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# Dialogue, condition for peace

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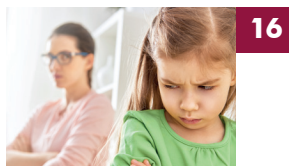
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## Editorial

### A truly new road

A real challenge in our contemporary world is undoubtedly that of dialogue. We often witness heated confrontations that are more akin to clashes than to real exchanges of ideas. In the political dispute there are increasingly aggressive tones and a lexicon far from elegant and diplomatic forms. Paradoxically, even in upholding a principle of non-violence, we come across aggressive and disrespectful forms. What is worse is the impact on citizens, who unwittingly absorb a very questionable style of debate. From this language, the desire does not emerge for real discussion with the other in view of the common good, with the logical consequence of a cultural and social dispersion. Another disturbing issue is the banality of many contents conveyed by the media, addressed to an anesthetized audience, floating on a quiet mediocrity, devoid of critical spirit. There are only two aspects of the world scenario that challenge us. How can we place ourselves in it to face the demanding challenge of dialogue? It is important first of all to consolidate our identity, to form our own convictions, to deepen the motivations of our choice of life, to inquire about the relevant events of the local, national, and international community, with the desire and will to "*Choose the path of encounter and reject that of conflict*" (Pope Francis). To dialogue, it is necessary to have something to say, the willingness to listen to the other, and to understand him/her even beyond words. It is not simple. There are obstacles that must certainly be looked at realistically, but this does not mean they must force us to surrender. The capacity for dialogue is also the result of patient craftsmanship, of daily learning of a properly human art that can produce significant changes in our relationships, in the world around us, and at all levels. The exercise of this art allows a greater knowledge, a growing trust between the parties, and can reach a beautiful goal that expresses well Antoine de Saint-Exupery: "*My friend, beside you I have nothing to apologize for, nothing to defend myself from, nothing to prove: I find peace... Beyond my clumsy words, you can see in me simply the man*". It is a realistic love that welcomes the merits and defects of the other, resources and fragility, in the knowledge that everyone, even in the most beautiful relationships, always has something to forgive and something to be forgiven. "*At the heart of every sincere dialogue is, first of all, the recognition and respect of the other. Above all, there is the 'heroism' of forgiveness and mercy, which liberate us from resentment, from hatred, and open a truly new path*" (Pope Francis).

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"Earth and Peace" is the motto of the "United States of the World", a world federation of 181 countries and over 16,000 bodies of civil society that sees the Salesian Family - in particular the FMA - among the first founders and first subscribers of the "Constitution" approved on 18 November 2022. It establishes rights and duties for the inhabitants of the planet, having as reference the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*. The common denominator that marks 37 years of commitment with over 11,000 events held in the 5 continents is, "Dialogue for Peace".

(Michele Capasso, *United States of the World*, Ed. Magma, 2024)

### ■ Together for the Earth and for Peace

Rome, 2 May 2024. Return to Italy from the tormented Gaza. In the mind, the harrowing images of thousands of innocent children slaughtered by a senseless and absurd war: human suffering cannot be summed up. Walking among hundreds of sacks wrapped in white sheets containing the bodies of innocent children, held tight by mothers who no longer have tears, I remember the words that Saint John Paul II pronounced during the Angelus on Sunday, 29 May 1994: "...The family is threatened; the family is attacked. The Pope must be attacked, the Pope must suffer, so that every family and the world may see that there is a Gospel, I would say, superior: the Gospel of suffering, with which the future must be prepared, the third millennium...".

During the journey to Naples, I reread a small book - meaning with this term the ancient usage with which we were referring to a particular book - printed by *Éditions Gérard & C.* and launched on 31 March 1966, at the 8th International Book Fair of Montreal: *Bâtir la Paix (Building Peace)*, by Father Dominique Pire. In 1958, he was awarded the "Nobel Peace Prize". Two years later, in 1960, he founded the

<sup>1</sup> Architect and engineer, founder in 1987, of the Mediterranean Foundation and the United States of the World. In 1990, he stopped his business, selling much of his assets to help victims of wars. Honorary professor in various universities, author of studies and publications in different languages.

*University of Peace* in Huy. Pire writes: "From a young age I realized the difference between social classes and the different choices about the problem of the existence of God. Diversities constitute the human heritage and often encounter those that cannot be harmonized: cases of injustice, misery, ignorance constitute a diminishment in the human being".

Rereading these words there comes to mind a conversation with Sister Maria Pia Giudici, FMA, in 2010, during which she told me: "Michael, you who sail on the sea of peace with indomitable courage and the heart of a child, you have well understood that the diversities of the world, if harmonized, constitute a good force and a source of enrichment for all humanity, complementing each other instead of opposing each other."

I had a long association with Sister Maria Pia for over a decade, during which we dealt with the fundamental themes of human existence, among them the safeguarding of creation and dialogue for peace. She suggested the motto "Earth and Peace" for the "United States of the World".

Dear Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Prize winner for Literature, said at one of our meetings at the beginning of this century: "Michael, remember that you have a gift: to transform love for power into the power of love. It is not a question of pursuing a system of universal harmony, as Fourier or Leibnitz wished. If in an orchestra, everyone played on his own, a

*cacophony would arise; if all the instruments were identical, it would be monotonous. It is much better if the inequality of instruments and the harmonization of sounds would arrive at a great universal symphony indispensable to save the planet and live in peace. The 'United States of the World' must implement this difficult action.*" The truth contained in the motto of Sister Maria Pia, which we find already in the interview with Naguib, will deeply nourish our common feeling and will constitute the basis of the unanimous and shared action for peace and the safeguarding of creation of the "United States of the World."

It was Gustavo Adolfo Rol, an enlightened and very religious man linked to the Salesian Family and to Don Bosco, who lived in Turin from 1903 to 1994, who launched on 11 January 1987, the "Appeal for the United States of the World". From a political and social point of view, Rol advocated since the 1940s the idea of "United States of the World" in the aftermath of World War II, which would not have happened if the "United States of Europe had already existed." There would not have been a Germany and an Italy against a France and a United Kingdom as it is unthinkable that there can be, for example, a Wyoming and Colorado against a Utah and an Idaho.

In a letter sent to the newspaper La Stampa and published on 27 January 1987, Rol wrote: *"The first men went to war: then two families, two tribes, two cities, then the war between nations began. Now the 'United States of Europe' is dreaming, but then? It would be the war between continents. So go to the 'United States of the World'.*

*Everything moves fast today; we might as well anticipate the time to put an end to the current misfortunes and avert those to come.*

*I am certain that the 'United States of the World' is already written in history and it seems to me that science demonstrates this in its continuous, passionate exploration of a universe whose knowledge belongs to all the peoples of our tiny planet. Science, above all political considerations and in perfect ethical unity, is a common good."* Rol had similar ideas even before the war, since 1937.

I met Gustavo Adolfo Rol in January 1987 at his home in Turin, accompanied by the "sculptor of color" Mario Molinari and his wife Pia Balducci. On that occasion, I set myself the goal of putting into practice Rol's appeal to create the "United States of the World", made the 11 January of that year in a telephone intervention during the television broadcast *Domenica In*, called in live by director

Sr. Maria Pia Giudici and Michele Capasso.



Franco Zeffirelli and the host Raffaella Carrà. Since then, I changed my life, selling most of my goods to help the victims of wars and to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence among peoples.

Gustavo Adolfo's appeal and idea was immediately transformed into a political-institutional project that would involve in the following years, starting from the area of the "Greater Mediterranean", over 180 countries and 16,000 organizations and institutions of Civil Society. Among the first founding members were the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

In 2017, in the Naples headquarters of the "United States of the World" and the "Museum of Peace", we established the "Salesian World

Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major inaugurates the World Salesian Oratory on 17 February 2017.



Mother Yvonne Reungoat with the Provincial Councilors and the Animators of the IMR Province, 9 November 2017.

Oratory" with the Chapel containing the relics of St. John Bosco and St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello and an "emotional" path distributed on the five floors of the museum entitled "Don Bosco, the power of Love". After the inauguration with the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, and Mother Yvonne Reungoat, many Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from all over the world visit this unique place. In particular, many young people are impressed by the message and charism of Don Bosco that invites them, especially in this difficult moment of history, to become "hunters of the positive".

On 18 November 2022 in Naples, in the headquarters of the "United States of the World", representatives of the Salesian Family, the dream cultivated for 35 years is crowned: 181 countries and founding members sign the "Constitution of the United States of the

World" containing the rights and duties of the inhabitants of the planet and based on encyclicals *Laudato si' e Fratelli tutti*.

The "United States of the World" brings together countries, international institutions, cities, universities, religious congregations, and civil society organizations in order to share knowledge to counter social injustices, wars, pandemics, the dissipation of resources, climate change. The fundamental objective is to affirm freedom and equality through the application of the fundamental rights of the human person. Since 1987, we have built a "large rope team" composed of men and women from the five continents whom with a common choral action, a change in the paradigm of development of the world through different geopolitics that must put the Common Good at the center, implementing new strategies of growth, competitiveness, and cooperation based on ethics has been supported, on social justice and the fair distribution of goods and resources. The "United States of the World" represents

a laboratory of ideas for concrete and shared actions that have at their core the safeguarding of fundamental values for humanity in respect for different identities and cultures, combining "Peace" and "Sustainability".

### ■ The Dialogue for Peace

Article 15 of the "Constitution of the United States of the World" - the only international body to have adopted one - states: "*The United States of the World pursues the Dialogue for Peace and works concretely for its protection, with the participation of all the inhabitants of the Earth: according to the principle of brotherhood and under the aegis of international organizations, contribute to promoting the diplomatic regulation of conflicts between States and the different cultural, ethnic, political, and religious realities.*"

Dialogue for Peace requires above all men and women of good will who assume the role of "Dialoguers" but, above all, of "Forgivers". "**Forgiveness**" is the fundamental element to support Peace.

Visit of Abu Mazen giving the picture of Our Lady, symbol of Christian Palestine.



With the King of Spain Felipe VI, always a supporter of SUM.



With Shimon Peres, First Secretary General of the United States of the World.



After the attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023, during a trip to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, I tried to convince qualified and influential interlocutors on the need to "Forgive". In front of the images of mutilated, torn, beheaded bodies, burned and raped by Hamas terrorists, I called attention to the opportunity and need to "forgive", instead of taking revenge.

If the rulers of Israel had the strength to forgive and to immediately arrive at the constitution of "Two Peoples in two States" - for decades hoped - but promoting on the media around the world the atrocious images that only a small part of insiders could see, it would be the whole world and the Arab countries themselves to condemn and isolate the terrorist and fundamentalist movement for the massacre carried out.

This has not been the case. More than 35,000 Palestinian deaths - mostly innocent children - and more than 100,000 injured, have been added to the two thousand Israeli deaths to date, with a people of more than two million on continuous pilgrimage in a strip of land become their prison in the open, without food and without hope.

The basis of the Dialogue for Peace is above all **correct information**. In this case, for example, to inform that only to eliminate 18 million tons of rubble caused in Gaza by Israeli bombs will take 14 years and the entire area will be polluted forever, or that the global arms market has reached the astronomical figure of over three billion dollars for 2023 or that the costs incurred for the war in Ukraine and other parts of the world could have - if used otherwise - eliminated poverty from the planet and helped international research to save the earth from the reckless damage that we ourselves have caused, would certainly help in a useful reflection for dialogue.

One of the problems of this difficult moment in the history of the world - which hinders

Dialogue for Peace - is the mediocrity, ignorance, and often bad faith of those who govern us.

Today it is a great disgrace that a "peacemaker" should address people with the words of the politician. And the misfortune is so great that it cannot be greater.

At one time, as the hero of Andrei Platonov, I believed that for humanity the most important thing was not to disturb the life of another. Now I think a little differently. It is even more important to do everything possible so that nobody can disturb the lives of others.

In art, in politics, in all spheres of life, today we live in a world of second-rate people. Perhaps the Ukrainian tragedy, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the "piece-meal" wars (as Pope Francis says) in more than 50 countries of the world could have happened even in the time of Sartre, Camus, Picasso, Krleza, Iwaszkiewicz, De Nerval, Ehrenburg, Khrushchev, Eisenhower, Charles de Gaulle, Willy Brandt, Sandro Pertini, Olof Palme, Nehru, Neruda, Brecht, Heinrich Böll, Alberto Moravia, Arthur Miller, Max Frisch, but they would certainly have been minor in the scale of the crimes. And what is left of the real but tired intellectuals, the real artists, the real writers, what about them? Very little.

Here then appears before us the arduous and difficult task of supporting the Dialogue for Peace even in the presence of a jungle infected with mass communication tools, in the absence of founding values for humanity, and with the coming of the so-called "artificial intelligence" which, if not managed, will be a real ethical and moral catastrophe. A glimmer of hope is the participation, precisely on this theme, of Pope Francis in the next G7.

### ■ Young hunters of the positive

"My only thought goes especially to young people: they must become *hunters of the positive*, pursuing the *True*, the *Beautiful*, and

the Good". With these words, Sister Maria Pia answered my question about her spiritual testament, at the conclusion of a long life dedicated to the Lord<sup>2</sup>.

And to the young Sister Maria Pia has truly dedicated her whole life, understanding that they are the producers of the future.

Dialogue for Peace means, today, to summarize the **ability to dialogue with young people**. Starting from families, where more and more often barriers, incomprehensions and misunderstandings are created that cause unimaginable tragedies. An important role belongs to parents who must know how to dialogue with their children with humility and firmness, placing themselves above all as an example. It is no coincidence that Don Bosco's charism and the irreplaceable action of Mother Mazzarello still constitute in these difficult times a fundamental anchor for young people, against the consumer drifts of today's society: the key word is "sharing".

