Don Bosco recalled his figure in his writings and in his formative direction; he chose that date for the annual meeting of directors; he had a picture of the saint on the standard of the Salesian Congregation (1884). He wanted a life of St. Francis De Sales to be written for young people in which they could see how “Christian life was incarnated” and entrusted the initiative to the first Novice Master, Fr. Giulio Barberis. The phrase: “Da mihi animas coetera tolle” had already been placed in the Pinardi shed and to Dominic Savio who asked the meaning of it, Don Bosco explained that it was the habitual motto of St. Francis De Sales. In Don Bosco, observed historians, it was also evident that there was a significant passage from Francis De Sales, model of pastors as presented in the Seminary, to Francis De Sales patron and model of educators. In the letter from Rome in 1884, Don Bosco wrote: “Let us all therefore be in agreement. Charity is what commands, the charity of those who must obey must reign among us let make our own the spirit of St. Francis De Sales.”

Sanctity for everyone

In an historical era in which sanctity was held to be a goal to be reached almost exclusively by religious and clergy, Francis De Sales, instead proposed it to all to be lived in the most suitable way according to one’s own existential condition. He made no distinction between men and women, priests and laity, poor and rich, educated or not. It dealt with a daily journey that was simple and metabolized in life. This meant that one could transform every action into an act of love for God. In this way, all of existence became vital prayer, actually, ecstasy of life that the saint presented in this way: “Ecstasy that was all holy, completely amiable...All actions of those who live in the holy fear of God in continual prayer and that which is called vital prayer.” Don Bosco was fascinated by this way of sanctity and proposed it also to his boys to the point that he was defined as the educator of youthful sanctity.
Roots of the Future

Celebration in life

Mara Borsi

In the decade of the 1870’s, life in the Oratory at Turin, was a continual flow of liturgical feasts, games, outings and theatrical representations. The celebratory times were among the most diverse and there were many occasions to celebrate, for example, the return from a trip, the arrival of a guest, a healing, and an inauguration.

Based on the sources of Salesian celebrations at the time of Don Bosco, Francis Desramaut tells us “Schedules changed, lights were lit in abundance, music flooded the environment, the ceremonies in church and theatrical spectacles became more exuberant, meals were better, the outside world of benefactors, friends, and even the curious penetrated the walls. The whole local community lived exceptional hours during which the present moment was illumined.”

Certain celebrations at the Oratory that were prepared with greater care and diligence were those of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco’s feast day. These two events brought to Valdocco young people from other houses, past pupils, cooperators, benefactors, and civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

The Feast of Mary Help of Christians

On the Feast of Mary Help of Christians young people and Salesians were co-protagonists with a mass of the faithful coming from other places. This event was prepared for with great care and once again, it was verified as we can read in the notes of the house chronicles of Valdocco.

The celebration involved everyone in carefully prepared liturgies, environments conveniently adapted and transformed to welcome the many people invited. You could not recognize the playground. Creative Salesians, assisted by the older boys, transformed it into a great open theater and the public had a space in the playground. The public was comprised of cooperators, friends, and, naturally, by the resident and day students. The whole community was involved in the dynamics of the celebration.

The liturgical celebration in church represented one of the key moments of the feast, it constituted the institutional frame of reference. For Don Bosco the participation of the boys in the feast had to reach its high point in communion with the body of Christ. A festive celebration in his house could not be called fully successful when there was not a “general” communion.

If we consult the notes of a few Chapter conferences (meeting of the house council), for example those of May 19, 20, and 21, 1875, we see that the Feast of Mary Help of Christians was organized by taking into account the preceding experience: responsibilities were distributed with minute precision on the service and order in church, on the 8 benches designated for the “fair” in the buffet, in the kitchen at table and in the special services.

Successively, in the June 13 meeting, they examined the limitations which, notwithstanding everything, had been verified in the courtyard. During the first General Chapter of 1877, Don Bosco recalled the first celebration of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in this way: “During the first year, there was a noise that seemed to come from another world; but the novelty of the event made it seem as though the noise was minor compared to the riotous behavior. Later, the noise level diminished. We can now say that this feast remains fully regularized’.
St. John Bosco's Feastday

The celebrations in honor of Don Bosco's name day in which young people, Salesians, cooperators and past pupils were more family-like. In 1878 the celebrations began on the vigil of June 24 and the functions of the afternoon took place from 6:30 to 8:30 with fireworks, supper and the good night. The next morning, the chronicler notes, at 9:30 the past pupils who came to present their greetings and gifts to Don Bosco were welcomed by the Oratory band. After the functions of the afternoon, there was still celebrating in the playground: the reading of compositions, songs, instrumental music, the homage of the young people from other houses and schools.

The celebration for Don Bosco's feast day was motivated especially by the need to express gratitude toward a father, a community and an environment. This recurrence was a way to make explicit the gratitude and at the same time it was way to implement the method of having people remember the good they had received. An affective and symbolic language challenged those who lived at the Oratory or those who had lived there. Don Bosco wanted to celebrate this feast to arouse in young people the respect and grateful love toward God, source of every good, the parents, educators and benefactors. ¹

There are many testimonies that indicate how Don Bosco constantly reminded the young people and the Salesian at the Oratory that they always lived on the charity of the benefactors. During the last years of his life, gratitude for time was continual and guided the Salesians, especially the directors, to behave toward them with every regard. The feast of gratitude, based on the sources, emerges as an undoubted means of social cohesion and relational continuity and the time and choice of adult life.

