Dear readers

I present to you all, this first issue of Vita Più in this new decade. The year 2020 opens with sentiments of gratitude for the continual attitude of listening and sharing that the Canossian Family has offered over the last few months, reflecting and preparing to welcome the new path ahead in view of the XVII General Chapter of the Institute. This important appointment – an event not only of the Institute but also of the Church too – is upon us. We know the theme well: “Women of the Word loving without measure. Reconfiguration to a life of holiness in and for the mission today.” So we have chosen for this first issue of Vita Più of 2020 to delve into the meaning of being “Women of the Word”. We have asked five people to help us deepen this expression. Five “voices from the world”, five precious contributions regarding the figure of Mary Magdalen, “feminine genius” in the Church, the beauty of the Word through the woman who nurtures life and the witness of two people coming from South America and the Far East, regarding what it means to live one’s faith coherently and with courage, today as a woman. In our interview with the Canossian world, we asked ourselves how the Canossian family presents itself on the eve of the Chapter. How our communities are involved in the intercultural challenge? Which new wine and prophecy are beginning to spring forth for the future? This future is the main protagonist of this issue, together with the Ten Challenges for the 2020s and the coming phases of the Church’s journey, together with Pope Francis. Finally, the usual columns and the photographic page as a tribute to every woman.

Enjoy your reading!

Paolo Bovio
May the Lord grant you that true peace your heart desires
(St. Magdalene, 4th January 1826)

Dearest readers

we started the new year 2020 celebrating 53rd World Day of Peace on 1st January. We exchanged joyful wishes of abundant blessings and peace in a thousand different ways and languages. Sometimes, they may have been formal or habitual, but it is also true that the beginning of a new year is something new and original that attracts and arouses enthusiasm since it offers new possibilities for hope.

The events two days later surprised everyone. They certainly did not speak of peace. On the contrary, they spoke of aggression and death, adding to all the events of the previous year. I am certain it was a sad moment for everyone, causing worry, uncertainty and fear. Many of us asked ourselves, “What is happening to peace? Is it still possible? Is it an utopia? What is the use of wishing each other peace if it cannot be realized?

We must be aware of one thing. Peace depends on each one of us because all of us can be builders of peace. Let us ask ourselves, “In which way? What can we do?” Perhaps we may not be able to intervene at an international level, but as the Canossian Family, formed by consecrated and lay people present throughout the world and living an international lifestyle, we have the chance of offering our contribution to peace. Peace is brought about by agreements but, above all, by witnesses, educators and bearers of peace among young people and those we meet each day. To be bearers of peace, it is important to start from ourselves and cultivate it within our hearts, our families and our ministries. Peace in the world starts from the heart of each man and woman.

A serene attitude, patient and respectful towards everyone, a word not said or said with kindness, all help to tone down tensions and help create peace in every situation. This is the way to live the Gospel and be men and women of the “Word” as expressed in the theme of the XVII General Chapter.

May prayer and active witness be our strength, open our hearts, together with all our brothers and sisters, to “Peace, a journey of hope”.

May Mary, the Mother of God, intercede for us and grant us this gift.

M. Annamaria Babbini
Congregational Leader
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Jet engines. Opposite to what we usually think, the most part of our so-called “actions”, good or bad, are really more “reactions”. Life precedes and overtakes us, reality knocks inside and outside of us and inevitably our action is more precisely a reaction to all that happens within and around us. That is to say, even before we awake, our inner voices anticipate our daily agenda as if turning the key to start up the engine of our reactions. Without even getting out of bed, it activates a semi-automatic system of predispositions (good or bad), pre-evaluations, moods and energies that constitute the greater part of the fuel with which we circumnavigate every single day. Understanding something of the workings of this “jet engine” that roars within us, is a crucial, delicate and fascinating part of our life’s journey. The acquisition of wisdom to know how to handle our interior world, soothe its dysfunctions and increase the workings of its virtual functioning, is what we mean by allowing oneself to encounter the Holy Spirit. The grace of being able to dwell in the secret of one’s interiority is certainly not material for the “geology of intimacy” and nor a type of “introspective gymnastics”. The profound mystery of each one’s identity is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and to be able to dwell here fully, each one must become familiar not only with self but with Him, the Holy Spirit. In other words, prayer is the dwelling place of our inner self. This what Magdalene of Canossa learned during those long years of her formation in listening.

Examples of listening. The world we live in is not made of “things” and inert happenings, but of swarming meanings, relationships and messages for which we have an innate predisposition since we are all natural and talented listeners. It is through our sense of listening that the Lord comes to us and within us in three ways. Psalm 19 recounts and sings, “The heavens declare the glory of God … no speech, no words, no voice is heard.” (v.1-4) Creation proclaims, voiceless, the radiant face of the Creator and the sons of God hear with wonder of his deeds. “The precepts of the Lord are right … the commandments of the Lord are clear.” (v. 8, 9) God incarnates his Fatherhood communicating with his children, to the point of communicating himself in the Word that becomes flesh. “The fear of the Lord is pure, it endures forever.” (v. 10) God has set up home, pitched his tent and built his Temple in the depths of the sentiments and desire of his children and there the Holy Spirit dwells and prays. From above (or below) the Spirit speaks to each one’s
heart, just as the Lord describes. “He will teach you all things and remind you of all that I have told you.” (Jn 14:26)