"I'm here to share!" These were the first words addressed by Pope Francis to the 1,500 young people of Triveneta present on the churchyard of the Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice, at 10 am on 28 April 2024. We are invited to attend, with a small delegation from the "United States of the World", the short visit that lasts only five hours, but enough to write a page of important history for a city like Venice, already a destination for papal presences.

To the boys and girls, Pope Francis addresses the invitation to "get up from the ground because we are made for heaven; get up from



sadness to look up; get up to stand in front of life, not sitting on the sofa." With the tenderness but, at the same time, the firmness of a father, Francis exhorts the young people saying, "Row with constancy to go far".

Many words of the Pope have remained imprinted on me: "The great goals are reached with time, through love and faith, dialoguing for peace"; "The secret of great achievements is constancy"; "The mobile phone is useful but prevents you from meeting people; you need a hug, a handshake, a kiss: use your mobile phone but hug people!"; "DIY in the great things does not work: take life in your hands but *together*"; "Please always carry with you a small pocket Gospel and sometimes read a passage"; "The prayer of the Our Father is the most beautiful because the first word is 'Father': he who loves his son and does not abandon him".

Before saying goodbye to us, off the cuff as he often loves to do, Pope Francis says: "What was the thing I told you before?"

A loud and convinced cry rises from all the young people: "Get up and go!"

## Peace encounter who loves, restores and sends<sup>1</sup>

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### John 20:11-18

**<sup>11</sup>But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb <sup>12</sup>and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. <sup>13</sup>And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher. <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup>Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and what he told her.**

### <sup>13</sup>"Woman, why are you weeping?"

The Holy Angels know well why she weeps and whom she seeks.

### <sup>14</sup>"She turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus."

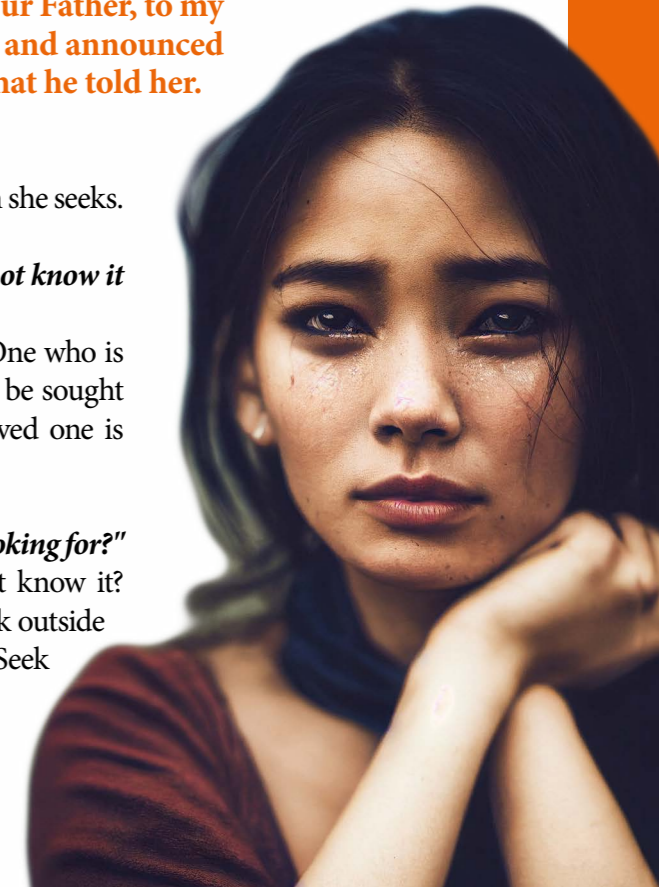
A scene full of tenderness and kindness, where the One who is wanted is shown and yet hides Himself. He hides to be sought with more ardor, found with more joy, until the loved one is introduced into the abode of Love.

### <sup>15</sup>"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"

You have what you are looking for and you do not know it? You have eternal joy and you weep? The One you seek outside yourself is within you. You sow your tears in a tomb. Seek

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by an anonymous text from the 13th century.

<sup>2</sup> The synthesis in the docufilm "Maria Pia Giudici. Joy in a simple life" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQvcHQ1d3h0&t=251s>



Me in your heart; I am not dead. I remain, living in eternity. Your soul is my garden. You are right to think that I am the Gardener. Your tears, your love, and your desire are my work. You have Me inside you without knowing it, and that's why you're looking for Me outside. I manifest Myself here to make you enter into yourself, so that you may find within yourself, Him whom you seek outside yourself.

<sup>16</sup>"**Mary**"

I know you by name; learn to know Me by faith.

<sup>16</sup>"**Rabbouni, Teacher**"

Teach me to find You, to find myself; teach me to touch You; I cling to Your feet, to adore You.

<sup>17</sup>"**Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.**"

Do not think that I am the same as before. Believe, and you will have touched Me. Your gaze is turned to Me as a man, and for this you do not believe, because you do not believe what you see. You do not see God; believe and you will see Him. With your faith, you will touch Me, like that woman who touched the edge of my cloak and was cured instantly. Why? Because she touched Me through her faith. Like her, Touch Me with your hands; search

Me with your eyes, run with your feet towards Me as she did. I am not far from you; I am the God who is close. I am the word that is in your mouth and in your heart. And what is closer to you than your heart? It is there, in the interior, that all those who seek Me find Me.

<sup>17</sup>"**I am going to my Father and your Father**"

I proclaim to you the dynamism of my Resurrection. I am the Lord of time and space. I send you, Mary, to the community and I entrust a mission to you.

<sup>17</sup>"**Go to my brothers**"

I open before you the future and renewed relationships. To you, Mary, I return your name in fullness; begin your journey towards your mission to proclaim the good news. And in proclaiming what I confide to you, let Me transform your existence into this encounter with Me. I am the Risen One.

<sup>18</sup>"**I have seen the Lord!...**

... my Beloved, He is Alive!



**FORM@RE**



# The role of schools in peace education

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The school can contribute strongly to the change of society and has a decisive role in educating for peace. The new generations can help us to imagine and build peace and to understand its value deeply.

Building shared meanings, taking a look at what is happening in the world, reading a book or exploring works of art... there are several possibilities to address the issues of war and peace.

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educ@te



Whatever the starting point, it is important to reflect on the essence of peace: *good relationships*.

Peace and conflict are two opposing terms that mark relationships and our daily lives. Peace as a great ideal, but also as something to be sought in the small vicissitudes of everyday life. Peace education starts right here, how we adults manage to accompany children and teenagers through the day, encouraging attitudes and behaviors that facilitate the establishment of a serene climate and helping them in the constructive resolution of conflicts.

*“Today war is in itself a crime against humanity. Peoples need peace! The world needs peace! We must educate to peace. We see that the whole of humanity does not yet have an education to stop every war.”*

Pope Francis

## ■ Change values

The main objective of peace education is to promote a change in values, attitudes, and behavior in order to foster a class climate based on tolerance, respect, solidarity, and justice. At the same time, peaceful transformation of conflicts, dialogue, and non-violence are promoted. It is an education to values that aims to sensitize adults, growing people, and society in general on the importance of cooperation and solidarity between different cultures and respect for all living beings.

Education for peace is an instrument of intervention that aims to translate nonviolence into concrete actions linked to the daily life of everyone. The nonviolent approach to conflict does not see the conflict as exclusively negative, but as a crisis that alongside elements of risk, contains elements of potential change, growth, and development.

Education for peace is at the same time an education for human rights, citizenship, interculture, dialogue and coexistence, democracy, legality and justice, social and emotional skills, conflict and nonviolence, equal opportunities, solidarity and sharing, respect for the environment, energy saving, critical consumption.

The school plays a fundamental role in this process and provides a privileged testing ground for the transmission of attitudes

and values proper to peace education. Far from building an "extra subject", it is an attitude, the constant attention that teachers and students give to attitudes, actions and reactions. It takes its cue from daily events and can be included in the annual program, relating to many of the areas of teaching.

## ■ If school does not educate to peace, what does it educate to?

A school of peace is above all a school that reflects on itself and that rethinks itself, both on a cultural and organizational level. Everyone, from school managers to teachers, from technical staff to students and parents, must answer the question: what can we do to turn our school into a place of peace?

Peace is taught and learned. For this reason, the school has a special responsibility. Moreover, if the school does not educate to peace, what does it educate to? Peace education cannot be considered an additional task to add to the many that fall on the school. It must be considered as the integrating background of the whole

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formation process. This does not mean that because "everything is peaceful" we do not need to "do anything" more or different. Peace, and above all the experience of its lack, questions us and urges us to constantly rethink the way we relate and do school.

Taking this perspective is equivalent to realizing the utopia advocated by the Italian pedagogist, best known worldwide, Maria Montessori: awaken education in a society wounded by war.

Peace is a transversal and universal theme (Montessori, 1949); indeed, it is the node between the various fields of knowledge. It is present in the various cultures, religions, and populations and in each of these finds a specific argument. Humanity has always seen itself engaged in

the contexts of belonging for its realization, often witnessing it with its own action.

Peace, as a personal, communitarian, and even political condition, can be considered as the impetus and openness of "the whole" of humanity to adhere to a plurality of values such as democracy, justice, and freedom; these values, which can affect the human and educational journey of each. It is not by chance that religions have always proposed ways to sow peace. These "paths" must be travelled with courage and creativity, but above all, they require witness.

The three paths traced by Pope Francis "for the construction of a lasting peace" (Francis, 2022), namely the dialogue between generations to share common

*"The first idea that the child must learn in order to be actively disciplined is that of the difference between good and evil; and the task of the educator is to ensure that the child does not confuse good with immobility and evil with activity."*

Maria Montessori

*"To educate is to help life to set out on the wide and ever new paths of experience with a spirit of joy, fraternity, desire for the good, responsibility."*

Maria Montessori

projects, education and instruction, and job security for the realization of the dignity of the person, are particularly striking to delve into a discourse which recognizes that peace has universal, educative, and planning significance.

The task of the teacher who teaches peace is a task that requires attention to the human in all its facets.

### ■ Challenge and compass

The teacher is called to be an educator and a researcher, a facilitator and a negotiator, an "expert witness" of the time in which the students live, capable of traveling the languages of the new generations. In this sense, the teacher who educates for peace is able to collaborate with colleagues, families, workers of the territory to build an educating community. This teacher updates research and studies, renewing the contents and methods of teaching and is capable of promoting an inclusive interpretation of global and local citizenship. The teacher acts with respect for the principles of peace and nonviolence and testifies to this choice in different professional contexts, in relations with students/pupils, with colleagues, and with families.

Montessori also insisted on the need to defend peace by assigning to pedagogy an essential role to make it universal and operative, and therefore capable of educating young people in the encounter and respect between different peoples, cultures, and religions. For the 'Doctor', "peace is a practical principle of humanity", that is, a need which requires preventive action - in these times more than

ever - and reflection at the community level. In the foreground, there is the need to educate and educate ourselves to peace by increasing in the new generations the ability to imagine it, to desire it, to understand it, to defend it, and to build it where it is not yet there. It is therefore essential to welcome the theme of peace as a challenge and compass for the education of the young generations. Montessori's exhortation engraved on her tomb in Noordwijk (Holland): *I pray that the dear children can all join me for the building of peace in men and in the world* fully summarizes the cultural and educational commitment that she carried out for the construction of a culture of peace.

Peace education is nourished by good practices. It is itself a practice and not a declaration of intent, which is why the teacher is called to recognize self as a "reflective professional", a researcher to respond to the needs of the new generations in order to coordinate and direct peace education towards effective and meaningful paths, not stereotyped, in which the pupil can exercise active citizenship in all its facets.

Educating to peace is an ethical commitment that calls for formal, informal, and non-formal education. It requires cooperation and here dialogue becomes a bridge to what can divide different peoples, cultures, and religions.

The school plays a crucial role because it is "freedom" and "integration". It is the place where relationships are intertwined, but it is above all a community capable of promoting the anthropological dimension, the experiences and the value sphere of "the whole" of the school population.



# Listen to be builders of peace

Giulia Paola Di Nicola - Attilio Danese

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Like all good arrangements, it is in the family that you learn the art of listening, because you live with people of different sex, age, culture, roles, which inevitably generates bickering and sometimes conflict. There is no one who has not witnessed at least once the quarrels between Mom and Dad and feared that the bonds would break down irremediably. There are countless children in the world who drag plots due to lack of peace in the family.

As children, we should learn from parents to listen to each other carefully, honestly, even if one expresses contrary opinions believing in his/her good faith and investing confidently on the possibility of starting over after making a mistake, to reactivate a relationship that seems broken. Violence, arrogance, prejudice, rigidity are born from those who show themselves incapable of putting themselves in the shoes of the other; who cannot stand different ideas judged stupid and malevolent and want to impose their own. War repeats on a broad spectrum and between States the model of family and interpersonal conflicts. Contemporary culture does not help. The noise of the squares makes listening hasty, careless, superficial. One gets the impression that violence and ignorance abound thanks to a cultural and political context, fomented by the mass media, which reduces everything to slogans, fueling disinformation and ideological fixation. The interweaving of the widespread economic and social malaise and this degradation of mass culture creates a perverse situation for which those who try to

solicit the brain are submerged by those who move the belly. It is not only the growth of fake news that affects the distortion of democracy, but all the language, which is getting mixed and deteriorating, a reflection of the inability to care for the other. The fact is that the *Risk Report* of the *World economic forum* has indicated that misinformation, which threatens global security, is the main concern for the next two years.