The feast for educators and young people thus became an experience, a possibility to construct something together, something different from that ordinarily lived every day, to experience a relationship of reciprocal collaboration, “doing something together”, outside of the formal classroom environment for the students and the workroom for the artisans. Celebration revealed itself, in short, as an important relational and formative key “ad intra and ad extra” considering the great crowd of those who were invited including those in different groups, benefactors, cooperators, past pupils.

According to the Social Doctrine of the Church, the process of accelerating interdependence between individuals and peoples is an undeniable, ongoing fact. The new relationships between individuals and peoples, which are also forms of solidarity, have become relationships for genuine ethical-social solidarity, a moral requirement inherent in all human relationships (cf. nn CDSC. 192-193). The theme of global interdependence brought forth by Caritas in Vritate can be read in close relation with other current themes in the text such as solidarity, subsidiarity, reciprocity.

Re-reading the Encyclical

- The sharing of goods and resources, the reciprocal openness of the awareness and freedom (No.9)
- The explosion of worldwide interdependence, known as globalization, the main news of progress (n. 33).
- Global interdependence implies a UN reform and a new international political authority (n.67).
- Solidarity, feeling that all are responsible for everything (n.38)
- Universal solidarity, in fact, benefit, and obligation (n.43)
- International cooperation, sharing the process of economic and human development through the solidarity of presence, accompaniment, formation and respect (n. 47).
- The principle of subsidiarity is closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa (n.58)

Let us ask ourselves

- The risk we run in our time is that the de facto interdependence between people and their need to correspond to the full ethical interaction of conscience and intelligence, the key to developing a truly human existence. In what sense is this reality present in our educational projects?
- Subsidiarity without solidarity falls into social preferential, subsidiarity and solidarity could fall into mere assistentialism that humiliates the person in need. How do we ensure that the two aspects are harmonized in our educational mission?
- Solidarity is not merely a commitment for certain groups of volunteers or the philanthropic solidarity of men and women of good will, but it is, rather, an
imperative to take responsibility for all. What level of solidarity lies in our personal lives and in our educational environment?

In Action

Some steps make the study operative:

- The educational mission commits us to expand reason and make choices that can guide a view of the civilization of love. Let us review our educational proposal to highlight the consistency between the fact of interdependence and sharing of resources.

- To harmonize solidarity and subsidiarity there must be an enabling of a culture where reciprocity is assumed as an irreversible commitment. This means that everyone needs to feel compelled to create a conditions for a dignified life not only for themselves, but also for others. Let us identify some obstacles to be removed and some steps to be taken to promote a culture of solidarity in the educating community.

- To overcome the culture of competition and individual success, education to solidarity must become a priority in all educational situations. To realize this in the most meaningful way we need to have a holistic and convergent commitment. In the light of these affirmations we need to find some significant experiences of solidarity to education in our environment.

FYI

Interdependence Days. What are they?

Formation and dialogue workshops for those who work in communications and information, education and social issues, so as to be able to read beyond preconceptions and stereotypes and to transform a given reality such as global interdependence, from a series of passive and ambivalent relations into active pathways of fairness and responsibility.

Where did it start?

It was an Initiative created by U.S. political scientist Benjamin Barber and the Association he founded, Civ-World, in Philadelphia during September, 2003. It was followed by various initiatives focusing on themes that put different emphasis on the urgency for political relations between the West and Islam, China and the great African continent at the center. Participating in the initiative are politicians, writers, journalists, ambassadors, artists of the Islamic world, China and Africa.

The 2009 edition has reinterpreted the theme of interdependence in its general coordinates, through today’s major challenges: the economic crisis, environmental crisis, the urgency for peace. Central to this research is the fact that the cities of the third millennium, with the strengths and weaknesses of their specific importance, where the coexistence of people and groups, between peoples and cultures, more closely face the challenges of interdependence and globalization calling on institutions and civil society for new models of governance, between local and global.

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What is freedom? Can one be truly free? In speaking of freedom, we run the risk of making it merely a means or caging it in a narrow definition. Freedom is in us, it is a constitutive aspect of our being. Speaking of freedom means we are talking about ourselves.

In this reflection there are no definitions. I wanted to leave room for the testimonies of those who seek to live the gift of being free on a daily basis, free even though facing limits, bearing with the physical discomfort or psychological oppression of those in power, inwardly free if you live by the Spirit, because "where there is the Spirit, there is freedom " (2 Cor 3:17). And the Spirit is Love. God created the human person to love freedom, returning His love in great measure, its own measure. "Freely do whatever is asked of you in charity " said Maria Mazzarello, a woman inhabited by the Spirit.

This article was the result of a collaborative effort. I asked some people, secular and religious, to share life experiences. It was great to be able to tell you that I had a hard time reducing the article to a few pages, and for this reason the reflection is in two parts.

Fidelity to self

I begin with the voice of a lay teacher, who, faced with questionable political and ideological choices regarding school, notes: "I experienced what freedom can be. Many colleagues, faced with established policies are clinging to ideological positions to the detriment of the young people. I experienced this personally during this difficult scholastic year as I sought to recover the meaning of a job that had only informative value, bringing it to an educational level.

I experienced that trying to be free means, above all, putting the person at the center. Sure, I suffered for being consistent with my positions, but it was the only way that allowed me to maintain inner freedom. My choices were related to my values, although this could have put me in conflict with colleagues who were often exasperated by certain situations. It was not easy, but it was necessary to be at peace with myself, to be consistent, to maintain the right distance. Freedom means being true to one’s ideals."