**Action, reaction, passion.** The task of the Spirit’s grace is to give life to the Scriptures and bring to life the Word who continually gives of self, so that the mystery of the Father’s face appears to the minds and hearts of his children. The mystery of God’s loving and acting, which, from all eternity neither acts nor reacts, but suffers. He gives of self without measure, consigns self, weak and defenceless, trusts and entrusts self to his children, in the Trinity. The Christmas stories reveal this to us. They are a great teaching that foreshadows the meaning of Jesus’ Passion and Cross. For example, someone who thought he was the master of the world, the Emperor, decided to count those he believed he dominated and the Creator of the countless stars and grains of sand, suffers and bows to a census. (Lk 2:1) Another figure, Herod, even madder, decided to eliminate the Messiah, the Son of God, but God, instead of eliminating him suffers together the innocent victims slaughtered each day through the insane violence of murderers. (Mt 2:13) God reveals himself as the Father of life (not death). Love that consigns self, takes on the evil of the world and dies for our salvation, since he loves us more than himself, defeats the absurd spiral of death and opens the passage to eternal life.

**Magdalene hears and listens.** Concerning “hearing voices”, Magdalene was second to none. In fact, Don Libera had to exercise patience and wisdom over seven long years in educating his daughter to divert her attention from hearing the rustle of interior murmurings and instead dedicate herself to “listening to her heart” where she found the Spirit waiting to speak to her. This encounter within herself with God was so intense and satisfying that Magdalene moved from her heart to God’s in one-step. Magdalene was a woman of ideas and actions, (just think of her Plan of Foundation conceived at the school of Don Libera), and by listening to God’s Heart she learned love for the Crucified One and God’s suffering. Her numerous journeys and foundations became a “rosary of passions”, or rather her passionate interior disposition to embrace reality, events and people.
Magdalene, a woman who listens

consigning herself, fully and with trust, to each person as if she was in God’s hands. This required the patient acceptance of the sufferings caused by the actions and reactions of others, learned at the school of her beloved Crucified Lord, comforted by the presence at the foot of the cross of Our Lady of Sorrows. There is no need for a magnifying glass to see how Magdalene carried out the first foundation of Verona with conscious and unhindered passion. The adventure of founding the Canossian Fathers was really a pilgrimage from one disappointment to another.

Passion and compassion.
Magdalene’s tendency to listen to her heart and that of God, refined in her the capacity of sharing in the many passions of the Lord for his beloved children. The documents in which Magdalene’s compassion for God emerges in an evident way, are her “Seven Commemorations of the Precious Blood and the Sorrows of Our Lady” together with the “Reflections”. She wrote these out of love for her sons of the “Congregation of the Sons of Charity”, to instil in them the “most generous Spirit” and the “virtues” of the Crucified Lord. These texts reveal Magdalene’s clear understanding of the mystery of Jesus’ action/suffering as the only way of salvation and her evident assent to shape her life following the example of the Crucified Lord. Magdalene’s sensibility for every Scripture text is very interesting and touching, even those most unusual (think of the passage from Is 63:3 “He trod the winepress alone”) in which she foresees the mystery of God’s suffering. Even if she only had access to Scripture through the readings of the Mass and books of meditation, Magdalene always felt quite at home, since the Spirit dwells there. The Spirit who waited for her in the secret of her heart and who would teach her throughout her life to remember the “what” and “why” used by the Lord.

fr. Angelo Bettelli
WOMEN OF THE WORD: VOICES FROM THE WORLD
They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.” The words of Mary Magdalen, after having discovered the empty tomb, express worry, fear, stronger than that felt at Jesus’ death. The presence of a tomb and the knowledge that it contains the body of a dear person is, in some way, reassuring. There is still the suffering of a loss, but it is a sign that still binds us to the dead person. However, if the tomb has been desecrated, if the body of the Lord has been taken away, just as Mary suspects without even verifying the fact, then there is nothing left. I often ask myself if Mary’s words express, perhaps the greatest fear of a believer who looks at today’s world. The fear that the Lord, notwithstanding what he means to someone who has entrusted self to him, (faith = selfgiving-trust), may have been taken away, eliminated from this world. Perhaps in a very subtle way, no less devastating in respect to the one who two thousand years ago led him to the cross. Our Easter faith is endangered by this fear; the fear of forgetting, of removal. The fear that Jesus has been definitely put aside, that one no longer knows where to find him in a world where values are so distant from those of the Gospel that he proclaimed. The invitation is to live a life that he incarnated to the extreme gift of self on the cross. We do well to measure ourselves with this height, remembering what is at stake, the profession of our faith in the resurrection. Magdalen’s heart is like a tomb in which the loved one is present but dead, absent but risen. Only when one is called by name can he leave mourning and enter into full life. Tears are the filter through which we see the risen Lord, that is, true life! In John’s Gospel, Jesus calls Lazarus by name and makes him come out of the tomb. To hear your name pronounced by Jesus makes you leave death for life. Then he calls Philip by name, “Philip, do you not know that he who sees me, sees the Father?” Philip did not know Jesus: to come to true life means seeing the face of the Father and the Mother in that of the Son, Jesus. Then there is Peter who denies Jesus three times and will be called three times by name. He will leave sin and receive forgiveness and reconciliation. Finally, this woman, a spouse, called simply by her name and nothing else. While there was something to be communicated to the others, here no. Her name suffices because she is much more than her name. As soon as the Sabbath had passed, why does Mary go to the tomb? Perhaps because she wants to remain near the body of Jesus. The one that Mary loved is dead and his body is there in the tomb. Mary wants to remain near him. She is tormented by that “ardent...
intimacy of absence”. (Rainer Maria Rilke) The angels ask her, “Woman, why are you crying?” Mary insists in her obsessive way of looking for Jesus and calls him “my Lord”. Mary remains there following the intuition that a grain of wheat will sprout where it has been planted. She cannot leave that place because there she has placed her life, the revelation of true love, that open wound, that enclosure in the tomb, that perfume. Yet, she stays there, still, and cries. The ancients used to say that only a tearful eye could see certain things. These tears certainly express the abyss of her love and the loss of her loved one. The Gospel wants to lead us to desire the Lord. If we do not desire him, he is not present, because God is love and self-giving, we receive him according to the measure of our desire. Those tears are like baptismal water from which this woman is being born to new life.