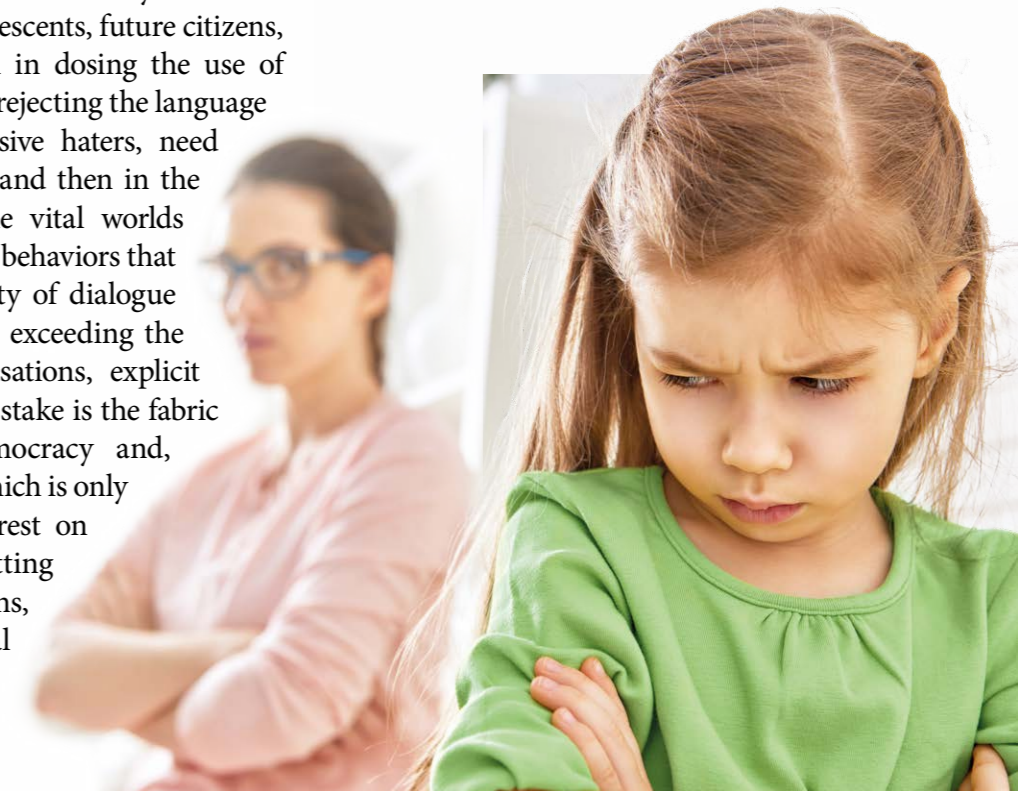
In politics, those who ride the contradictions to their advantage prevail. The differences are amplified and contrasted, inducing the most fragile sections of the population to take sides prejudicially on the one hand, take partisan behavior and replace the confrontation with aggressive and often violent confrontation. The ego feels strong if it sides: or with the majority, which always and in any case defends its own work, minimizing the antecedents and contributions of the opposition, or with the opposition that, instead of making integrative and/or alternative proposals, goes in search of the weak points of everything the majority does, insults, and lashes out. Accusations of

incompetence, of lack of sense of the State, of immobility are flying. The dominant public opinion stabilizes on the polarization of the sides, which does not concern only those that Giovannino Guareschi called with the offensive epithet 'trinariciuti', i.e. 'from the three nostrils', with reference to those communists who in the post-war 'aspired' with the third nostril the dictate of the party newspaper. Too many professional politicians look to the next elections, neglecting the concrete and most urgent problems of citizens. Yet in the Italian newspapers you can read editorials sapid commentators who reason with detachment and realism, but you know that it is not the best that comes to the fore besides the fact that the good press is losing grip on the general public. We cannot limit ourselves to face-to-face relationships or reading, given the explosion of social networks that capture a large part of citizens and voters inclined to absorb more than build.

To counteract the habit of easy mockery of opponents and encourage a serene comparison of ideas, which promotes the ability to discern and listen, to have adolescents, future citizens, capable of self-control in dosing the use of electronic devices and rejecting the language Simplifier and aggressive haters, need to feed, in the family and then in the condominiums, in the vital worlds and in the public ones, behaviors that testify to the possibility of dialogue on the whole, without exceeding the controversy and accusations, explicit or implicit. What is at stake is the fabric of a nation, of democracy and, ultimately, of peace, which is only a flag if it does not rest on people capable of setting reasoned comparisons, formulating original

and alternative paths, encouraging instruments of inclusion and participation. That we are far from this is attested by the episodes of intolerance and fanaticism in the universities, privileged places for protest often devoid of proposals and unfortunately also anti-democratic if it prevents freedom of expression. What citizens of tomorrow are those young people who have prevented the director of Repubblica Maurizio Molinari from speaking to Federico II? What about the people who stopped Poreč's surgery? On the other hand, we cannot pursue the idea of the militarization of universities in order to prevent demonstrations and free speech, solutions that would risk widening the area of extremism. That something must be done, however, is urgent, especially in the face of the rise of anti-Semitism following the events in Gaza and the spread of 'putinism' (because so few pro-Ukrainian demonstrations, now almost destroyed?).

They are not just students, if the Academic Senate of Turin has also rejected the protocol



of cooperation with Israeli universities. Nor are these episodes limited to universities. This is attested by the bad signal before: on 20.5.2023, at the Arena Piemonte of the Turin salon, there was a chaos that prevented the scheduled presentation of the book "A radical family" by the minister for Equal Opportunities, Family and Birth, Eugenia Roccella. A group of about thirty protesters (Extinction Rebellion, Comitato Essenen, feminists of 'Not one less', Fridays For Future and Ecology), sitting on the floor in the hall, had raised banners and shouted slogans making it impossible to present the text. Yet Roccella has a radical and feminist past, but her Catholic choice is considered conservative and unacceptable. No possibility of public confrontation on the grounds of the protest. One of the activists replaced the author and read a statement - effectively avoiding



dialogue - against Catholic positions on issues such as abortion and the surrogate uterus, adding the alleged 'indifference' of the government to the climate crisis. The Digos of Turin has identified and denounced 29 activists, accused of private violence. La Roccella, on the contrary, asked not to dismiss anyone: "I could not accept it because I have a past in which I was taken away by sit-ins and I do not want this to happen." Yet she had to leave the stage, noting that solidarity between women is now a slogan of the past, since the protesters did not want to confront the rented uterus rent, the commodification of the body of women, the relative racist market (children of black women cost less than white women). The reaction of the publisher Rubbettino was significant: "A wasted opportunity for debate. It is not a good signal for democracy. Eugenia Roccella's book is also the story of a life spent on civil rights, women, and freedom. You were barred from speaking even though you gave a style lesson by getting protestors to talk."

What peace do these illiberal-posture youths demand? They confirm that:

- Peace is based on a democratic attitude which must be defended and always rebuilt, avoiding taking it for granted.
- Acts of intolerance do not help the cause. They bounce on those who make them and harm families (how much pain for parents whose children are identified by the police!), social groups, parties.
- The widespread prejudicial stance towards the ideas of others is based on the high consideration, dogmatic and individualistic, of one's own convictions.
- The space given to positions that directly or latently incite confrontation endorses the interest of economic and political power groups aimed at capturing the consensus of the least equipped culturally and psychologically.

- Reality shows that a certain dullness in the comparison between differences surpasses the categories of belonging. It is not the case to delude oneself on the spontaneous solidarity between women, on the ethical superiority of one group over another, whether it is women and men, right and left, of young and old, of religious and atheists. What is at stake is the civil and ethical depth of democracy, as called for by the Italian Constitution: "Everyone has the right to express his or her thoughts freely by word, writing, and any other means of dissemination" (Art. 21). Of course, neutrality is not the solution, because it is often cowardly and harmful. There is no democracy without 'parties', carriers of opposing views that reasonably compare themselves on what the 'good of the homeland' is (Cesare Balbo explained this well), but there is no democracy either if the intolerant rejection of open and respectful dialogue is allowed to prevail. When we focus on the goal of silencing the other, of turning off the voice so that it is not even heard and much less can be challenged, the doors open to dictatorships and despotism, albeit in soft clothing.



What and how long is it appropriate to tolerate? Can tolerance be absolute, if racist, machist, propagating ideas of violence swarm? There are no quick and easy solutions that fall from above. It is better to multiply, as far as possible, the educational laboratories capable of nourishing in every place of coexistence that "ethical minimum" to be respected in order to avoid chaos, creating alternative spaces, in which we are educated to accept the longer periods of formation, the patience of confrontation, respectful listening, and serene discussion. It is difficult to expect that there are citizens willing to give their lives to defend the right to free expression of thought, as the inflated phrase attributed to Voltaire hopes: "I do not agree with what you say, but I would give my life so that you can say it" (actually by Evelyn Beatrice Hall in *The Friends of Voltaire*, 1906). Progress cannot be made without setting a limit to legitimate opposition, which concerns the task of politicians and lawyers, but at the bottom, above all, it is important to increase the number of hero-citizens willing to engage in frank and respectful dialogue, even when it involves a certain willingness to pay in person.

# Fear and fears

Maria Rossi, FMA

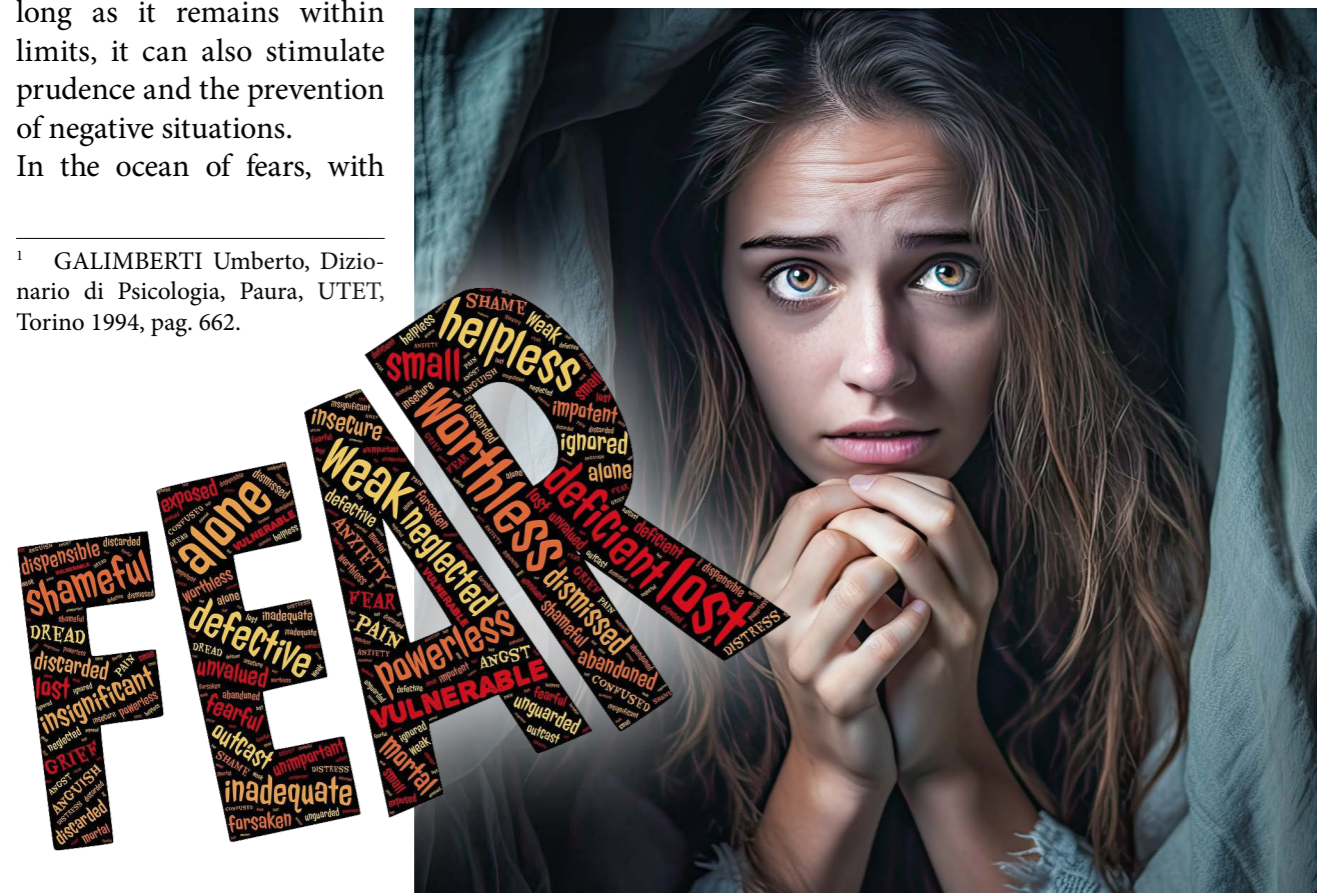
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Sooner or later, little or much, we all have to reckon with fear. It comes in many different forms and intensities ranging from healthy fear, to terror, to pathological phobia. In the Dictionary of Psychology by Umberto Galimberti, it is defined as: "Primary emotion of defense, caused by a situation of danger that can be real, anticipated by prediction, evoked by memory or produced by fantasy. Fear is often accompanied by an organic reaction, which prepares the body for the emergency situation by readying it for the defenses that usually result in attitudes of struggle and flight."<sup>1</sup>

Fear is generally associated with a negative meaning: it scares us. Often, in fact, it leads to irrational attitudes of exaggerated aggression, uncontrolled flight, insecurity, impotence. But, and as long as it remains within limits, it can also stimulate prudence and the prevention of negative situations. In the ocean of fears, with

those rooted in the mists of time, there are others arising linked to the advent of wars, climate change, and the rapid development of technology. They are fears that you breathe in

<sup>1</sup> GALIMBERTI Umberto, Dizionario di Psicologia, Paura, UTET, Torino 1994, pag. 662.



the air, intuitions, feared, but still unknown. Some recent research, interested in the effects of the daily use of smartphones in recent generations, highlighted in adolescents and young people the emergence of new forms of fear such as *Nomophobia*, that is, "the psychological condition in which people are afraid of being disconnected from the connectivity of the mobile phone" and the *Fomo*, namely, "the fear of being cut off: a pervasive fear at a time when you think that other members of your social group are having rewarding and meaningful experiences while you are not with them."