“A significant episode” writes a religious, was linked to accepting an obedience that placed me in the reality where I now find myself: with these people, with this task, with these lay people and young people with whom I spend my life. Faced with the unexpected proposal of animating this community my first thought was: ‘My superior has not understood anything!’ and, in fact I had hoped that she had made a mistake. However, when time passed I understood that it was not a mistake, I trusted and I am happy. This is why I think that the exercise of freedom can be well-understood in the polarity of sonship-entrustment, sonship-affection. And this is in dealing with God and persons.”

An FMA expresses this in an analogous way when she tells us: “Faced with an obedience that seemed impossible and superior to my forces, I felt anguished and oppressed. In the time in which I arrived at saying yes and
entrusting myself to the Lord, I felt free, in peace and available for anything, certain that the Lord would have sustained me.” True freedom guides the person to carry out God’s plan that wanted us to be in His image.

At times, freedom is tried by structural situations as emerges from the testimony of one who recognized how “In this political time the government is taking ever more explicit steps toward totalitarianism. It then becomes more important for the testimony of the Institutional Church to continue to illuminate, clearly condemn the violations against human rights, acting always with a united and compact agenda, marked by a great freedom in the face of pressure, humiliations, and threats.”

**Planning**

Free from... free to... free for... is the trio that is associated with the concept of freedom. Planning is one key aspect. "For me" - says an FMA - Freedom has been a life project for at least 25 years. One thing led to this precise determination: I understand that if I did not choose this path, I would not be happy. It was a life project and therefore it will last as long as I live; it implies vigilance and daily exercise. It requires clear decisions, determination and clarity with self when there is a need to manifest choices, knowing that every choice is relative; it allows for no confrontation (or judgment) with others because I am the one to choose for myself (and this is still the most delicate aspect).

It requires that I have a clear goal (for me this goal is the Love of the Lord and His Will) and if the direction is clear, I know which steps to take –in all modesty–because each of them could be mistaken or not the best, because we have to deal with other freedoms.

In trials or uncertainty, I force myself not to hasten in looking for immediate solutions. This is very difficult for me because I would want to resolve every problem as soon as possible. It requires from me a state of exodus, an attitude of conversion. In all of this, I feel the habitual presence of the Spirit that sends me back to the Gospel and the Eucharist as the gratitude/presence of Jesus, the one Love.”

A laywoman, responsible for a large school complex, accepted the invitation to reflect on this theme. "One is free when you can express it without fear to outsiders (the political environment, for example), but also without fear that comes from within, such as the fear of being judged. I think of some Sisters whom I have met in the Salesian mission: women inwardly free to think, to share with the locals, free to make their assessments without being able to divulge them, free even under a dictatorship because they have a great inner strength, values and balanced principles to inspire. They manage to smile even in the face of certain taxing regimes. In my personal experience, this "feeling free" has matured with age, with the acquisition of greater awareness of what I am and what I am worth, without the fear of being judged, with the consolidation of a circle of true friends that respect you for what you are, who accept and support you."

**Flexibility**

Once again it is an FMA who tells us how she lived the transfer from a community in which she was committed with intensity and joy, where she had loved the young people and her work. "I was able to leave without regret, without looking back. And I know I will be able to do the same in the future. I feel that I will be able to go anywhere, to bring so much enthusiasm for the mission the Lord has given me I will be able to adapt anywhere." The same Sister acknowledges that "while I am surprised my feelings of 'inner freedom' and recognize that, in fact, I believe I am free, I find myself equally enslaved to feelings, ideas, ways of perceiving and judging facts and people. In my mission and work I show myself to be a strong, free woman, However, in life and relationships there is a type of slavery in my heart. Indeed, freedom means freeing also from self and understanding the world around us! Ridding one’s self from slavery to the ego that makes me 'hard' and 'misunderstood' by others. For this reason I realize that, while I am
free in some respects, I have to grow in others. Only the Lord knows how to make us 'free' when 'the truth in us' is accepted and 'developed' with the wisdom of passing years.

A community animator is convinced that one exercise to become free if that of fraternal correction. We have to break down internal and external barriers to say things with charity, to conquer inner fears and conditioning and while being aware of our own limitations, being able to speak to our Sisters from the heart and seeing how much good one can do shows how much we can grow together.

There is an interesting reflection from a religious who is not Salesian: “Freedom is based on solitude. These were the words written on a card given to me years ago. Above the inscription there is a photo of an eagle in flight over tall snow-capped peaks. Over the years, I have confirmed this link of ‘freedom-solitude’. The second was and is often the price of the first. This is not mean seeking or wanting or planning. Experience tells me that they always go together. Or at least as twins, having something in common. Freedom for me means being myself, not pretending, not forcing, but living from within, where I feel as I am... because the profound identity of every person is a gift from God and to maintain this relationship with self and others, does not seem to be gratuitous. And, as I said, in my experience, the price is solitude. ”.

Speaking of a priest, a man of profound inner freedom, a friend said he pronounced an expression at the end of the sharing on a meeting that had been problematic: "If I feel that something is true and I feel that I must say it, I will do so even before the Pope." "Saints are champions of freedom," says another religious friend. Don Bosco’s best educational achievements took place with boys who used their freedom in a positive way, that is, confidently handing it over, trusting in those who worked with love for the person’s own good and not for their own interests."