There is something special in this persistent love that goes beyond death. Memories, words, the empty tomb are not enough for Mary. She needs to remain with the body of Jesus. Her loving, faithful and persevering search is constant but so hard to accept the reality of the end of a relationship, since Jesus means so much to her. Mary Magdalen desired to have the “person” of Jesus; only the presence of the loved one heals the wound of love. “They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put him. If you know, tell me!” She wants to know where her Lord is, because there she feels at ease. “Where” is an essential element, both in a first encounter with Jesus (Master, where do you live?”), and here. The important question is where is he at home, so that I may be at home with him.

In her turning round at Jesus’ voice, a symbolic gesture, Mary re-reads the whole of her life with Jesus. She remembers her loving relationship with him and so continues to cry, for the nostalgia of what cannot return. In her grief, she turns around, not looking at the tomb nor the angels, but at the figure of a man who asks, “Woman, why are you crying?” At this point, face to face with Mary, Jesus says, “Mary”, calling her by name. Immediately turning towards him, she is able to recognise him and exclaims, “Rabbuni, Master!” How many times did she dialogue with him, she, the lost sheep but found by Jesus (cfr. Mt 18:12-14, Lk 15:4-7) and called by name, recognising the voice of the shepherd (cfr. Jn 10:3-4). Recognition is truly a personal call and the aim of this call is a mission. You live out your name by going towards others. In this encounter with the risen Lord, Mary Magdalen immediately becomes an apostle, sent to the disciples, to Jesus’ brothers, to bring them the Easter message. And, in total obedience, she declares, “I have seen the Lord”, and tells them all he said. Certainly, Mary Magdalen is at the origin of faith in the resurrection, a woman who believed in the Lord Jesus and loved him.

fr. Gianfranco Lunardon, Camillian Father
Searching for feminine “genius”
Women in the Church: a reflection

Women have had a fundamental role in the history of the Church, building it up through their activities carried out with dignity, grace, perseverance and humility. In his letter of gratitude to women in 1995, St. John Paul II coined the term “feminine genius”, praising women for their many initiatives of extraordinary social significance, especially at the service of the poor. They remind us of those women martyrs, saints and mystics, who have left an indelible sign on history. Among these, St Catherine of Siena and St Teresa of Avila continue to inspire the world of Catholic women today. But we can also remember St. Magdalene of Canossa and St. Josephine Bakhita, their holiness, works and witness which continue to keep alive the journey of the Canossian Institute and inspire trust in thousands of people throughout the world.

Over the last ten years, more than ever, women have continued to strengthen faith communities with determination and perseverance, through institutional or lay positions in the Church, as well as through pastoral ministries, associations and other groups. The contribution of women – motivated by their courage, creativity, energy and intelligence – invigorates the Church and produces compassion, empathy and collaboration. In this sense, the activities of the Canossian Sisters and the Canossian Foundation are emblematic and they accompany young women, youngsters and children living in difficult conditions all over the world helping them to become positive protagonists in society.

But what do we mean by “feminine genius”? Let us think of the indispensable contribution that the Church recognises in women in various sectors of life, especially their natural sensibility and intuition. For example, the special attention women have for others, expressed above all in maternity. These qualities strengthen the Church and play a decisive role in transmitting the faith.

This vision is strongly supported by Pope Francis. On many occasions, he has repeated how the Church needs this feminine genius, expressed in those roles of guidance and support in their communities, whether the family or the parish, as well as social and professional roles. In the Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium”, Pope Francis recognises “with pleasure how many women share pastoral responsibility together with priests, offering their contribution in accompanying people, families or groups and proposing their theological reflection.” The discussion on the ministries of women and their role within the Church has continued to be in the limelight in many Christian communities over the last few decades. The Catholic Church itself still does not permit women deacons. Although Vatican II restored the

by
Alina Trabattoni,
Journalist

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role of married deacons, the Catholic Church still excludes the introduction of women deacons. The Catholic world, that from the outside may seem to be strongly traditional and even conservative, has fertile terrain for the maturation of the woman’s role and the development of a positive Catholic feminism of which there are still few official and institutional traces.

From the day of his election, Pope Francis immediately pointed out the importance and relevance of the woman’s role within the Catholic sphere, underlining the urgent need to re-appraise the gerarchical and unitary nature of the Church. He has repeated these considerations on many occasions over the years, especially when he pointed out the necessity of “increasing space for a more incisive feminine presence in the Church.” He also affirmed, “The Church cannot be itself without the woman and her role” and asked that a female role may be introduced in the sphere “where the Church exercises authority in it various ambitus.” He proclaimed too “for the Church, the woman is essential.” Even if the recent Synod on the Amazon ended without a unanimous conclusion on the question of the women’s role, the Pope stated that he would re-convoke the commission on women deacons, indicating that “it is a question of integrating the woman as a figure of the Church in our thought. It means thinking of the Church using the categories of the woman.”