*"Imperfection is simply the meaning of life. What we see and experience is imperfect. Imperfection is part of human nature; only the idea of striving for perfection is terrible."*

Paolo Crepet

<sup>2</sup> These fears, as well as other attitudes induced by the use of smartphones, prevent a healthy development of the relationships necessary for growth.

Among the ancient and recent fears that deserve a serious reflection there is an underground and elusive one that can dwell in anyone. It is the fear of those who, by some characteristic, are seen and felt to be different. The different, the unknown, at the best can be perceived as a danger; they can give rise to the fear of not measuring up.

Those who experience this emotional state can hardly perceive it in its real scope, indeed tend to deny it, hiding it under good motivations and attitudes apparently correct.

It can lurk in everyone, but, as we know from present-day history, the most vulnerable people seem to be those who manage large or small roles of power in the political, economic, religious, and social spheres. One

of the dangers that frighten those who find themselves in these roles are people who, supported by a good culture and with serious reasons, think differently or have particular characteristics that cast a shadow. The defenses to take shelter from these "dangerous beings" are often those of removing them by means of war, exile, imprisonment, murder, removal from important roles, displacement, marginalization. What is happening in the broad political sphere, with similar methods more attenuated, is repeated also in small communities, in the various groups of people.

Besides being against the dignity of the human person, these reactions highlight in those who carry them out, the inability to confront, to dialogue, to accept that someone has something different and better to propose. They highlight, above all, fear and rejection of one's own frailty. The acceptance of one's limits is difficult for everyone, but for those who play a role of power and believe that they must be better than others, it is much more so. Ignoring and denying yourself your own limitations and attributing to others presumed dangers, is easier than finding the courage to accept them.

From the very beginning of life, nature has provided human beings with instinct and intelligence, useful tools to defend themselves both from fears caused by real dangers, anticipated by prediction and evoked by memory, as well as from those "created" from the fear of not being up to the mark, from jealousies, comparisons, fantasies, and more. And it continues to do so. But, while knowledge of the dangerous content of real fears allows

<sup>2</sup> GIUFFRÈ Rosa – FASOLI Giovanni, *Notte digitale? Un viaggio dentro Nomophobia Fomo Vamping Phubbing*, Dario Flaccovio Editore, Palermo 2024, pag. 20 e 118.



you to find targeted defenses and the ability to rescue reactions to fears 'created' by the dangerous content built, become very problematic and negative. In the sphere of interpersonal and international relations, they create enormous injustices with infinite consequences of suffering.

In the Osservatore Romano of 15 April 2024, Pierluigi Banna writes: "Behind the conflicts there is always the fear of not being up to the task. But a solution exists." Recognizing and accepting the real content of the fears aroused by interpersonal relationships is difficult, but possible. It is about stopping, leaving behind the expectations of the world that wants us to be efficient, to enter with respect and benevolence into the depth and complexity of ourselves and situations, and there to give space to critical thinking illuminated by great human values and by the Faith. In this space, where the Light envelops you with an embrace full

*"Hope is linked to courage; if you want to have hope you must have courage that is above all to believe in yourself; all of us can change."*

Paolo Crepet

of trust and with the help of a wise person, it becomes possible not only to recognize the real motives of fears with the psychic dynamics that have built them, but also to find the courage to accept them. Recognizing and accepting one's limits means accepting oneself for what one is, unifying oneself, no longer having anything to hide, neither to lose, nor to defend, thus overcoming that fear of not being up to the task that creates conflicts. And, in the deep sense of bliss that comes from feeling free from the hidden boulders, also find, as the Pope lately supplicates, "the courage of the white flag" when the good of the human community is at stake, peace.

Those who have experienced this liberation in daily life, those of both the great and the small world, can accept confrontation with those who are different, to listen, dialogue, and to collaborate without prejudice. They are not afraid to recognize their exaggerated need

to possess, to have superfluous things, as well as to believe themselves the only owner of the truth, and must have the last word by imposing themselves with arrogance. They do not need to laugh about everything and everyone to feel important. They can treasure criticism, humorously smile at themselves, create fraternity.

*"Communicating is a gesture of love, a recognition that one has the right to know and the other, the duty to speak."*

Paolo Crepet

Paolo Crepet, well-known psychiatrist, writer, and educator, in his latest book: *"Take the moon. A dialogue between generations"*, observing the difficulties that young people encounter in their confrontation with a world that always wants them perfect and unshakeable, he writes: "Maybe our boys and girls must arrive at feeling like superheroes

when they can accept their weaknesses and tell each other, to love each other!" The same thing, and perhaps even more so, could be said for adults. To find time to enter into oneself, to free oneself from the excuses/preferences induced by the fear of feeling forced to follow the race to efficiency, to do, and thus to avoid the fatigue of thinking, knowing, understanding, and being willing to question oneself. In the current times, they could really be like "Superheroes". But, in the embrace of Light that comes from Above and in the company of a wise friendship, in addition to the acceptance of their limits, it also becomes possible to open to dialogue, the realization of engaging relationships that build peace.



# In the difficult path to build peace... rediscover the path of dialogue

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In the arduous process of building peace in a world context of the crisis of democracy, of the increasing brutality of power, of individual and collective violence now resulting in a war that threatens to annihilate humanity, it is more urgent than ever to engage in the search for an active and creative peace, finding together a different way of setting up diplomacy and negotiations, to undertake *paths of dialogue* aimed at restoring peaceful and sustainable international relations. This becomes possible if deep changes are promoted in people, communities, and institutions that touch attitudes, beliefs and values, emotional orientations, especially those that are the basis of prejudices, identity visions, and collective memories.

## ■ Rediscovering the path of dialogue

The *path of dialogue* is the first condition for establishing realistic *paths of peace*, capable of transforming the conflict into a resource and overcoming violence.

"Dialogue" is a magic but also concrete word that fills and makes current our meetings, our daily life today enveloped by the nightmare of a global war that seems imminent and that generates a widespread sense of impotence

before the observation that the roads of solution seem distant and still unpredictable.

*Dialogue*, however, is a word of vital importance in every sphere of human existence, because it has a formidable power of good and evil, of construction and destruction, of harmony and peace, of conflict and conciliation. In fact, there is a dialogue that 'disarms' and a dialogue that feeds the opposition and the dialectic.

Every human encounter with others, with friends but also with enemies, with those who manifest dissent, opposition, feelings of revenge, vendetta, and arrogance challenges and exposes our relationship with life, with the other, and also with God. We are called to constantly confront ourselves with the risk of letting ourselves be dominated by words, thoughts, attitudes, and gestures that go beyond social and relational 'correctness', beyond respect and tolerance, and that give space to prejudice and hostility.

Dialogue is a necessity. It is a profound request of the person but it is also a challenge, especially when interpersonal relationships are called into question, both in groups, in communities, in society, and in the world.

Dialogue is the basis of every relationship. Yet in the current communication society, always virtually connected, dialogue has become more difficult and one risks not being able to be understood because of the multiplication of misunderstandings, ambivalence, offenses or verbal violence.

*"The challenge of reality also requires the ability to dialogue, to build bridges instead of walls. This is the time of dialogue, not the defense of opposing rigidities."*  
Pope Francis

In the complex and fluid contexts of the contemporary world only the *culture of dialogue* can help to face the alienating predominance of advanced scientific and technological knowledge and to rediscover the dignity of the authentic human being, the regenerating force of fraternity, beyond all conflict and hostility between peoples.

In times of "institutionalized" war, terrorism, and great ethnic and social conflict, the need to focus more on education, to invest in formation for the men and women of today is increasingly being questioned, for the life and future of the Church and of consecrated Life,

so that the *culture of encounter*, of *sharing*, and of *dialogue* may be forcefully affirmed as an antidote to incommunicability, to egocentric individualism, to ever-latent conflict, the fragmentation of thought as a threat to critical freedom, the difficulty of implementing prevention, mediation, and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

## ■ Towards a new grammar of relationships with each other

The *relationship with the other* is one of the great nodes of contemporaneity and the line that Pope Francis is pointing out to the Church and society is to learn to re-write a new *grammar of relationships*. It is what humanity needs, because it carries within it a powerful

"nostalgia" for the *relationship with the other*, a "nostalgia" for *dialogue* and *engagement* to be able to put in place a constructive interpersonal communication that leads to harmony and peace. But, as Martin Buber maintains, "authentic dialogue and, therefore every real fulfilment of the interhuman relationship means

acceptance of otherness." In the relationships between people, as in any social interaction, dialogue and communication play a key role. Most relational problems, in fact, can be traced back to the lack of dialogue and, therefore, of listening to the other and to reality.

It is well known how strong the power of dialogue is that, in its etymological root (*logos*=discourse and *dia*= between), means discourse between people, especially if it is not marked by the dialectic of defending one's point of view maybe against that of the other, but the need for an encounter that enriches both parties and promotes the transformation



of thought towards new convergences and synergies. In this way, dialogue becomes the key to a solution against the fragmentation of thought typical of contemporary times, where individualism and personal protagonism can hinder the overall vision and critical thinking itself that instead allow us to overcome dichotomies and mental rigidities to converge towards common awareness and shared and coherent decisions.

The possibility to understand the other and to understand each other is more understood in relation to the level of harmony that can be established between the interlocutors. As the German philosopher Gadamer authoritatively states, "the understanding between people takes place on the basis of a common horizon that lives in the language we speak" and that "the experience of truth is given only in *dialogue*, in that dialectic of question and answer that feeds the circular movement of understanding" (Gadamer H.G. 1931).

### ■ The fundamental components of dialogue in the context of human relations

In the first place, it is essential to establish an open relationship that is always reciprocal. Communication cannot exist without the reciprocity of openness to the other, to the countless "you" who are in front of and around us, without grasping them as "you" in their personal identity and welcomed as such. This predisposition to open to the other, in an active and passive sense, allows the emergence of a wider relational climate that embraces a "we" certainly richer and more comprehensive. This inevitably entails greater complexity of interactions whereby communication itself could become conflictual due to the presence of oppositions, divergences, and clashes or the emergence of individualism and personal protagonism.

So, the passage from the Ego to the You, as an intermediate stage towards the 'We' of the community, the nation or the global world, is made more difficult and problematic.

While being aware that the very structure of the human person is *dialogical*, nevertheless the path of dialogue is not an automatic and natural reality. Moreover, the nature of the relationships in which we are involved is built up through a series of *implicit negotiations*, sometimes even compromises. It is a matter of building within oneself attitudes that are then transformed into lifestyles, in a way of being *for* and *with* the other that must be cultivated with constant exercise and commitment, always motivated and renewed in everyday life.

The main components of the dialogue, taking into account the complex grammar of human relations, can thus be summarized:

- exit from oneself or rather the decentralization of the ego to become available to opening;
- understand the other, that is, knowing how to place oneself from the point of view of the other and of reality;
- assumption of the other on oneself and his/her requests, 'taking charge' of the other's questions, needs, and problems, suffering as rejoicing;
- give confidence, appreciation, and esteem, without which one cannot build a positive communication, indispensable prerequisite for the other to open up;
- clarity, sincerity, and courage in revealing oneself, with respect and loyalty, recognizing the gifts and accepting the limitations, offering the other the freedom and autonomy to be him/herself;
- learn how to manage conflict or any

opposition competently, effectively, and creatively, in the belief that one can also learn to draw the best from conflict without demanding a solution at all costs, activating internal resources and skills, such as the ability to mediate and negotiate, to transform conflict into a resource for self and for others.

Putting into practice the *art of dialogue* as a *way to build peace* involves directing formation and learning processes more seriously in situations of relational conflict, not only through the application of psychosociological techniques or dynamics detached from reality, but through specific exercises or *formation* that help to acquire awareness of attitudes towards others, of our own style of communication, and the ways in which we approach or influence each other, as well as our ability to listen actively.





# Communicate with the heart

edited by **Pascaline Affognon, FMA**  
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**Sister Maria Teresa Añaños Colón, FMA Spanish missionary, arrived in Africa on 13 January 1982, welcomed to the Ivory Coast where she was also a community animator and novice formator. Later, she was a missionary in Madagascar and also Superior of the Preprovince, and a missionary in Togo and Mali. She currently resides in the community of Abidjan (Ivory Coast). On 6 April 2024, the Spanish Embassy in the Ivory Coast awarded her the honor of the "Official Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic".**

## ■ **What was your first community?**

Duekoué, in the Ivory Coast, it was one of the communities that was the fruit of Project Mornese. We were three sisters: Sister Maria Asunción Bosch, Sister Bagur, and myself. Together with us, there was a lay nurse. My memories are very beautiful and I thank God with all my heart. I was very, very happy. Everything gave me joy, a joy I tried to share without expecting anything in return. It was a moment of grace.

## ■ **How did you manage to communicate the Salesian charism?**

In simplicity, trying to be a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians putting into practice all that we learned in the years of formation in its various aspects. We did this by discovering the seeds of the charism in the people, the children, and the girls from whom I have learned a lot. The communication of the charism also takes place through community life in the search for God's will and in sharing.

## ■ **What aspects of the culture helped in the communication of the charism?**

Many! The welcome, the celebration, the simplicity, the openness, and the sharing; the religious dimension, especially the joy of children able to rejoice in the little things; the ability of the people to suffer. The difficulties encountered helped me to mature. One of



the difficulties was that of language. I could only say a few words, but people were happy to hear us speak their language. They laughed when I was wrong. To overcome this difficulty, we tried to communicate with our heart, the universal language.

## ■ **What was the relationship with the first Salesian missionaries?**

In Duekoué, our Salesian brothers had already spoken to the people about our arrival. And, in fact, our arrival was a celebration. Our Salesian confreres were waiting for us with an open heart. We took part in the various activities of the Parish: visits to the villages, promotion of women, formation of catechists, oratory, animation of groups, accompaniment of the group *Cœurs et âmes vaillantes*, of the *Jeunesse Etudiante*

Catholique (JEC) first aid dispensary, etc. The collaboration between us was very good.