«Love and do what you will», said St. Augustine. Freedom is the song of love!

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I frequently go to
The Gare d’Austerlitz.
I go because I like to see the trains leaving
and for emotion,
I like to see the emotion of the people
and for this reason
I don’t mind missing a soccer game
on TV that I really like,
when they hug one another
after having made a goal,
when they run with their arms upraised
and when they embrace one another.

Everything is different at the station,
One can see the emotion and understand it
In the glances, gestures, movements.

Text taken from Delphine De Vigan
The Secondary effects of Dreams
We sit facing one another
and I read the tiredness in your face,
It is like a grey veil that covers it, enfolded it
and perhaps protects it…
It speaks of the fear, the cold, the
wandering…
the violence. The trips back and forth on
the subway, along the same track, just to
kill time, like the hours spent in a coffee
shop before an empty cup, the coin
operated laundromat because it is cold
outside, and the library,
the shelters, the stations and the parks…All
tell of your life, the hours spent in waiting,
and
the fear of the night…
The Story: The Legend of the Stars

Mara Borsi

One day the women of the village had gone to pick corn. A child who had gone to help, found many ears. The boy stole an incredible amount of grain and hid it in bamboo tubes, which he brought to his grandmother, asking her to make a cornbread for himself and his companions. The grandmother did so and the children ate their fill. To hide the theft and fearing the wrath of their parents, the children fled to heaven by climbing up a knotted vine that the bird fly had set up on high. The women returned to the village and looked for their children. One of them saw the rope and the row of children intent on climbing. The mothers, overwhelmed, followed them, but the little thief, who was the last in line, cut the rope as soon as he reached the heavens. Since then, as punishment, the children were turned into stars and were forced to watch the pain of their mothers.

For some years I was a member of the team coordinating the Salesian Youth Movement in the province. It was an experience that filled my heart with so much hope.

Which are the values of your culture that you love the most?

The Brazilian people have a very varied culture. The values that I love most and that involve me most are:

Solidarity as a form of closeness to develop human dignity.

- Care and respect for nature to conserve and preserve the forests, beaches, and water. All these riches are important to our lives and those of future generations.

- Openness to others, so necessary for life and which presupposes acceptance and trust at all times.

The industriousness of the people who work with pleasure and are committed to developing society

The simple, profound faith of the people who believe in a God who loves us and is present; one who is always near and never abandons us.

- The ability to network with other people and organizations to promote social development that can reach everyone, which recognizes and respects the rights of all, able to promote the integral development of the human person.

Interview with Denize Salvador

I belong to the Brazilian province of Porto Alegre. I worked in the schools as a teacher and coordinator of youth ministry.

Brazilian Fable

http://www.il-fantamondo.com
What do you appreciate most about living in an international environment?

An intercultural environment with greater awareness helps to love one’s identity, and of course, to appreciate and participate in the richness of other cultures. With this open attitude one becomes aware that no culture is better than any other, but there are different ways of expressing the values you believe.

Living in another country is a very meaningful experience. Personally, I am extremely happy to have the opportunity to get to know cultures so different from my own, such as that of Asia, Africa and Europe.

I realize that thanks to the friendship and meeting with people of other cultures and traditions I can better understand myself and my Brazilian soul. Through sharing the charism that is lived all over the world, we have firsthand experience that the FMA Institute is "really a sign and expression of God's love for young people that live on different continents. I must say that it is very beautiful to look at the panorama of the FMA mission. I really like living with people from other parts of the world because it gives me the opportunity to discover the richness that exists in manners, customs, music, art, history, religious values, and in the way of acting and working.

For me being in an international environment means learning every day that I am not alone and that I always need others to live and understand that every place is sacred.

Which difficulties do you encounter in meeting with persons from other countries and cultures?

During the first months after I had arrived, I had to learn many things and get used to many new ways. The greatest difficulty was that of limited communication, because I did not know the language.

However, after a few months I began to understand the language and customs, to enjoy the food and I gradually familiarized myself with my new reality. The welcoming attention of the Sisters helped me to move forward.

When one arrives in another country it is necessary to be aware that our heart says my country is better, my culture is more important, however we need to change our attitude and be careful.

It is necessary to have an open mind and heart to accept the new realities that we encounter. I believe that the challenge for becoming acculturated lies in opening one’s mind. An open mentality can assimilate new values and accept a vision that is different from that of our origins.

I learned that it is very important to overcome prejudice, to see the reality beyond our own mindsets to respectfully be open to accepting the other person in his/her cultural manifestations. I am convinced that every day we need to overcome the difficulties of encounters with a different culture and meet it with an open heart having the determination to make a journey together. We are persons and we need to create bonds of friendship and fraternity.

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Pastoral-ly

Relationships with Young People

Emilia Di Massimo

“I told him everything about myself”

Don Bosco has left many testimonies relative to the accompaniment of young people, although the term he used to indicate this method of education was “assistance”. Let us think of the meeting as one with a “fatherly heart”, that of Fr. Calosso, as it determined the inner life of adolescent John, and influenced his future vocational choice. The evidence on the effects produced by Don Bosco in his life from his friendship with Fr. Calosso and symbolic value attributed to it are well known: "I immediately put myself in the hands of Fr. Calosso [...]. I told him everything about myself. Every word, every thought, every action was readily manifested to him. This pleased him very much, because in this way we could work with the spiritual and temporal aspects of my life. I knew then what it meant to have a stable guide, a faithful friend of the soul, which until then had been lacking to me. " In the spiritual conversation John confided all that formed his life: his moods, projects, dreams and inclinations, but only because he perceived the strong fatherly affection that showed him welcome and acceptance.