Contemporary history is full of female figures who have made great theological contributions to the reflection on the Church, the human person and God, but there is much more to do in recognising the role of women in the Church. The history of the Church is marked by women who have shown great gifts of government as well as the necessary frankness to focus attention on fidelity to the Gospel. Even if a certain mentality shared by all cannot be overcome straight away, personally I hope that the theology of women and about women may be valued so as “to recognize more fully what this entails with regard to the possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church’s life.”

(EG 104).

A solution could be the recognition of equal dignity while still respecting the diversity of roles and maintaining equality and diversity of the male and female vocation, but valuing the “feminine genius”. As St. John Paul II wrote in his letter to women, the “Church in the Third Millennium will certainly not be lacking in new and surprising manifestations of “the feminine genius”.
The beauty of the Word in the Women who nurture life
Time, listening, relationship: accompanying life

by Maria Cristina Falaschi, Counsellor, President of the Association of Professional Counsellors REICO

My name is Maria Cristina, I am a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend and I work as a counsellor. I cannot do without words in my life! For this reason, I like to choose them, try them out, weigh them and often change them trying to find the right one. Then I combine the tone, the rhythm and the volume to pronounce them according to the situation. Finally, I present them to the person. It is almost like a work of art. The spoken word is a delicate and precious instrument and merits some reflection.

First, can a word exist by itself? What is the use of a word without someone to pronounce it and someone to listen to it? The word requires at least two people who have the intention and desire to establish a relationship with one another. Thus, an exchange of words is the beginning of a relationship. We can say that the word is generative, in a positive and a negative way. Our everyday relationships are affected by the words we use and can promote or destroy them.

In our daily exchanges, often we go so fast that we do not take time to generate good words that nourish. Everything has to be quick and consumed rapidly, sometimes even relationships and people. We learn to communicate with a tweet, a SMS and we click on ‘like’ to say, ‘what a wonderful idea, how much I miss you or how would you like to be with me.’

What sort of words do we generate and what kind of relationships do we live? To generate good relationships, words need attention, care and sufficient time. This is what people feel who come to me for counselling. They re-discover their capacity to be generative, firstly of themselves and then of their wellbeing. During the session, I am with the person in a situation of presence and listening, through words and silence. This time is necessary so that the person may understand whether he may trust and entrust self.

For me, the person is important because he exists. He carries within himself his problems and difficulties trying to recount them, often with mistrust because of his failures. I am there with him. I have neither magic solutions nor answers. I listen attentively to his words without judging. I do not have to decide whether he is right or wrong; I am there to accept him as he is. This permits the beginning of that wonderful miracle; a transformation process, a change. When the person feels he is accepted for what he is, he begins to sense the chance of making a small change and feels better. This can only take place within a solid relationship of trust that depends on a presence, on words, silence and gratuitous time. Time dedicated to words becomes “new time” in which the person sees there is a new sense to what he is experiencing. This is the beauty of my work: helping
others to live relationships better, find
the meaning of what one experiences,
choose how to feel better. I chose to be
a counsellor because this is my place in
a world in which everything races and
is consumed quickly and real Life risks
being wasted.

There is a time for words and a time for
silence. Counselling sessions are not
made up only of words. At the begin-
ning, the person talks and talks, and
I do not interrupt, but simply listen.

Then, at a certain point, I ask a simple
question, “Are you breathing?” The per-
son looks at me searching for the an-
swer. Then he realises he is not breath-
ing. I ask myself how all those words
that came out like a flood were generat-
ed. Were they simply thrown out? What
does the person really need? Perhaps
to recover his breath, the breath of
Life that generated him. From that
moment, the person no longer needs to
pour out so many words. Time seems
to be suspended, silence reigns and I
simply remain there with him. This
is a moment of intimacy, where the
noise within deposits and stops. Si-
lence embraces the mystery of what is
happening within. The person begins
to be aware of breathing; he begins to
establish contact with a reality beyond

meanings to his problem or new per-
spectives to resolve his problem. This is
the beauty of my work, accompanying
people in regaining the generating pow-
er of words and nurture more meaning-
ful relationships. Words render present
a relationship with the other person.

But how can I write about words that
generate, relationships, without refer-
ring to the Word par excellence? My
experience with people I meet in my
work, recalls the inevitable experience
of faith when the Word, in the silence of
mystery and a precise moment in time,
chose to become flesh in the relation-
ship between a man and a woman, and
enrich it. God makes himself present
in the relationship with man, starting
from his Word. For me, this makes
sense and acquires meaning. The
meaning of our existence comes from a
generative relationship, a relationship
with God who takes care of each of us.
He never betrays his promise of Love
and fidelity to his Word.
My name is Sandra Jara, I am 26 and married to Gustavo and have a son, Gioachino. Since 2016, I have been working in Hogar Kuñatai-Roga, a Home for young girls named after “St. Magdalene of Canossa” in Encarnación, Paraguay. For me, Hogar is a family in which I arrived having just finished my university studies in social services.

My work consists of accompanying the young girls who arrive here. They come from all around Itapúa, mostly from poor families and they are forced to leave home to complete their studies. Every year we take in girls who are driven by the desire to achieve, to reach what their parents could not attain, or, in some cases, be the first in the family to finish secondary school and perhaps obtain a university degree. I have met many young girls with clear objectives and the determination to reach them. Others are trying to understand what they want from life. All of them need to feel someone is there at their side, they are not alone and they can achieve their ideals. They all need love, company and understanding.