## ■ **What were the challenges?**

The peripheries. We immediately realized that the mission is not a personal but a community matter. Each of us had a specific responsibility. For me, it was the school. Sister Zion was responsible for the promotion of the woman, and the infirmary was run by Sister Elena, an activity she carried out with great competence and solicitude. The Bishop, Msgr. Bernard Agré, was like a father for us and always trusted us. His desire was to build a large Catholic pilot school for all the other schools in the diocese, with the aim of sharing the preventive system, which we immediately started with the formation



of teachers for a transformation of mentality. Gradually, we found that education to values was urgent. The school grew very quickly. The five classes of the elementary course were full. In a short time, the mission became beautiful and a home for girls and a school were added. We also had difficulties, like the cyclone that destroyed several things and sometimes we were forced to start over. Almost every month there were some accidents.

■ **How was the insertion in the diocese?**

It was not difficult. We were able to know practically all the missions of the diocese and we worked a lot. We were entrusted with the responsibility of the Education Council and the accompaniment of eight schools. We had to visit them periodically. Sunday was beautiful because we went to the villages for liturgical animation. The parish had more than 80 Christian communities that we visited monthly. In the evening, we met for prayer, sharing experiences and then dinner. They were really beautiful times. Other significant moments were the festive activities with the presence of some volunteers.

■ **Are you satisfied with your presence as Daughter of Mary Help of Christians Missionary in Africa?**

Yes, I'm very satisfied. What I would say to the young Sisters is to let yourselves be seized every day by Jesus, to have passion for humanity like Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. This means being in love with Jesus. I look at the future with great hope.

■ **Did the Spanish Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire give you the award in recognition of your achievements in education and human advancement? What does it mean for you?**

I thank the Lord for what He has done in me and in the Institute. The medal of honor that I have received is in the name of the entire Institute. Sister Chantal Mukase, Visiting General Councilor on her canonical visit to our Province, was present at the ceremony of awarding. She took the opportunity to thank the authorities, in particular the Ambassador, for having conferred this merit in the name of the King of Spain, on a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and for having presented the Institute in his discourse and in particular the work done in Africa at the service of children and young people. This encourages us to always work under the banner of fraternity to transmit to young people love of life, the desire to live, and to be signs of hope for the world.



# Moatize! A Mission that sings and enchants

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For 24 years, the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians has offered its service and love to the inhabitants of the village of Moatize. The community and the mission were entrusted to the Protection of Sister "True Eye" - "Vera Wacucena", that according to the local language means Saint of Mozambique. It is a mission that is born of the saving initiative of God, and implies the gift of predilection for the most vulnerable groups (C 63) of our society: young people, adolescents, and children, whom Divine Providence entrusts to us, because with them and through them we can always be mothers generating life in a society that excludes, marginalizes, and closes its ears to the cry of the poorest.

In this reality, the educating community wants to be the voice of many who do not have it; to be a friendly presence that listens and accompanies young women and their families. Because adolescents and children are at risk, the educating community develops a series of activities for the integral growth and development of all recipients. Among the activities we carry out, we point out the diversified accompaniment of 800 pupils from the first to the sixth year of school, the formation of the educating community, the administration and management of the Primary

School and the Kindergarten School which carry out activities for 150 children from 3 to 5 years of age in the same premises of the primary school. We feel called to reach out to the families of the children and to help them attend every grade of school through distance adoptions, allowing them to realize the dream of continuing their studies, since many of them live with their grandparents.



In addition to these activities, the four Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who make up the community also accompany young women during the period of assessment and guidance, who show signs of vocation to the consecrated life and knock at our door. Another of our activities is to visit the communities of the periphery, supporting the parish priests, animating and encouraging the communities and young people who are there, forming them to the Christian life.

The FMA community is actively involved in parish and diocesan activities, coordinating, taking care of and accompanying various faith groups, with greater attention to catechesis. We also coordinate catechesis in the Salesian parishes where we work.

Together with the laity, we are committed to the joint formation of the educating community. We live synodality, planning, realizing, and evaluating together, as well as 'educating

ourselves' to care for our planet, transmitting practices of good coexistence, how to build together the future of the planet, leaving something positive to the new generations.

The challenges of this mission are many and touch us closely as educators. We want to hear the cry of teenage girls, who are often forced into early marriages, preventing their development at all levels and in many cases, risking their own lives. For them, we want to build a home where girls can continue their studies, prepare for life, and can make their own choices.

This house will be the sign of the passage of Mother Chiara in Mozambique on the occasion of this year's Feast of Gratitude and of the gesture of solidarity that, for this occasion, has united all the educating communities of the world, making visible the family spirit and the communion of goods that characterize our Institute.

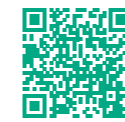
# Rebuilding bridges

**Maria Baffundo, FMA**

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**In many parts of the world, we need paths of peace that lead to heal wounds. There is a need for artisans of peace willing to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter with ingenuity and boldness. FT 225**

We all know the story, "The bridge and two brothers", which is significant in today's



fascinating world of interpersonal and international relations. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JrDIO\\_QhfI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JrDIO_QhfI)

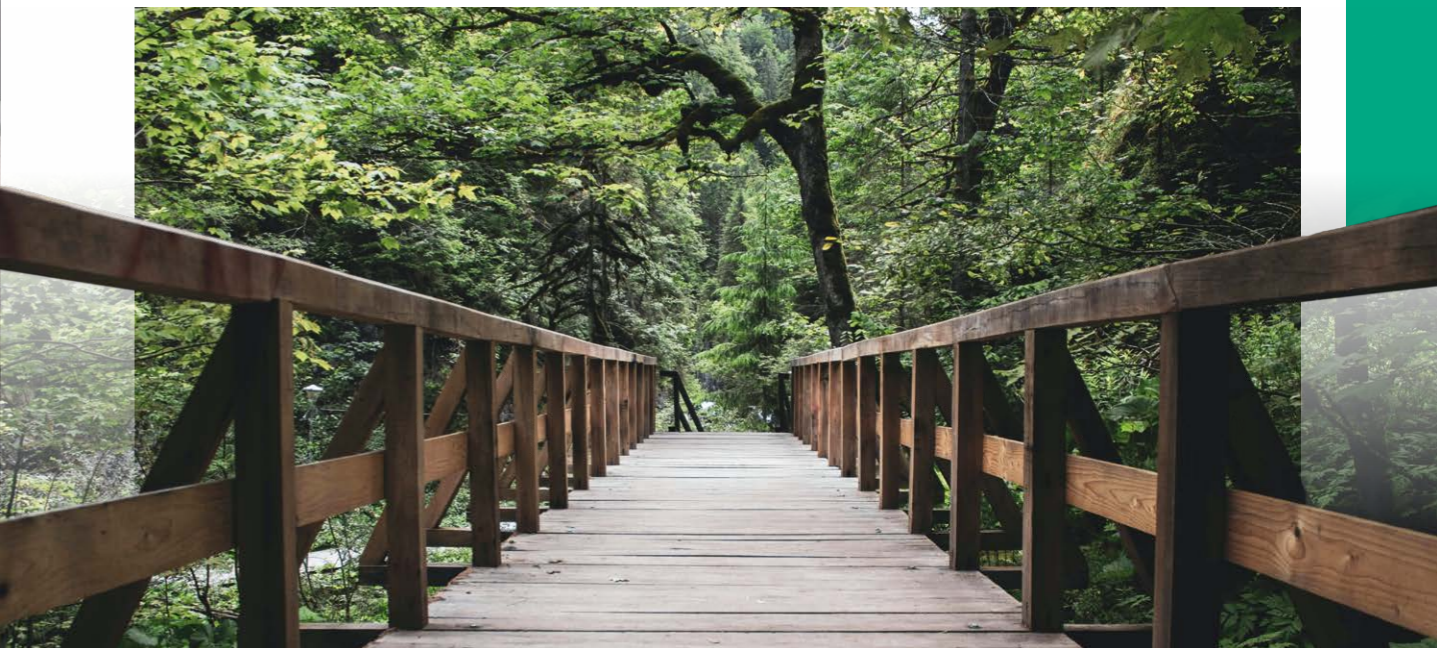
International relations are failing and the reasons deepen from year to year. According to the Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB<sup>1</sup>), 2023 has been the most confrontational year in the world since the end of World War II, with 237,000 deaths in 10 major armed

conflicts, some of which are better known than others, but they see all of us involved.

We have heard a lot about these conflicts, there are great scholars of each strategy used, numerous graphs are made about possible decisions and their effects; we can name names and culprits... The call for PEACE exhorts us. And also, this question: how do we get involved? What do we do for change? Conflicts are struggles to survive, to gain wealth and freedom; they are disputes to build one's identity, ultimately to defend the satisfaction of fundamental human needs.

If we look at our nearest reality, we find a large number of disagreements, which concern us on a social, family, working level,

<sup>1</sup> Research Center on International Affairs analyzes global issues that affect political, social, and governance dynamics.



with friends and in our way of getting in tune with nature. It is a great crisis, despite the many advances and technological improvements. We cannot understand, discern together the best solutions, and the rift is widening.

We have seen the importance of listening in this process of understanding; now is the time to deepen a more complete communication. What does this mean? It is known that the simplest communicative act is accomplished only when the message is understood. The simple fact of sending, saying something or writing is not communication. It is not even remotely comparable; it is only a free expression of oneself.

When this cycle is complete, that is, when a 'you' receives the sent message, and this two-way process closes, we can start talking about communication.

Communication has accompanied humanity since its origins, and has allowed the human being to evolve, grow, and understand oneself. For this, it was necessary to pass from an I and a you to a we. Thus was the dialogue so necessary for the evolution of humanity established. That we, today for each one, means community. Community is communication and communication is community.

Today in interpersonal relationships, respect, tolerance, empathy have been lost. Without these values, there is no understanding. Dialogue is not the same as asserting my opinion, imposing my ideas. To achieve this, we must have the ability to listen, learn from others, pay attention, and, above all, be capable of silence, which helps us to better understand and not feed prejudices.

The rise and expansion of new technologies allows better communication today. This is what was promised, but despite having at

hand or a click the opportunity to meet, we are more separated and without dialogue. How many of us leave our phones behind during a meeting? When we get on the bus, or on the subway, there is an infinity of Is connected with themselves and not with others, without listening to what is happening around them or with their head down and eyes fixed on their devices.

We are losing our functions and our senses. We urgently need to recover our voice, smell, touch. We urgently need to look into each other's eyes.

As a society, as a government, we have stopped promoting coexistence with the people around us; we have no longer formed communities with a common goal. We have devastated individualism and competition instead of valuing the different, the diversity of views and thinking that enrich and give quality to dialogue.

The evolution of the person, of all humanity, is linked to the wisdom that exists between the relationships of people and learning to be "better people". To reaffirm this need for learning, let us listen once again to our Pope Francis: *"In this age that risks being rich in technology and poor in humanity, our reflection can only start from the human heart. Only by endowing ourselves with a spiritual gaze, only by recovering a wisdom of heart, can we read and interpret the novelty of our time and rediscover the way to a fully human communication."*<sup>2</sup>

We know that we are not primarily responsible for the management of rules, laws or relations between Countries, but we have at hand a great power: dialogue (and who says dialogue, speaks of listening, of speech, of voice).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis' Message for the 58<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day, 2024.

A power that, like the carpenter of our parable, is able to curb anger to reconcile, create brothers and sisters, and bridge distances. How can we change the course of these conflicting situations with dialogue? The great scenarios of multicultural, of inter-religiousness, of different political ideas, speak to us of respect, of acceptance of nations, each with different cultures, traditions, ideas, languages. That is, to see the world with and from another perspective; to understand the feelings and actions of others. With actions that also benefit others, we would have more just and equitable societies. Our main task will be to promote



#### THE BRIDGE AND THE TWO BROTHERS

Two brothers, Tomas and Javier, lived with love and harmony on adjacent farms. One day, a serious quarrel broke out between them, the first after 40 years in which they had cultivated the land together, sharing machines and tools, continually exchanging crops and goods.

It all started with a small misunderstanding, grown to explode in an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning, someone knocked on Tomas' door. When he opened it, he found himself in front of a man with carpenter's tools. "I am looking for a job for a few days" said the stranger, "maybe you need some small repairs here on your farm and I could be of help."

"Yes," said the elder of the two brothers, "I have a job for you. Look there, across the stream, that farm is where my neighbor, my younger brother, lives. Last week there was a beautiful meadow between us, but he diverted the riverbed to separate us. Maybe he did it to make me angry, but I'll do better. See that pile of wood near the barn?"

I want you to build a two-and-a-half-meter high fence, I never want to see him again." The carpenter replied, "I think I understand the situation. I will do a job that will satisfy you." The older brother helped the carpenter gather all the necessary materials and left the farm for the rest of the day to go shopping in the village.

The carpenter worked hard all-day measuring, cutting, nailing. Towards

communities of dialogue and to achieve balance. Dialogue is undoubtedly the basis of a new paradigm for today's civilization.

"Each of us is called to be an artisan of peace, uniting and not dividing, extinguishing hatred and not preserving it, opening the ways of dialogue and not raising new walls!" FT 284.

sunset, when the farmer came back, the carpenter had just finished his work. The farmer was amazed. There was not a two-meter fence, but a bridge. A bridge connecting the two farms across the creek. It was a true work of art.

At that moment, his younger brother, Javier, came from his farm across the bridge and hugged his brother and, eyes full of tears, told him, "You are a great man! You built this beautiful bridge after what I did to you. Thank you, forgive me."

While the two brothers were making peace, the carpenter quietly picked up his tools to leave.