Accompanying means awakening the desire for God that often lies dormant in the hearts of young people, and this is possible in a relationship that is affectively meaningful, because only in a personal relationship can one show the way and lead, advise and strengthen for good. Accompaniment is where the confidence that our young people, beyond the dissipation of what overwhelms them, can feel the inner call of the Lord, be attracted by the allure of the evangelical life so that they, too, will be able to make themselves known and can reach an encounter with the God of life.

“Here we are now at the heart of a human relationship that is suddenly going to take on new importance. Within this relationship, a journey is about to begin, an event is about to take place. It is an event in the strongest sense of the word. It will be much more than an exchange of knowledge, or the concession of a counsel. The question is more than that of mere knowledge or wisdom; it means looking for one who will accompany. It is for a profound life to which he aspires." (Generati dallo Spirito, André Louf)

On the importance and need to choose a “faithful friend for one’s soul” with whom to live in “filial confidence”, beginning from his personal experience, Don Bosco frequently returned to the topic, speaking and writing to young people because he held that this was a qualifying point of his pastoral proposal, in addition to being a decisive factor for his spiritual life.

In the actual context of the Valdocco formative environment, the invitation to confidence clarified all of life and the multiple daily occasions for encounter between the young person and the formator.
How Don Bosco accompanied a young person

We know that the spirituality practiced and taught by Don Bosco was not isolated but ran throughout his whole educational system. It took place in an educational setting that was fervent and committed; a fruitful stimulus to meaningful human relationships, varied activities; in a communion of life linked to the rhythms of daily life and work with the sacredness of prayer and celebration, and the playfulness of the serene playground. It took place in a mutual bond between times of intimacy and a personalized, intense living together. It was prepared for in ordinary daily encounters of confident and intense friendships that led to maturing and establishing a meaningful, lasting relationship, to help prepare our hearts to trust.

"The quality of the accompaniment relationship involves the two partners so strongly that the benefits spill over to both. In most cases what is at the heart of the relationship is that the one being accompanied, usually powerfully challenges the freedom of the other, i.e. the one doing the accompanying, to the point that that he/she in turn is called to grow in awareness of his/her inner reality. The person being accompanied and the companion evolve together, and the growth needs of one causes the growth of the other. " (Generated by the Spirit, André Louf)

The Guidelines of the Educational Mission of the FMA have clearly updated the relationship of accompaniment, going back to the sources, reinforcing what is asked of the educator, underlining the importance of the educating community, but especially recalling what is fundamental so as “to learn to act in accord with the Holy Spirit” (113) “more than a friend”, “more than a father,” “an incomparable mother”. These terms, emotionally fraught with affectively weighty images, speak for themselves. They allude to what must be within the accompanying relationship, the quality of accompaniment in contact with life can flow and be transmitted. This quality relationship is called “love”, but a well-understood love, in the strongest sense of the word, and we would actually be tempted to say “more than love, agape”.

"It is the ability to go out of ourselves and go toward others, expecting nothing in return. Through love we confirm each other and we are, in turn, confirmed, but without even having looked for it. In love one gives love without losing anything. Indeed, you find yourself by losing yourself." (Generated by the Spirit, André Louf)

We "find one another" continuing to walk the pathways of the road with our young people; they already have their backpacks and are ready to go to great destinations. Why make them wait?

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Women in the Context

Why Mother Earth?
Paola Pignatelli
Bernadette Sangma

On April 15, 2009, the UN General Assembly voted unanimously to choose April 22 as the "International Day of Mother Earth." One of the first paragraphs of the resolution declares: "We recognize that the Earth and its ecosystems are our home, and in the belief that to reach a balance between economic needs, the social and environmental aspects of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony between nature and the Earth."

A question challenges us in this regard: Why is the symbolic representation of the Earth the image of a mother? What leads us to consider the Earth as being feminine?

Among the possible answers, we find an emblematic icon in the book of Revelation (12.1 - 9). It is the story of the woman, whom we refer to as Mary, pregnant, vested with forces of nature: the sun like a garment, the moon under her feet and the stars as a crown. In her travail she is in direct conflict with the dragon, the author of death, ready to snatch and attack the life she has generated. The woman gives birth and God is at her side ready to take the baby, to protect it. In biblical imagery the woman is defended by earth that swallowed the river sweeping out of the mouth of the dragon. On the other hand, the woman through the act of generation, has a special relationship with the earth.

Even in the various world societies, especially the indigenous, the feminine symbolism of the earth recurs often.

During the month of March this year, three women from the ethnic groups of the Q'eqchi', Aymara and Kichwa, participated in the UN Commission on the Woman at the New York gathering. We asked them, Olga Patricia Garcia Cuz, Adriana Pacosillo, Maria Ayda Azogue Tixilema and the Sisters who accompanied them to explain how they relate to Mother Earth.

Adriana Pacosillo explained that for Aymara women, "The relationship consists of a strong interaction with nature, where the woman refined her ability to observe. Nature is like a teacher for her. Through direct contact, the Aymara woman knows the complex reality addressed to her by nature herself, giving it two key elements: the vertical expression of the source from which all the gifts of nature come, and the horizontal line, which expresses the transmission of these same gifts to those who wish to bring them to fruition. The relationship is intertwined in a dialogue of thanks for all the benefits received by her. And when the earth does not produce good fruit, it generates a sense of remorse, because it is a sign of discomfort in the relationship."