Every year the same happens. Each girl has to adjust to living in the city, with new companions and learning to live together. Here, they learn to share “their” things and take part in “our things”. Gradually, the appreciation of family grows and the meaning of community life. What is their greatest difficulty? Being far away from their family. Yes, these girls make a big sacrifice; they study to help their family. Each one arrives with her own story, character, joys and sufferings. For all of them, there is joy and love, the distinguishing characteristic of the Canossian Sisters. The first gift they receive is trust. Trust in their talents that they have received from God. We try to help them accept themselves as
they are: young women loved by God and by us too. We sustain them offering the little we have, driven by the Love of the Father and St. Magdalene’s desire to promote the development of these women. My contribution consists in taking part in their formation, helping them study, listening to them, encouraging them and speaking with them in our guarani language. We consider it important to use their mother tongue, learned from their parents and grandparents. It seems to be the only way they can express what they feel. This lessens nostalgia for home and shows them it is possible to dream and attain their aims. We give great attention to educating them in a correct conception of work. We do not allow the younger ones to work outside Hogar. We adopt a project called “Vy apope” in which funds are raised from the sale of culinary specialities and handicrafts produced by them and sold to companies and other institutions. Through this activity, we have discovered their many gifts and talents.

We are concerned with the spiritual aspect offering them a holistic formation, not only for the girls but for all those who collaborate in Hogar. I take part in daily and periodical formation sessions together with my family, since we all feel part of Kuñatai-Roga. The Word of God is alive, efficacious and demonstrates that it creates a new heart in us and builds up fraternity. This experience has greatly enriched me even from a professional viewpoint. The home has its own rhythm and shows me that it is possible to help others without invading their vital space. I like to look back and see my growth reflected in the girls. It really warms my heart. The home Hogar never stops growing. In the little time I have been working here, I have experienced moments that have left their mark on my life. I have seen the joy of parents present at the degree presentation ceremony of their daughters, dressed in the traditional “toga”. I have understood the greatness of the mission Jesus has consigned to us, that of being bridges for women to have the chance to reach their goal and recognise that God is good since he has transformed dreams into reality. As a laywoman and a professional, I ask myself how I live the experience of transmitting God’s Word? Through my gestures of love in the concreteness of daily life.

This experience with the Canossian Sisters is a gift from God. I found a job straight after university in my town where it is hard to find one. And what a job it is! Especially because I am helped to grow personally and live in harmony with my joys and failures. I have met many Sisters and girls who have taught me so much, each one giving something singular to my life. I would like to thank the Canossian community, especially this mission in Paraguay. I wish to say a heartfelt “Gracias” (thank you) and I ask he Lord that we may continue to recount many more stories from Kuñatai-Roga. May many more youngsters feel part of this adventure and, as the Sisters always say, may they leave Hogar enriched, more resilient, autonomous and strong, convinced of the beauty of whom they are. May they take St. Magdalene as their model, inspired by her humility, charity and generosity. Thanks to you who have read these words. May I ask you all to remember this Home in your prayers.
A glance at the future: being women in the 2020s
A testimony from the Far East

I was born and brought up in Laguna, Philippines. After various work experiences in the financial sector in the Philippines and in Japan, today I am vice-president of a company in Japan and I also teach English part-time. One of the greatest blessings of my life has been my encounter with the Catholic faith as a youngster. I owe everything to an aunt who took care of me and my brothers and sisters while my mother was at work. My aunt took me with her while she carried out certain responsibilities in the parish. I remember especially her devotion and fervent prayers. Therefore, as a child, I understood that God wanted me to be at his service. I attended “Canossa Academy” in Calamba where I was formed as a woman and a Christian and there I started to teach Catechism, announcing God’s Word to children of the State schools. I had to walk more than 3 km to reach them. I received my university formation at the College of St. John Lateran in Calamba. I was active in various religious associations and other activities on and off campus. I was part of the athletics team, but my favourite discipline was trekking up mountains to bring food to the old and needy. I completed my studies at the University of the City of Manila.

During those years, I felt a strong desire to become a religious Sister, but the necessities of life made me choose another path. After the death of my father in 1989, I had to put my family first. In 1997, once my brothers and sisters had finished their studies, I got married at the age of 31. With my husband, we joined the “Couples of Christ”, a group of married couples involved in evangelization, education and care for the poor. Our three splendid daughters – Josemiah Faith, Jonaziah Hope and Jepheziah Love – all grew up in the faith.

I can say that I had a happy marriage until 2015, the year in which I was diagnosed with cancer. At the height of my physical weakness, my husband suffered an emotive crisis and sought consolation elsewhere. I was tried physically and psychologically, but I discovered I was spiritually strong. My faith was the only thing that sustained me. From 2015, my...
husband ceased to support the family financially. I thank God I found a job teaching English and because of this, I was contacted by the company I now work for. My friends were worried about how I would face this difficult situation. However, I never doubted that the Lord would always be near. When I had reached the depths of my suffering, I was conscious of how much the Lord was taking care of me. I felt his loving embrace and support through my family and friends. My therapy never prevented me from praying and carrying out my service. I joined other groups of Christian life and took part in prayer meetings and groups that share the Word of God.