"No, no, wait; stay for a few more days; I have many jobs for you," said the older brother to the carpenter. "I would gladly stop," he replied, "but I have many bridges to build."

# Young people's trust in dialogue is hope for peace

edited by the Editorial Board

**In a world immersed in conflict, we may feel crushed by pessimism and resignation. The voice of young people around the world, their common trust in dialogue, becomes for all the hope of a better future, to be reached by listening and mutual understanding, essential for building peace.**

Looking at the world immersed in conflicts, it is possible to feel crushed by the weight of images, information, and speculation. The first reaction to this negative narrative of the world could be to close ourselves off. The constructive reaction, however, is totally opposite: to open up. Peace requires listening, but what comes after?

The answer to this question is at hand, or rather, from the heart, because we are the answer. When we succeed in going beyond our own needs and noting that the good of the other is equally important; when we refuse to respond to conflict with violence and choose dialogue, we approach peace. Dialogue is the key word in building peace. It begins with one's own openness; it requires patience and willingness to give up the pretense of having all the truth in hand. We need to go deep into the motivations and accept that another person can choose differently from us. Education to shared commitments that implies encounter, therefore becomes the important educative

challenge. We need to decide - together - for the good and for this reason dialogue is the indispensable condition for peace.

*Oliwia Byliniak*  
Mszczonów, Poland, FMA Novice

It has been said that peace is a lost paradise in our world. With technology, we are connected more than ever. However, we have experienced conflict more than ever. I believe that dialogue is a way to build peace in the world. We all have different ideas and beliefs, but we can find the positive in our differences by embracing and respecting them. We should focus on our common goal, avoid exclusion in dialogue, and have a welcoming attitude. We need to be open and listen to each other rather than pushing others to accept our ideas forcefully. We should not judge others, rather we should try to understand them and treat them as we would like to be treated. We must be ready to be part of the solution and the process that guarantee peace. This will create true trust, harmony, and friendship in the world. Then we will be able to recover our lost paradise which is peace.

*Dinkneh Temesgen Tadesse*  
Hossana, Ethiopia

I leave you peace, I give you peace. Today we find ourselves immersed in a world in which more and more talk of cruelty, dehumanization, and indifference to the lives of others prevail. The habit of individualism distances us from those around us and makes us believe that we can be at peace away from what disturbs us, but what is peace if it does not contemplate the dignity and well-being of every person? How can we achieve that peace without the practice of respect and listening? Sharing the good news in these times requires that Christians

engage in the reality in which they live. War, hunger, violence, and hatred are the product of daily decisions that take us away from the possibility of living in a society where peace reigns. Jesus, who has left us peace, who has given us His peace, encourages us to open the doors and to meet our neighbor whose rights have been violated, but also to meet those who, by actions or omissions, have allowed this to happen. The collective overcoming of indifference can be the key to transforming reality into a horizon where peace is not a word alien to anyone.

*Marisa Costa*  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

For dialogue to be a condition for peace, three elements are needed: knowledge, competence, and attitude. Knowing well the information, the perspectives, the causes, the consequences... as a basis for having your own opinion in dialogue. Have communication skills to present well, clearly, to be understood. And above all, we must have attitudes such as respect, listening, to seek together the best solution for the common good.

*Teresa Nguyễn Hoàng Ngọc Anh*  
Thủ Đức, Vietnam

Words have enormous power and, in times of upheaval or crisis, they can have a healing power. Everyone can think of a moment when they met an obstacle with another person; dialogue and reaching an agreement have given serenity, because they knew that this moment would open a new path to follow, in which both sides would struggle to be fine. Let us think of those situations in which many people depend on a dialogue. These are moments in which words should not be said without thinking of the other and should also have a special connection



between the mind and the heart, which helps to find a space for sincere and synergic dialogue, in which everyone will seek the good of the other, reaching the much-desired Peace.

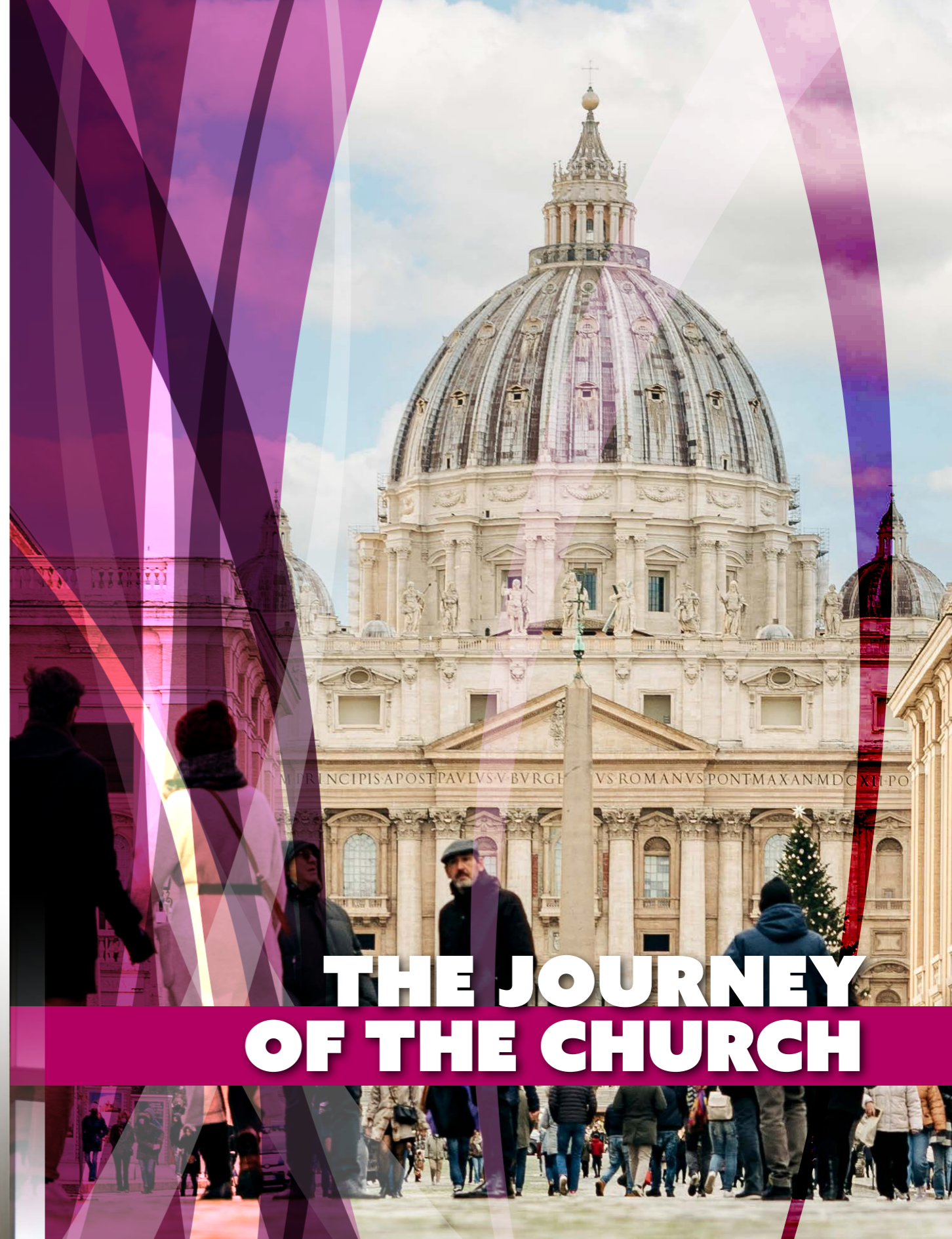
*Ingrid Yessica Guzmán Guevara*  
Santa Tecla, El Salvador

Many wars have characterized our history, often due to grudges that, not expressed diplomatically, that led men to give rise to real massacres. Dante Alighieri, in his work "De vulgari eloquentia", had already presented dialogue as the only instrument that allows the human being, as a social animal, to communicate with others, to create a union and a bond. Dialogue, therefore, is a unique opportunity to be able to express ourselves to others and to be able to create peaceful relationships and trust in our community. Not surprisingly, we also find other important figures who invite society to "sit at a table" to achieve "eternal peace", including the philosopher Kant with the work, "For perpetual peace" and the financier Jan de Bloch who, with his

predictions based on repressed and hidden hatred, mutually felt by the European Countries of the early '900, anticipates the event of the First World War.

Dialogue is fundamental to building a climate of peace and this applies to people and, thinking bigger, even for entire Countries. Thanks to the UN, entire Countries, through delegations, collaborate to arrive at a common solution in various areas, for example, to achieve the goal of peace in the strict sense or that of climate change. There will always be Countries that, by trying to put aside their differences, will make the interests of the community prevail in order to maintain a lasting peace on all fronts. The birth of the European Union took place thanks to the dialogue and the agreement signed immediately after the end of the Second World War between the so-called founding fathers: Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, and Robert Schuman: an Italian, a German, and a Frenchman.

*Leonardo Casati and Lorenzo Maggi*  
pupil of Mary Help of Christians Institute,  
Lecco, Italy



# THE JOURNEY OF THE CHURCH

# The Synod: a conversation in friendship

Yvonne Reungoat, Mother General Emeritus FMA  
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The common thread running through all the articles in this issue of the magazine is: dialogue, a condition for peace. I am part of this same line sharing a particular aspect of the Synod of October 2023.

## ■ A long conversation

During the Synodal Assembly, the dialogue was lived as a long conversation that lasted the entire month of October and, I think, it will continue throughout the world starting from the participants. Actually, there is no synodality without conversation.

Conversation is an integral part of everyday life and is essential to building the human being. We are aware of what this ordinary experience represents in our lives, the quality of communication, the dynamics, and the bonds that are created between people?

We think spontaneously of the episode of the two disciples of Emmaus who, on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus after the death of Jesus, were conversing among themselves about what had happened. Jesus himself approached them and said to them, "What are these discourses that you are having between yourselves during the journey?" At such a dramatic moment, the disciples could not bear this unsupportable burden alone, at the disappointment caused by the death of Jesus. Along the way, they share their sad experience and Jesus is interested in what they are saying. Only after hearing



them, does He explain the Scriptures to them. It is the same experience lived during the Synod. In it, *spiritual conversation* significantly marked the atmosphere of the Assembly. I was struck by a reflection of Father Timothy Radcliffe during the Retreat that preceded the Synod on the theme: a spirituality of synodality. He stressed the importance of friendship. Before his Passion, Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are." (Jn 17:11). The disciples were divided and Jesus prayed to the Father for their unity.

## ■ A prayer for the unity of hearts

The participants in the Synod, coming from all over the world marked by cultural diversity and with various experiences, needed to pray for the unity of hearts and spirits, to go beyond differences. We were invited to welcome the Word of Jesus to His disciples, "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). Father Timothy stressed that this Synod will be fruitful and will bear fruit if it leads us to a deeper friendship with the Lord and among us, with each participant. The foundation of what we will do during the Synod will be the friendship we will create. We have the creative task of making unlikely friendships, especially with people with whom we disagree."

*Spiritual conversation* was the space in which this experience of friendship was created, and that along the way increasingly became reality, despite the difficulties. Friendship flourishes in the sharing of deep convictions, but also of doubts, and in the search for truth. We were continually invited to move from the "I" to the "we", the most authentic passage when we live in friendship. The Holy Spirit

guided us in this unprecedented experience of friendship, unthinkable at the beginning of the Synod. He made us progressively open to active and profound listening to every person and reality; to respectful acceptance of differences, divergences, sufferings, hopes, expressed or not expressed, and capable of generative words. In reality, the feeling of being embraced by divine friendship gradually overcame the fears and resistances that were present in hearts at the beginning of the synodal journey.

Friendship is a source of joy and the experience of the evening of 29 October 2023 is very significant. After the end of the vote on the Synthesis Report, we assisted at a spontaneous explosion of joy! Bishops, priests, lay people, consecrated men and women, men and women all embrace each other and their faces are luminous. It is an experience of grace and peace! At this moment, it is revealed that indeed friendship was built in the Spirit. The conversation founded on evangelical friendship knows unexpected developments, multiplies, and becomes a builder of peace in the world.



How important it is to feel embraced by *divine friendship* when we walk together in daily life!

#### ■ Conversation in our communities

Consecrated life is called to live and develop the *art of conversation* in communities and in mission. Perhaps there is a risk of experiencing the various occasions of daily conversation with a certain routine, or as a banality. In reality, every conversation is a space inhabited by God and, to the extent that we welcome it, He communicates His love. In this light, no conversation is trivial. It is important to become aware of this extraordinary opportunity in the ordinariness of everyday life, and to make the resulting choices.

The power that holds up the world is love and those who understand and translate it concretely can change the world! "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

Let us imagine that Jesus reaches us today and asks every community, "What are you talking about among yourselves?" Can the answer to this question give us the opportunity to read the faith of our life and reality?

We are called to establish meaningful, generative *conversations* that lead us into an adventure that cannot fail to transform us. Active listening lived with hope allows us to enter into the horizon of the other person, to let ourselves be touched by what the Spirit says to the heart, where a profound word can spring up. Silence, which is not a lack of *communication*, is indispensable, but it is entering into the deepest relationship with every person we meet along the way.

Let us feel ourselves invited to renew the art of *conversation* in a synodal style, in our communities, in the mission, and with the different vocations in the Church. Conversation with others is lived simultaneously in *conversation* with God in an intertwining of love, a source of happiness and peace.

## A village in the heart of Pope Francis

Alessandra Smerilli, FMA

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"The care of the 'common home' is a responsibility that we assume towards our neighbor and at the same time a way to recognize the infinite beauty of God and contemplate the mystery of the universe. That every person may awaken the desire to contribute to this duty, with the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, I recalled the example of Saint Francis who manifested a particular respect for the creative work of God considering it inseparable from attention to the least and the abandoned."