Ayda Maria tells us that the rapport is one of great respect and care. Indeed, "The Kichwa loves and cares for nature to the point of avoiding the use of chemicals and fertilizers that contaminate the environment and people's health. They prefer to enrich the soil by the use of natural products, typical of the place at the time of sowing.

What was common in the three cultures interviewed, even in the level of the terms used, was the consideration of Mother Earth as Pachamama or "The mother who gives us what is necessary for life: food,
work and a home. She is a mother who generates children cares for them, giving them food, and clothing and she educates them in their ancient stories, helping them to live through any situation, be it in joy or suffering.

Fecundity is what characterizes both the woman and nature. In the Q'eqchi concept, to which Cuz Olga Patricia Garcia of Guatemala belongs, "the paradigm of fertility in itself contains the reproduction of children and the production and harvesting of maize. Both the mountain and the woman have a progressive increase in heat until the completion of growth.

The theme of fertility recurs also in traditional African society. It is, in fact, the woman who works the land because it is she who knows the secret of fertility.

The sense of communion with creation is also apparent from traditional practices during childbirth. The custom of giving birth while seated is common to the cultures of indigenous peoples of Latin America as well as those of Africa. It is a custom pregnant with meaning and is motivated by the fact that this position allows the newborn infant to touch the ground and receive the welcome and blessing of the land that is the great Mother.

The Igorot people of the Philippines, instead, have the practice of burying the placenta, which is considered to be the source of life and this gives a special value to the land where it is buried.

One may say that the symbolism and practices created around the woman, the unborn life and Mother Earth have an infinite wealth of information, which can provide the basis for a relationship of respect and care towards the earth. Indigenous cultures and especially indigenous women are filled with this wisdom. Listening to them could provide education for the respect and protection of creation, the logic of caring, which undoubtedly, would give new balance of communion and peace.
"Church of God, welcome every day with renewed freshness, the gift of charity that your Lord gives you and that makes you capable. He learns from the content and extent of love. Be the Church of the Beatitudes constantly conformed to Christ. Free of obstacles, be poor and friend to the poor, welcoming all forms of old and new poverty. "

(Ecclesia in Europa, 89;105)

Pope Paul VI often stated: "Ecumenism is now an essential dimension of consecrated life. All who are now consecrated must by vocation, feel the yearning in the heart of Jesus himself for the unity of all Christians. We are called to live an authentic spirituality of communion.” The Decree on Ecumenism brings out “The preoccupation and the care to conserve in communion of faith and charity, those fraternal relations which, as Sisters, must exist among local Churches. In this way dialogue reaches a quality and a more profound level, that of the Spirit where sharing becomes a testimony of one’s own belief and life.” Christ came to illuminate every people, every person, all cultures.

Paul VI further stated: “We need to immerse ourselves into the words of love, listening to each other, sharing together, ready to accept differences and difficulties. Removing those thorns that have, for a millennium, hurt relations between the Churches of the East and West, imploring in prayer the spirit of shared traditions.” This is a duty, not an option. We must never forget that ecumenism requires a testimony of fraternity that is carried out in daily life through the free and generous gift of self,

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The reality of an educating community best expresses the metaphor of today's communication: a network of networks, faces and stories of generations and words, gestures and actions, symbols and interactions.

The educational community is a "reality" in the Institute, although there are different paths with regard to its constitution. In many provinces it has consolidated an experience of collaboration in the vocational reciprocity between FMA and laity, in others, instead, is still not entirely clear how it exists in the educating community, although its value is understood and we try to involve the laity in the educating mission.

A conviction is all in the education and community project, developed and verified and with the mentality it fosters design and coordination for communion. And all is a commitment to build educating communities available in faith, open to hope, and work in love. For young people

Along the thread of the story

It would be very great to establish a channel to tell the everyday stories of our educating communities. All would be imbued with the passion for Christ, passion for "our young people" and for "our "people. Punctuated by the friendliness of relationships, interwoven by languages that speak of affection, feelings, and emotions anchored to reason and founded on religion. However, this is not always easy.

Young children and teenagers today are the children of a global society, a family that is often somewhat irresponsible; living in a consumer society that does not orient toward being, but to having.

In every context, the educational community is the area of promotion and sharing of experiences, of making everyone, great and small feel that they are truly part of a living community.

The strength of the community is being together not only to do, but to think, plan, pray. This daily being present in classrooms, courtyards, theaters, and gyms, in the chapel and on the streets is a sign that "we" is stronger than 'I'.

A day is built around moments of communication that are small and great at the same time. It is meeting and sharing the word and silence, marking the times, the routes and stops of human, cultural and spiritual growth.

Interpersonal communication educates and teaches us to be attentive to non-verbal language, to be active listeners, living and decentralization, to improving the congruence between words and actions, to build the climate of "we."

It is the daily bread formed to accept and welcome the other, who is different because of culture, language and ethnicity; it activates I, because that's where you are happiest and you experience the joy of giving yourself and your talents to those in need.

The network of the "little word whispered in the ear" is one where with immediacy, ease and conviction gives you encouragement, support and closeness. It also implies correction...

Participation is the active aspect of any
communication, if we allow ourselves to be challenged by urgencies and needs, if the seeking for discussion is lived around a table actively involving all, we cannot help but roll up our sleeves and get to work!