Being a teacher allows me to serve the Lord through meeting students and spreading the Good News. Gradually, they asked me to form new formators, to offer spiritual accompaniment, encourage other members of the group and guide prayer meetings. I also accompanied couples in their formation. The Lord showed me he is able to do wonders with our limits and sufferings. All this is God’s work!

I often think of the words of a song that says, “We cannot become what we need to become if we remain as we are. So give yourself completely, give of your best and leave the rest to God.”

Yes, I am faithful to this word, to the Word of the Lord, and I will continue to share it with others. I will continue to look to the future as we begin this new decade.
INQUIRY

THE CANOSSIAN WORLD
INTRODUCTION TO THE INQUIRY

THE FACE
What is the face of the Canossian family preparing to cross the great threshold of its XVII General Chapter from which will emerge the Congregational Leader and her Council to guide us in the years ahead? With what eyes, what breath, what smile, what style of listening?

FRATERNITY
How does the intercultural dimension challenge our living together? How can we be open to engage with different peoples and cultures as an opportunity for personal and communitarian growth? How to be part of an ever more “intricate” world that calls us to renew the missionary thrust and the vocation ad gentes in every place and in every ministry?

PROPHECY
What new wine is emerging for the future? How do we approach the next ten years of the 2020s? (And let us not forget: new wine cannot be poured into old wineskins...)

These are the questions we have deepened during the Inquiry on the Canossian world of this edition of VitaPiù, gathering points and reflections that emerged during the listening of these past months and so continue to walk, together.

Paolo Bovio
On the eve of the XVII General Chapter, what is the face incarnated by the Daughters of Charity? To ask ourselves today, after more than a year of listening involving the whole Canossian family, is to be provoked by the very rich reflections and proposal that have emerged in this exciting journey. Thousands of voices, like thousands of small, unique strokes of the paintbrush, allow themselves to be worked by the wise Artist, by Him who daily enjoins brush and paints to create a unique portrait, overflowing with beauty and light.

Let us try to observe it.

The first detail that strikes us are... the ears. Yes, in this intense year of preparation the Canossian family has, above all else, exercised the art of listening. To choose an attitude of listening is always and mostly an act of freedom. The one who listens is the one who chooses to risk, the one choosing to be challenged by giving space to the words of the other, to their expression. The choice to approach the General Chapter by asking the sisters of all the communities, provinces and delegations to offer their experiences and reflections to trace together the way, is the sign of an Institute that wants to journey in a style that is ever more connected and co-responsible; where even leadership is a ministry more than a role, a taking-care-of, and not only a responsibility.

Hence, we are not surprised that the second detail drawing our attention is... the nose. A nose capable of breathing deeply, as deeply as the breath of prayer. It is a prayer that the sisters throughout the world recognize to be the true oxygen that gives life, a personal and communitarian life. It is an oxygen that fills the lungs of spirituality and exhales as love and service to our neighbour. But for this breath to impart a rhythm to life, it is necessary that it doesn’t become suffocated by daily events, that prayer is given adequate time and space to grow and be strengthened. In this way, even the surrounding air has a perfume that is
always more Canossian.

What kind of eyes has this face? They are eyes fully open, turned towards the other, looking at the world with purity of heart, capable to absorb its beauty, even what is hidden in what is small and humble. They are not afraid to turn towards those places lacking light, situations of pain, loneliness, injustice. That is why these eyes are sometimes veiled by tears because they don’t avoid the one who suffers. They are ready to meet, to turn towards those who are alone and left behind.

They are sisters and brothers to whom the mouth will proclaim the good news, will bring words of consolation, will make Jesus known. Certainly, not only with words but with the whole of life. And also with silence, when the mouth is ready to be silent in receiving some intimate sharing and allowing the other to be who they are, always ready to open to smile, to joy.

Looking at this face we are struck by the beauty of its skin without colour, because it is of all colours. The face of the Canossian family is the face of the sisters and the communities, of the students and collaborators, of the families and of friends. It is an ever more complete intercultural face.
The dimension of fraternity has always been at the centre of life, of spirituality and of the charism of the Canossian family. These are sisters who seek the Lord in the encounter with the poor, young people, families. Along the world’s highways, among the classrooms or in the courtyard of the oratory, at the door of a parish or in the corridors of a hospital. These are sisters grounded in prayer, cultivating spirituality and thought, breaking bread. These are sisters who share daily life, its lights and its difficulties, who live in community as the place where the talents of each shine forth the hopes of the entire group, where dreams become projects, mission, woven hands, distant steps. And where differences become gifts. At the beginning of the next ten years, the fraternal and com-munitarian dimension become inevitably woven with interculturality. If the face of the Daughters of Charity in 2020 is an ever more coloured face, so will be also our communities. They are already.

It is not a question that concerns only the Canossian family. The whole world, always more frenetic, always more “intricate”, is crossed by a true and real intercultural yeast. As in all dynamic moments, there are also tensions and questions. We can ask ourselves, “Is there a specific Canossian style with which we can best live interculturality?”