LS 10 (*Chirograph of the Supreme Pontiff of 2 February 2023*)

With these words, Pope Francis on 2 February 2023, established the *Laudato si' Higher Formation Center*, which, as stated in its Statute, is a scientific, educational, and social activity body work for the integral formation of the person within sustainable economy and in compliance with the principles of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*. The Holy Father entrusts the Center with the task of carrying out the project *Village Laudato si'*, in the wonderful Gardens of the Pontifical Villas of Castel Gandolfo. The path outlined in the Encyclical *Laudato*

*si'*, and taken up again in the most recent Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, can be concretely followed through conscious behavior and choices that focus on the care of Creation and social justice.

To give life to this bright intuition, *Village Laudato si'* is entrusted with 35 hectares of gardens and 20 hectares of agricultural area in the summer residence of the pontiffs. It is a botanical and historical heritage of inestimable value consisting of the archaeological remains of the Villa of Domitian and over 3,000 plants and trees of over 300 botanical species.





Education to integral ecology, circular and generative Economy, and environmental sustainability are the three cornerstones of Village Laudato si' on which are starting a series of interventions aimed at preserving and caring for the wealth of the Gardens and making it accessible and inclusive for all.

In every activity, great importance is given to the preservation of biodiversity and the harmonious interaction between human beings and nature. The central focus of *Village Laudato si'* is formation to integral ecology and fraternity, with particular attention to people in a condition of vulnerability.

In concrete terms, in this first year of activity the opening of the gardens to the public has continued according to the desire of Pope Francis, while we are working so that those who visit the village can combine in a single experience, centuries of history, unique natural and artistic beauties, and an immersive and inclusive *Laudato si'* path.

Alongside the visits, diversified formation courses are being planned. The first to start are courses for the employment of migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors, women survivors of violence, unemployed young people and adults, people with different abilities, and former prisoners. It starts from the areas of green maintenance, pruning, gardening, arboriculture. Integration into the world of work and personal accompaniment are planned for the first year of employment. Great attention is also paid to young people: for children of elementary, middle, and high schools guided tours and formation sessions

are offered, with activities and workshops. For university students, organized in collaboration with the various universities and summer schools, courses and study days on the themes of *Laudato si'* are programmed. In addition, seminars and retreats on the fundamental themes of *Laudato si'* for entrepreneurs and managers are planned. Many in recent years have expressed interest in deepening the themes of the Encyclical, to create companies not only "green" or sustainable, but oriented to the good.

The agricultural area is working on the reorganization and development of a number of activities such as the production of oil, wine, honey, fruit, vegetables, medicinal herbs, cheese. To make the project more sustainable, a circular economy model based on sharing, re-use, repair, reconditioning, and recycling is being developed. The creation of an energy community based on renewable sources, the elimination of plastic, and a water system that avoids any dispersion and allows for recycling and collecting rainwater.

***Village Laudato is a recommended stop for Jubilee 2025:*** "pilgrims of hope" will be able to visit a place that, with the help of all, is a welcoming home especially for those who live in one of the many existential peripheries of our time. At the same time, it will be generative of a new culture of care. It wants to be a sign, a small luminous example, to show everyone that it is possible to live in harmony with creation, pursuing the seven objectives of *Laudato si'*.



**COMUNIC@RE**

# Fighting fear to achieve peace

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*"Do not be afraid!"* This deeply Christian expression appears 366 times in the Bible and is extremely relevant to all nations, religions, and cultures. When analyzing the roots of the attitudes of individuals and groups who practice and spread violence, recent studies show that fear is a fundamental element. It has been a strategy widely used in Nazi and fascist discourses and continues to be used today by politicians, religious groups, and extremists, with very negative results for societies.

The call to fear is a resource used to generate insecurity, creating the feeling that there is a latent threat coming from the other, from the different that must be eliminated, fought or removed. This is the case of anti-immigrant discourses and policies, which are becoming stronger in many Countries, but which are also used in relation to ethnic,

religious or social minority groups, labelled as internal 'threats'. In addition to provoking fear, these discourses are permeated with hatred, racist ideas, and conspiracy theories, enhanced *"by the rise of populist nationalism and xenophobia in campaign speeches and the perceived legitimacy of hate speech when politicians, religious leaders, and traditional media produce and circulate misinformation."*<sup>1</sup>

Fear breeds anger and triggers violent attitudes that may include contempt, indifference, or practical attitudes of aggression toward *another*, seen as a threat to a certain group. In these situations, there is a kind of justification for the aggression done in the name

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO and United Nations, Addressing hate speech through education: a guide for policymakers, 2023. (Available in Portuguese and English).



of defending the integrity of the individual, the family or a specific social segment. The Christian perspective shows just the opposite. The attitude of *"not being afraid"* is what allows us to reach out to those who are different, to welcome those who think differently from *"me"*, in an attitude of empathy, kindness, and gratuitousness. Some biblical images reinforce this position. Think, for example, of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:25-37). The Samaritan is not afraid of the man on the side of the road; he is not afraid to become impure by touching the wounded man. When Jesus meets the adulterous woman (Jn 8:2-11), He does not see her as a *"threat"* to the *"good customs"* of the Jewish people, but sees her as a person worthy of mercy. It is fear that paralyzes persons and prevents them from multiplying the talents they have received (Mt 25:25).

The path to peace implies overcoming fear, as Pope Francis reminds us in Evangelii Gaudium: *"Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face*

*encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction."* (EG 88) It is a path that allows us to "create communion", to weave spaces of "communication", dialogue, and encounter. It is very worrying when speeches appeal to *"ancestral fears"* and take new forms through digital media, being absorbed as ideological flags that support social segregation practices. In the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis warns that today: *"new walls are erected for self-preservation, the outside world ceases to exist and leaves only 'my' world, to the point that others, no longer considered human beings possessed of an inalienable dignity, become only 'them.'"* (n. 27) It is a culture of walls, divisions, and exclusions, within which it is not possible to glimpse new horizons of fraternity and communion.

Pope Francis has launched countless appeals for peace and insists that the walls of division and closure be torn down. His appeal is



timely and necessary, *“We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art. Jesus told us, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt 5:9). In taking up this task, also among ourselves, we fulfil the ancient prophecy, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares (Is 2:4)” (EG 244).*

In this context, it is urgent that Salesian educative environments be able to reflect on the great problems of today’s world, so that there is a critical dialogue on the discourses circulating in the media and in the different social strata. An education that takes a stand against the culture of fear, hate speech,

and different forms of violence is essential to create a culture of peace and fraternal coexistence.

Conflicts exist and are part of the dynamics of every society, but this does not mean that their resolution must go through violence. To deal with these discourses that permeate different realities, a process of deconstruction of these ideas is needed, looking for the roots of these positions that spread feelings of fear, exclusion, anger, and hatred, as well as the mechanisms of communication and manipulation that are used as a systematic strategy by certain groups and movements. It is about the need for media and information literacy that starts from a humanistic perspective and is in line with the ethical and moral values necessary to build a democratic, equalitarian, and fraternal society.



# Glossary

## Disinformation

All kinds of fake content, impostors, manipulated, produced with the deliberate interest of harming someone/something. Typically, this content is created and transmitted using intentional and systematic strategies. They can be spread through real accounts belonging to strategically chosen people, through fake accounts managed by individuals or through automated systems that extend the reach of messages and give the idea of the popularity and social acceptance of these contents.



## Ancestral fears

Are fears that have deep roots in our evolution and are present in the collective unconscious of humanity. These fears were born as mechanisms of survival and are linked to the threats that our ancestors faced over thousands of years. They are universal and can be observed in different cultures and eras. Examples of ancestral fears are: fear of darkness, predators, strangers or dangerous animals.



## Media and information literacy

Refers to the set of skills and attitudes that enable citizens to interact with the media and with other information providers. The development of these skills facilitates citizens' empowerment and equal access to information and knowledge. It includes aspects such as knowledge and understanding of media and information for democratic discourse and social participation; evaluation of media texts and information sources; production and use of media and information.



# In dialogue with peace

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In the complex fabric of contemporary human society, dialogue stands out as a guiding beacon, an enlightened path towards mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. In a world that seems increasingly divided by ideological, political, and cultural barriers, the power of dialogue resounds as a fundamental antidote for building bridges and overcoming divisions. In this context, singers have always told in their songs the deep link between dialogue and peace that becomes essential for global progress and prosperity.

Dialogue, in its most authentic form, implies not only the act of listening, but also the will to understand and respect the perspectives of others. It is an art that

incredible song called *Conversation peace*, reiterates:

*“Me for you. You for me. There’s no chance of world salvation unless the conversation’s peace. When publicly or privately convened may love, positivity and life’s preservation be the basic theme and should you put your trust in some prophet in life. Give him trust but your faith must stay with the one. Who gave the ultimate sacrifice for. All for one. One for all.”*

## ■ From where do you look at the world?

After all, it’s about understanding from where you look at reality. *Both sides now* speak of the commemoration of human frailty and lost youth. It is the story of the life of its author **Joni Mitchell** who wrote it around 1966, at the age of 23 years. A life of dialogue and silence. His world contained in a song that even today surprises and frightens because it is able to tell the disorientation due to some

requires empathy, humility, and a sincere desire to find common ground. American singer-songwriter **Stevie Wonder**, who is considered one of the most innovative and influential musicians in pop music, in his



love’s illusions that I recall. I really don’t know love. I really don’t know love at all. Tears and fears and feeling proud to say I love you right out loud. Dreams and schemes and circus crowds. I’ve looked at life that way. Oh, but now old friends, they’re acting strange and they shake their heads and they tell me that I’ve changed. Well, something’s lost, but something’s gained in living every day.”

And this lived life was seen on stage in Los Angeles in February of this year for winning his tenth Grammy Award at the age of 80, making the performance of this song immortal. In fact, dialogue, dreams, projects are the only means to achieve a greater goal: peace. When the parties involved engage sincerely in dialogue, it opens the way to conflict resolution and the building of relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

## ■ Maintain your inner strength

The musical group **Florence and the Machine** in the song *Light of love* tells how dialogue is sometimes threatened by opposing forces. Arrogance, unwillingness to listen, and closed-mindedness can hinder the flow of dialogue and fuel discord. This is where the challenge becomes crucial:

*“I thought my heart was falling. You said, ‘hey you’re ok. You seem to be still standing’.*

*Flashes appeared at the corner of my eyes, I saw the stars and I didn’t ask why. Heard the voices and caught my breath. So close and yet so far from death. Well, the feeling was always too much for me, it always came to strong. I wanted to get it right so badly that I always got it wrong. So, you keep pushing on. You hope it won’t be long ‘till you could find the child you were and find a way to get along. Don’t go blindly into the dark. In every one of us shines the light of love.”*

This love is a radiant glow that resides deep in the soul and illuminates the path of our existence. This light, while varying in intensity from person to person, is a universal constant that binds us all. It is the invisible thread that connects us as humanity.

Dialogue and peace are two sides of the same coin, two pillars on which a better world can be built. Investing in dialogue is not only an act of common sense, but also a commitment to a future in which diversity is celebrated and peace is cultivated with care.



# Arrival

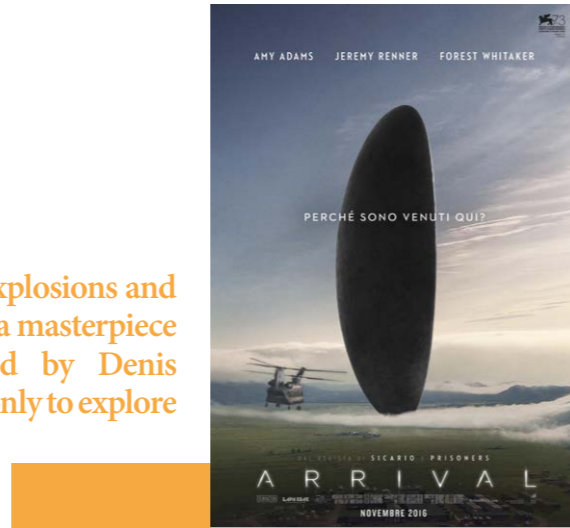
of Denis Villeneuve

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In a cinematic world dominated by visual explosions and adrenalinic narratives, *Arrival* stands out as a masterpiece of introspection and humanity. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, the film uses science fiction, not only to explore the unknown, but to address themes deeply rooted in the human condition. At the center of the story, linguistics professor Louise Banks is recruited for a mission of crucial importance: to communicate with mysterious extraterrestrial visitors who have landed on Earth. As the world is on the brink of global conflict, *Arrival* invites us to reflect on the power of language as a bridge to understanding and peace, challenging our deepest perceptions and prejudices.