**Simply being present**

A few months ago in the City of Magdeburg that was once in East Germany, a new community, a new field of action for Sisters who are no longer young was opened. Three FMA live in a parish that has not had a priest for years. “Our Apostolate,” says Sr. Katharina Schmid the animator, “is that of simply being present. From this way of life, the Sister have organized themselves and the neighborhood streets have become their home, open to the encounter. Men, women, young people the elderly, the unemployed...They have a word for everyone, a smile. They have time for the people, to answer their questions, to teach them to pray, to speak of Don Bosco, to play with the children. Sr. Apollonia has always been with the little ones, and she knows what to do. For this reason, the Sisters have been asked to guide a few ecumenical prayer encounters in a nursery school. This is a network that has spread by way of concentric circles, and only by the force of a presence does it offer a countercurrent sign that speaks of the preferential choice for young people, it stands alongside the mission of the Don Bosco Youth Center, coordinated by three younger Sisters, This work is by now well-known and appreciated by the people, by the civil and religious authorities of the city.

The bishop who had desired this foundation for fifteen years gave the FMA an important program: “You are called to help the young people to become persons capable of reaching their own personal maturity.” There is a place for all; there are no age limits and there’s no risk of losing your job!

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I-Pad

What does a three year old child, a 99 year old, an autistic person and a prime minister have in common? The iPad, of course! The iPad is Apple’s latest “toy”, more-anticipated than the iPhone that was launched just 3 years ago. The iPad is a device shaped like a page of A4 paper and has a thickness of 1.27cm. It weighs just 7ounces and is a cross between a netbook and a smartphone (without the phone). It is a light portable laptop, with a screen that also incorporates a touch-sensitive keyboard, it is used to navigate, view photos and videos, read ebooks, newspapers, magazines, music, write notes, and read mail. You can also download a myriad of applications. The price range is between $ 499 to $ 829 according to the size of the memory chosen (16B, 32GB or 64GB) and connectivity (Wi-Fi or 3G network).

Is it complicated? It is so easy that even a child who does not yet know how to read can handle it. A journalist gave his iPad to his young daughter (already accustomed to using the touch screen) and she was able to use it like a veteran. However, it is not a toy for children. It has the potential to change one’s life. An affordable application allows those with autism, Lou Gehrig’s disease or Down’s syndrome to communicate. The possibility of enlarging fonts and changing the screen resolution has given the ability to read to a 99 year old woman suffering from glaucoma. It was even used by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway to track the volcanic cloud from Iceland that had grounded travel outside the country. So should we run out and buy the iPad? Maybe waiting for the second generation would not be a bad idea!
Communicating the Faith

The Internet and Evangelization

Claudio Pighin

For anyone who had doubts about the effectiveness of Internet evangelization, the message for the 36th World Day of Social Communications of John Paul II offered a variety of valuable and stimulating comments.

These were anticipated in the title "The Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel". Today at the beginning of the third millennium we have in the Internet a new revolution in communication and information.

Having clarified that the new frontier is not an end but a means, the Christian community must confidently and realistically face using it, taking into account its positive qualities and weaknesses. This is to help those who come into contact with the Internet for the first time to move from the virtual world of cyberspace into the real world of Christian community. It must be considered that the network has countless sources of information, documentation and education on the Church to which we must connect with wisdom, remembering that the Internet offers extra support and a unique encounter with Christ and his community.

However, we must not forget that the Internet offers knowledge, not values and despite its potential for good, it can degenerate into negative situations about which the public authorities must ensure accountability in this wonderful means, so that there may be a guarantee that the common good does not become harmful.

Scrolling through the message, underline the annotation when the Pope says that Internet radically redefines the relationship with a person's psychological space and Time. It multiplies contacts with the possibilities for evangelization, but the electronically generated reports can never take the place of a person.

The challenge that the Internet presents can be conquered if one has the courage to do so, and the Holy Father tells us “not to close the doors to progress.” In this way the “mass media will become a reality for authentic communication, a world not made up of illusions, but of truth and joy.”

I conclude this brief presentation of the significant papal document with a quote that touches missionaries in a special way. “In today’s world”, said John Paul II, “how can the successor of Peter accomplish his mission of preaching the Gospel, if not through social communications? No one will question that the central role of the media now and in the future, will be exercised by the Internet. ”

In this media context we ask: “Is there room for Jesus…Does his face appear?” If there is no room for Jesus, not even the human being will have space, incredible as it may seem. The Internet is a wonderful tool, but if you do not know about it or it is misused, it becomes inappropriate, and it runs the risk of being manipulated.

It's like when you have a beautiful car but you do not know how to use it or don't know how to care for it. One can expect a crash or having it remain immobile. One thing is certain: after the first emotions pass, you will be afraid. That fear comes from lack of knowledge that conditions the act of driving.
That's the way it is for the use of the Internet. Lack of knowledge can cause problems. We already know a few of these: individualism and dependence, exclusion, loss of values, social and political instability, illusions, imaginary reinforcement or empowering. Others could arise without our knowing the consequences.

We are at the mercy of the media. We, human beings who produce them, become "products" of the same means. There is nothing worse for the human being than to lose his/her own dignity.

How can we evangelize this new reality that has both positive and negative aspects? I repeat that it is not the machine itself that is responsible for the situation, but the one who uses it and drives it. Therefore I think that the first thing so as to be able to evangelize using it is to get to know it. This knowledge is not defined only in the ability to use it, but also in all the implications that this entails.

Second is planning. Communities and individuals themselves should know how the Internet fits into their daily lives, evaluating all of its projections.