A fact appears certain, that the Canossian sisters consider interculturality as a value that is peculiar to the Gospel. For this reason, interculturality perfectly aligns with the deep identity of the Institute, being international and open to the world. Not only. Lived as a personal and communitarian source of richness and growth, interculturality can be read as an integral part of the charism, of the Canossian DNA. And, it can become a decisive push
to re-launch our missionarity. This thrust of fraternal interculturality leads us towards two directions. Internally, we are called to welcome with joy the growth of ever more Ca- nossian intercultural communities that grow in a cli-mate of welcome, freedom and exchange of values, ways and cus- toms brought by every sister. It is a family environment! All of this can be attainable, but only in overcoming pre- conceived attitudes and closures, and expressing appreciation and respect of differences. The keys are dialogue, a more inclusive communication, and formation. Yes, it is necessary to form oneself towards a permanent horizon of interculturality, applying - person- ally and as a community - adequate skills, times of sharing and knowledge, moments that are part of daily living and moments of relaxation, of real and proper immersion. And then, there is the external perspec- tive, the opening to the world. It is a world, as was previous-ly said, always more intercultural and animated by the continuous meeting of peoples and cul- tures. Herein, the vocation ad gentes is called to re-awaken. It is a strong recall to live this dimension in every one of our ministries, allowing ourselves to be met so as to meet everyone with a heart that is welcoming, generous and capa- ble to make space for the other so as to walk together.
How are we facing the future that is opening before us in these next ten years of the twenty-first century?

It consists of openness and trust. We look to the future not as a threat, not as something to be feared, although we are certainly realistic. We know we live in uncertain times, full of questions. Let us not stop being challenged by the teaching of Pope Francis who has taught us that we are not living a phase of change, but in a changing phase. Deep down there is solid rock, a great trust.

It is trust in humanity. It is trust in the possibility of being faithful to the Canossian charism in a creative way, perfectly contemporary; sisters of a world crossed by contradictions and difficulties, but also rich in talents, connections, hopes.

It is the great trust in the intercultural dimension, the one that most of all calls us to a reconfiguration, a personal and communitarian work of conversion, that may be in itself prophetic. In a scenario like that of today, too often characterized by fears, closures, fragmentations and divisions, it is possible to live interculturality as an encounter and not a conflict, fraternity as a possible way, openness to the other, taking care of those who are fragile. This really represents a way forward and a language that can speak to the world, the Canossian language!

That “there is more”, a formidable intuition of an international, Venetian woman crossing the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in a time of change, a very true change of the times. She is calling us forward. She is encouraging us to dare. Listening has encouraged us to dare along a journey of reciprocal sharing, of encounter towards the General Chapter never experienced before. The journey has shown how much the sisters, the communities, the provinces and delegations, the regions, the entire Institute is ready to be challenged, to risk, to dare. This attitude of listening is cer-
tainly an experience that can still bring much fruit and grow along the path of community discernment for the future.

It is a generous ministeriality, not afraid to dirty one’s hands and walk within this story: also a contradictory story, convulsed, painful, but always reached by the mercy of God, always reached by the good news of the Gospel and by the call of justice.

It is a life of community more and more a home, of dialogue, reconciliation, openness to the world, closeness to the young generations and to the poor. Let us look to the future with the Gospel in our hearts, ready to speak the Canossian language with our life.
Ten challenges for the next ten years
What words will highlight these next ten years?

CLIMATE
These next ten years will be decisive in containing the excessive increase of the global temperature within 1.5 degrees Centigrade, the objective fixed by the Paris Agreement of 2015. A fundamental objective if the fragile equilibrium of our planet is not to be altered, if the rising of the sea level is to be avoided including the risks of ever more violent meteorological events. In 2019, the battle for “climatic justice” has imposed itself on the attention of public opinions. Are we capable to listen to the cry of young generations?

WATER
The blue gold is an indispensable and precious resource. Up to now, too often wasted. In the next ten years we ought to learn how to use it wisely, efficiently and above all equitably, because the source of life may never become a source of conflict.

FORMATION
We live in a world ever more complex to interpret. At the same time, we have access to an amount of knowledge without precedents. Men and women in the next ten years are called to become always more knowledgeable, informed, ready to learn new things. The challenge is that of continuous formation to accomplish at every age, free and responsible choices.

COMMUNITY
In a life always more fragmented, peoples’ movements and the demands of an individualistic society, the risk for many is to be alone. In these next ten years we are called to rediscover the sense of community and to build new, courageous forms of common life for sharing joys and sorrows, for living together forgiveness and celebration.

DIGITAL
The information revolution has already changed our lives by breaking down barriers and giving us access to an enormous web of information and services. The advent of Artificial Intelligence can be an extraordinary opportunity for growth that will bring us to confront ourselves with fundamental questions about our very nature. Technology must always be at the service of humanity.
EQUITY
Within the next ten years, equity will be our greatest challenge - equal access to resources, equal distribution of work opportunities. The value of wealth cannot be driven by the accumulation of goods without scruples that leave behind territories and people. It must be driven by the development of society, a society in which everyone can enjoy the fruits of the earth and of intelligence.

MIGRATIONS
Our world is moving like never before. Millions of people are on the move, seeking a better way of life. In the first ten years of this millennium we have seen too many walls being built that have caused divisions and sufferings. In the next ten years we will commit ourselves to learning the art of intercultural encounter, to open ourselves to the dimension of welcome and discover that we are sisters and brothers in our differences.

SCIENCE
Progress in research has allowed humanity to be always more healthy, informed and free. In the following years the challenge will be to utilize with responsibility and equilibrium its extraordinary potentials. May science be always at the service of life while respecting nature’s limitations.

SPIRITUALITY
Our world is being transformed, is in motion. As Pope Francis warns us, we are at the threshold of “changing times”. This is why we can’t risk to lose that breath that gives rhythm to our life, the heart. Research makes sense since from time immemorial it has moved the individual. In the next ten years our societies, more or less secularized, are called to rediscover the intimate, irriducible opening of humanity to the Other as the way of a real, authentic and full humanity.