*Arrival*, by Denis Villeneuve, is based on the story "Story of your life" by Ted Chiang and written by Eric Heisserer. The film stars Amy Adams as linguistics professor Louise Banks, recruited by the US Army to lead a team tasked with communicating with creatures in one of the twelve gigantic spaceships landed in different locations around the world. In a context of global tension, with nations at risk of plunging into a world war, Banks and her team struggle against time to crack the alien code. Their mission is crucial: to find a way to communicate with extraterrestrial visitors before fear and misunderstanding trigger a conflict on a planetary scale. The linguistic challenge Louise faces is not just a matter of decoding, but a profound exploration of a completely different philosophy, which questions the foundations of human thought and communication. The film is set against a backdrop of war threats, where world powers compete to demonstrate



Original title: Arrival  
Director: Denis Villeneuve  
Performers: Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Forest Whitaker, Michael Stuhlbarg, Tzi Ma  
Distribution: Warner Bros. Italy  
Production: 21 Laps Entertainment, FilmNation Entertainment, Lava Bear Films  
Country: USA  
Year: 2016  
Length: 116 min



their determination to counter the newcomers. However, the heart of the narrative lies in Louise's path, whose task of establishing contact with aliens requires a radical rethink of her anthropological approach to communication. This process of mutual understanding

becomes the fulcrum around which the possibility of peaceful coexistence revolves. Villeneuve's direction, supported by the wonderful photography of Bradford Young and the exciting soundtrack of Jóhann Jóhannsson, creates an evocative atmosphere that amplifies the emotional intensity of the film. In the unfolding of the *Arrival* plot, the light fades more and more, while the fog and black clouds merge almost with the twelve floating objects 450 meters high. These spaceships, silent outside, are fascinating for some and disturbing for others, helping to create an aura of mystery and tension. They are controlled by the "epitapodes", so called for their seven arts, which seem to be considered as often happens for foreigners or immigrants. They arouse the hidden fears and the classic questions: who are they? What do they want? Why did they come here? The typical fears that emerge in the face of the unknown and the different. Denis Villeneuve explained that the film is based on the 'theory of relativity' of modern linguistics, known as the Sapir-Whorf theory. According to this theory, learning a new language affects the way we think and dream. "About half the time," Villeneuve said, "we learn that they can write a sentence simultaneously with both hands. They know the end of the sentence as they are writing its beginning. As Louise tries to write in their own language in their own way, the synapses in her brain begin to connect with their language and way of thinking. The more she learns their language, the more confused her thoughts become. She begins to have not exactly psychotic interruptions, as much as vivid flashbacks of her past. Why does this language bring to mind memories of the daughter she lost?" Language changes us and puts us in contact not only with "others", but also with parts of ourselves hidden or forgotten. Louise discovers that the language of the epitapodes adopts a semasiographic model, that is, not phonetic, but linked to concepts. Communicating with an otherness requires a

deconstruction and reconstruction of the very way of thinking, a process that profoundly transforms those who undertake it. And the strength of the protagonist of *Arrival* derives precisely from her vulnerability. Louise, a wounded mother, becomes the last hope of the world, putting us in front of an authentic and powerful female character. *Arrival*, as happens in the best science fiction films, puts us in front of the great philosophical questions: the meaning of life and death, time, diversity, and communication with it. Despite the depth of the themes addressed and the film genre rich in special effects, the film always retains a certain delicacy and elegance. Villeneuve's direction is refined and evocative, while Jóhannsson's soundtrack creates an atmosphere of mystery and introspection. The film in fact, does not explode in sensational special effects or adrenaline action scenes, but prefers to leave its mark with its intellectual depth and its emotional charge. At the same time, the story of Louise Banks teaches us that, sometimes, thought prevails over technique, humanity prevails over technology, inclusion over exclusion, and dialogue over confrontation. *Arrival* is in fact a science fiction film that, paradoxically, speaks of humanity: of language and therefore of communication and dialogue, of misunderstandings and geopolitical tensions, of ancestral fears, of choices, of time, of hope, of life and death.



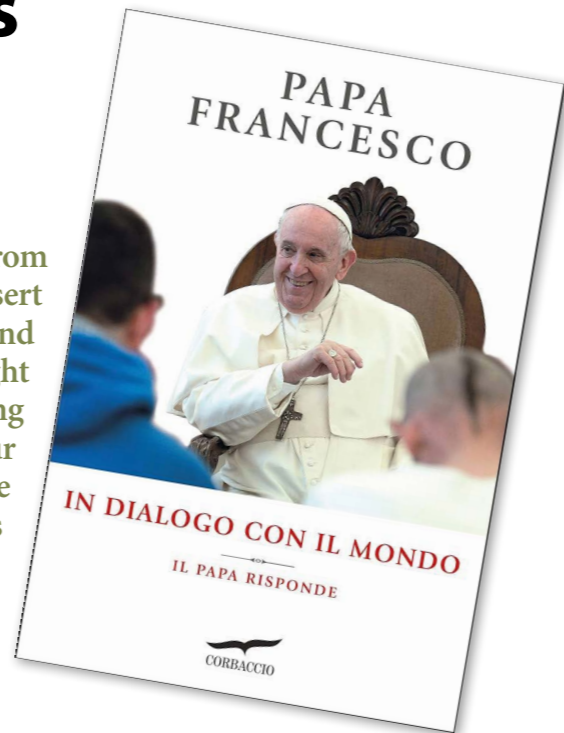
# In dialogue with the world. The Pope responds

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Children from the Brazilian favelas and women from the Indian plains, children from the Iranian desert and homeless Americans, Asian prostitutes and Malagasy families. They are the ones who brought to Pope Francis several questions synthesizing those from all over the world, represented by four groups of the "clochard" and precarious of the Lazare Association that animates and develops coexistence solidarity between homeless and young activists in France (but not only).

## ■ The homeless at Santa Marta House

The book was born from the meetings of those who became spokespersons for the poor of 80 Countries who interviewed the Pope at Santa Marta house, accompanied by Pierre Durieux and Loïc Luisetto, respectively secretary and general director of Lazare. The least of the world, not only Christians, asked the Pope questions about his life and pontificate, about faith and the Church, about peace and war. "Poverty and injustice", were the most important and urgent themes: "How is it possible to live poor in the consumer society? What use does the Vatican make of its riches? What does the Church do concretely to combat injustice and violence in the world?" To all these direct and urgent questions, the Pope answered with frankness, simplicity, and warmth, faithful to the demands of social justice. An exchange of ideas between equals, unique and rich in inspiration. He



is truly the "Pope of the poor", commented in the preface the four curators who with the guests of the Santa Marta house tried to "enter into the heart of this man, of his words and actions" and the best way, they write, is "listening to him speak, not of poverty but with the poorest. We were the beggars but he was the one to say thank you, and he chose to renounce his copyright giving them to the associations that helped us gather the questions."

## ■ The question of Francis

Luisetto, in the interview with VaticanNews, recalls that since the first meeting, "We saw that he was happy to see people, to spend time with us, and to answer the questions of our tenants. Of all the questions we received,

we were very impressed to see that some of the questions were not really questions. Many people said, "I have nothing to ask the Pope, but I wanted to know if he prays for me." One question that surfaced more often than one might imagine, an unusual question from a homeless American, ex-alcoholic, was, "I only have one question to ask; what can I do to help you?" Francis replied: "Proclaim the wonders of God, bear witness." The Pope's answers reveal his deep conviction expressed by himself to the homeless, "You are not discarded or failed, but a precious gift," and they also trace a path for those who put their lives at the service of the poorest, to whom he suggests not to replace them. We must accompany them so that they are able to find the strength to get out of the difficult condition in which they have sunk since, "In every situation there is a point from which you can start again, a path on which to take the first step

*"Eliminating the poor from the Gospel would mean emptying it of meaning."* Pope Francis

that no one can take in place of the other, it would be paternalism. The real gift, the good one, is to stretch out your hand and walk with them, remaining behind them." The responses of Pope Francis bring out a different Church, witness of a "God who does not separate people, accepts them all for what they are, does not refuse entry to anyone because of their way of being, social condition or sexual identity. He accepts all human beings because He is the Father of all." The relative testimony, Francis says, is "to live with the Gospel in hand and in heart" but starting from a question that he addresses to the homeless, "you who have known the suffering of the road, what do you expect from the Church? How could you first, listen to the poor? According to you, who have experienced humiliation and abandonment, what must the Church and society know about this experience?" The answer is in everyone's heart.



# Peace has an address: our communities!

We live in peace, dear FMA sisters around the world! And forgive me, if I make proclamations from... the Pope, but I really feel like saying it this way, with simple words! We live in peace! Period. If we are at peace with one another, the world will follow suit, and it will improve! If we are always at war with one another... then we let the whole world down! We sink it! Like the Titanic!

But you will say, "yes, okay, Camilla, but open your eyes! Don't you see how difficult it has become in our houses to make peace? Don't you see the generational conflict, the fatigue of the advancing years? Don't you see that we are few now, to the point that someone (young) must always run to do everything and the others (old) risk feeling useless or disoriented because... "in my day it was not like this...?"

And then, come on, often in the community "whatever you do, is wrong!" Being all precise, scrupulous, fussy, observant women, we use the magnifying glass on the errors and defects of our Sisters and slices of salami on their virtues! Peace is a utopia, dear Camilla!"

No! That's not true! Peace is possible! I mean "domestic" peace, which is simply living as Sisters. Living by accepting ourselves (not in the sense that we use the axe against each other, eh?); by listening and loving each other. Well, what does it take? Just a little good will! And it would be Heaven for real!

Think a little. I speak and the other understands me. I am wrong and the other forgives me. I need something and someone helps me. I am tired and someone replaces me. I have gifts and the others value me. I do not obey and the Animator encourages me. I want something and the others give it to me immediately (??) Well, no,

maybe on the final one I got a bit confused! It's my age!

But this is not the way of peace. Because we must not think that we are at the center of this logic, of being the recipients of peace and fraternity. Each of us, for example, expects the family spirit! And we cry out scandal if we do not find it where we want it, how we want it, and in the desired quantity! But what do you do for the family spirit? To create it? What do you do for peace? You must feel responsible. Responsible for gestures and words.

How do we talk to each other? Sometimes the Sisters who intervene in the community speak with such animosity that they seem to throw bullets not words. I then stay with the Hail Mary in midair and I would end up with the requiem! (I do not intervene because I pray when you make groups or there is the conference. I say the fourth or fifth rosary of the day. 'Santa subito'!)

Dear sisters, emotions must be tamed! We don't talk to let off steam. We don't say everything that comes into our mind. We can also be silent. Or pray. Or talk to build, to caress. And now I really close it here, otherwise I run the risk that they will make me an Animator and at my age my heart would support that!

*Words of Camilla*

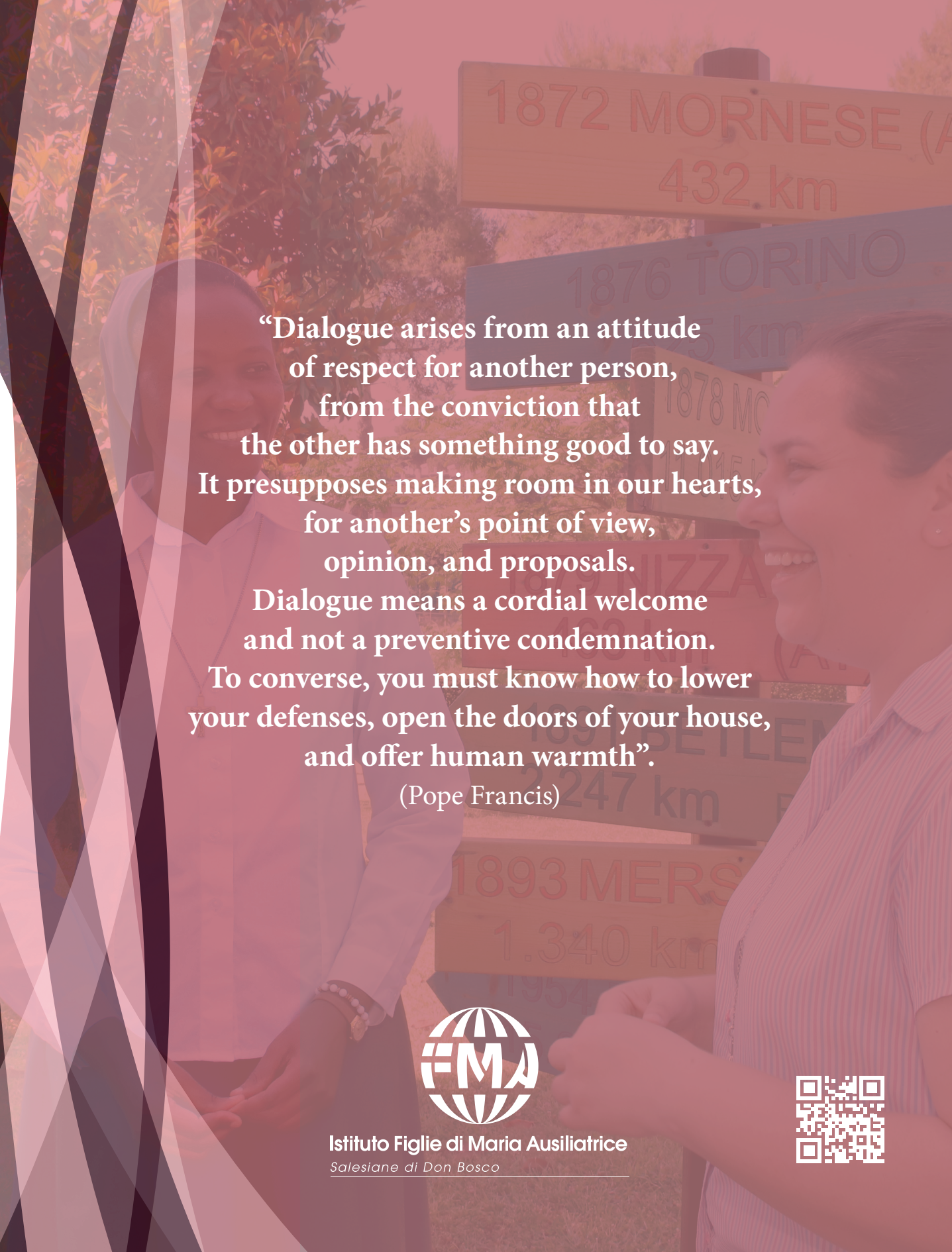


HAVE GREAT CONFIDENCE  
WITH OUR LADY:  
ALWAYS TELL HER ALL YOUR SORROWS  
AND ALSO YOUR JOYS!

M. Mazzarello







**“Dialogue arises from an attitude  
of respect for another person,  
from the conviction that  
the other has something good to say.  
It presupposes making room in our hearts,  
for another’s point of view,  
opinion, and proposals.  
Dialogue means a cordial welcome  
and not a preventive condemnation.  
To converse, you must know how to lower  
your defenses, open the doors of your house,  
and offer human warmth”.**

(Pope Francis)



**Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice**  
*Salesiane di Don Bosco*