A third important point can be expressed by feeling that one is part of the community. As the Church we feel it is our duty to avoid harming the ecclesial sense by individualism, and ensuring that action in the digital world is a truly authentic experience for perfect ecclesial communion. We may, therefore, say that the Internet is a very useful means for us and for our ecclesial aims. The center of everything—and we must never forget this—is always Jesus. And He, I believe, has the right of being present everywhere.

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Mitch Albom mesmerized readers around the world with his number one New York Times bestsellers, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Now he returns with a beautiful, haunting novel about the family we love and the chances we miss. *For One More Day* is the story of a mother and a son, and a relationship that covers a lifetime and beyond. It explores the question: What would you do if you could spend one more day with a lost loved one?

As a child, Charley “Chick” Benetto was told by his father, “You can be a mama’s boy or a daddy’s boy, but you can’t be both.” So he chooses his father, only to see the man disappear when Charley is on the verge of adolescence. Decades later, Charley is a broken man. His life has been crumbled by alcohol and regret. He loses his job. He leaves his family. He hits bottom after discovering his only daughter has shut him out of her wedding. And he decides to take his own life.

He makes a midnight ride to his small hometown, with plans to do himself in. But upon failing even to do that, he staggers back to his old house, only to make an astonishing discovery. His mother -- who died eight years earlier -- is still living there, and welcomes him home as if nothing ever happened.

Albom has said his relationship with his own mother was largely behind the story of the book, and that several incidents in “For One More Day” are actual events from his childhood. *For One More Day* is a quick, slick read, full of literary jewels and lines that go down like a sip of water. The mythical, magical world that lives behind Mitch Albom's eyes, where you can go back and fix what was wrong, where it doesn't hurt to dole out forgiveness, where a mother walks the earth like an angel paying homage to our one true treasure -- our families -- is a place I wish I lived. If you had the chance, just one chance, to go back and fix what you did wrong in life, would you take it? And if you did, would you be big enough to stand it? Mitch Albom, in this new book, once again demonstrates why he is one of my favorite writers: a fearless explorer of the wishful and magical, he is also a devout believer in the power of love. *For One More Day* will make you smile. It will make you wistful. It will make you blink back tears of nostalgia. But most of all, it will make you believe in the eternal power of a mother's love.”

—James McBride, author of *The Color of Water*

“Think of Mitch Albom as the Babe Ruth of popular literature, hitting the ball out of the park every time he’s at bat.”

—Andrea Sachs, *TIME*

Mitch Albom sees the magical in the ordinary, giving character Chick Benetto the opportunity of having one more day to go back and share a moment in his life with his mother”

—Cecilia Ahern, bestselling author of *P.S. I Love You*

“ Mitch Albom returns with a new novel in which death is a tender presence. The hero, after a missed attempted suicide, falls upon his mother who died eight years before. It is an encounter full of love and warmth that eases his torment and erase some regrets. “You need to keep people close,” Albom writes, “You need to give them access to your heart.” Hurry to For One More Day: it is a tender memorial that escapes sentimentality. It is rare.”

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I came to know that the “2009 National Report on the condition of aging” was presented to the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Government. This report brought out the demographic aspect of aging not only in Italy, but in the world. It said that the welfare and development of a country is measured by lengthening the life of the population, combined however, with the improvement of its quality of life! Improve its quality. Indeed, the challenge of the forthcoming years will consist in diminishing the gap between the length of life and the quality of life. Why live long if you live badly? The government, then, must devise strategies to affect the quality of aging since the elderly account for its resources, especially since the ISTAT(Italian data gathering agency) data shows that in 2030 there will be over 1 billion 400 million people in the world over 60. (Mama mia! Fortunately by that time the Sisters of my group will have already been transferred... into the eternal youth of God!) Then I thought that our Institute, which, to demonstrate its charismatic and spiritual level, must be concerned to improve the life of our elderly Sisters, whose numbers are increasing before our very eyes! I thought that it would still have to do it, but then I became aware that not only is the Institute doing this, but it has always has done so...Listen a bit...

I read, for example that every cultural stimulus renews new connections in the brain of elderly persons, and we, FMA, even for us, little old ladies, how many new experiences there are! Celebrations, annual and triennial evaluations, group work, planning! There is a continual cultural stimulus that keeps us mentally active!

**Isolation, then, aggravates aging.** There are some people who never receive a letter, or who chat only with the delivery man. We, instead, received a personal letter every month in the circulars of Mother General; we have a community... the greatest poenitentia, but also the greatest companionship!

**Movement and activities reinforce circulation.** We often think that our enormous houses are not suited for helping the elderly to reach the chapel or refectory, that this requires too much effort...It is for our health! Our circulation is re-activated without having to spend money on joining a gym!

**For an elderly person, trying to change some habitual action keeps one psychologically healthy...**This is the secret for our changing places at table, or in chapel, or in case, when out of respect for our age, it no longer happens that often, the animator changes (then too, if things are really not going well, you only have to put up with it for 6 years and then, bingo, there is a change!). In short, dear Sisters who are no longer young, it is really the Institute in its pedagogical wisdom that allows us to age gracefully! Rather, let us say it in another way...the Institute allows us to stay young!
It is love that gives value and is the price of all our actions.
(Francis de Sales)
THE FLOWERS HAVE APPEARED
IN THE FIELDS
THE TIME FOR SINGING
HAS RETURNED
(Canticle 2,12)