CITY
It is only a short time before the previous ten years that the percentage of urban population has surpassed that of those living in rural areas. Projections are saying that within 2020, over five billion people will live in the city. Our metropolis are the place where all the contradictions of our time are being manifested: opportunity and exclusion, encounter and segregation. Will they also be laboratories of new solutions and answers to the challenges of the next ten years?
ONLINE AND OFFLINE NEWS

**Alexander Masters, “A discarded life”**

Cambridge, England, a day like any other in 2001. 148 diaries are rediscovered in a rubbish drum and are entrusted to Alexander Masters to save them from destruction. There are thousands of yellowed pages covered in mould and written more than half a century ago, from 1952 to a few weeks before being discovered. Who is the anonymous author of this autobiography? Piece after piece, Masters assembles the puzzle of a mysterious and authentic existence. A discarded life is a work without precedents, in perfect equilibrium among different genres. It is a true story that becomes an absorbing thriller, a moving love novel in society that unravels itself along the thread of a deep reflection regarding the sense of life arriving to an unexpected epilogue that is simply breathtaking.

**Alex Honnold “How I scaled a vertical wall of 1,000 metres in free ascent”**

On 3 June 2017, Alex Honnold, a professional climber from the USA, at age 34 succeeded where no one else could. With bare hands, in less than four hours, he climbed over 900 metres on the rocky face of El Capitan, a mountain in the Yosemite Park, in California. And, he did it in free climbing. Such a climb had never been seen before due to its difficulty, length, exposure and mental stress. How did Honnold do it? The young mountaineer related the climb at a TED Conference, where he traced the long preparation, key of his success. There were intense daily training routines, study, but above all, the capacity to concentrate and discipline. Driving him was the decision to follow through his desire by reconciling with his own limits in order to overcome them - a provoking experience. Are we prepared to cultivate our courage to follow our desires?

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iM6M_7wBMc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iM6M_7wBMc)
Hans Rosling
“Factfulness. Ten reasons for why we don’t understand the world. And why things are going better than what we think.”

What tools can we leave our children with which to interpret the world we live in in constant mutation? How can we face the daily avalanche of oppressive news arriving through the media, society and politics? Why do we pay more attention to negative news, those that give us the impression that everything but surely doldrums? Of what unreasonable prejudices is our thought a victim? Through an attentive study of the facts, Huns Rosling shows us that things are not so bad, rather, we are faced by a radical improvement. To understand it, we must, however, learn to look at the facts with curiosity, place them in context and know how to be amazed. Rosling encourages us to be curious, but does not stop at asking questions. He replies by availing himself of the truth of the facts.

The Final Document of the Synod for the Amazon Region
“New pathways for the Church and for an integral ecology”

Five chapters, besides an introduction and a brief conclusion. This is how the final Document of the Special Assembly for the PanAmazon Region, circulated on 26 October, by the expressed will of the Pope at the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops. Among the themes examined were: mission, inculturation, integral ecology, defense of the indigenous peoples, Amazonian Rite, role of women and new ministries, particularly in areas where it is difficult to have access to the Eucharist. These are words and themes that need attentive reading and reflection for relaunching the courageous journey of the Church in a world that is changing.

Link: http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/it/documenti/documento-finale-del-sinodo-per-l-amazzonia.html
Walking with Francis
To build a future of communion

From the Synodal reflection on the Amazon Region, the green heart of our planet from which emerge fundamental questions for the future of the Church, to the renewed call to be women and men of peace who incarnate hope for humanity; from the commitment to build more just and fraternal economic systems that overcome the logic of waste to a new educational agreement for the young generations. Pope Francis proposes to all of us a courageous journey: Let us follow him!

Synod for the Amazon Region
For an integral conversion
OCTOBER 2019

Conversion: this is the driving thread of the final Document on the PanAmazon Synod, approved by the Synod Fathers gathered in Rome. An integral conversion that is pastoral, cultural, ecological and synodal. The text is the result of the exchange that took place during the month of October in the three weeks of work by the Synod, to relate the challenges and potentials of the Amazon Region, biological heart of the world spread over nine countries and lived in by over 33 million people of whom 2.5 million are indigenous. The region is very vulnerable due to the climate change provoked by humans and thrust into a frenetic rush towards death. This is why it is urgent to take a new direction that would allow it to be saved. From the reflection on the Amazon, precious and urgent indications have emerged for the journey of the whole Church.

World Day of Peace
Incarnating hope for the world
1 JANUARY 2020

Peace, as a journey of hope, is about dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion. The words chosen by Pope Francis for the 53rd World Day of Peace are an invitation to trust, to responsibility, and they trace the course for these next ten years. The message launched by the Holy Father is an ample reflection that spurs us on, without hiding the obstacles and difficulties, towards a spiritual, social and political conversion. Peace is a challenge, a desire and a precious good, the promise made by God and realized in the human story with the coming of Jesus on earth. Peace is the way to go in confronting, in hope and in dialogue. Peace passes through a more just economic system that respects to our common home.
From 26 to 28 March 2020, the city of Assisi will host The Economy of Francis, an international event aimed at young economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers committed to think and practice a different economy. The Pope has called them to the city of St Francis, a symbolic place of fraternal humanism, to set in motion a process of global change so that today’s and tomorrow’s economy may be more just, inclusive and sustainable, without leaving anyone behind. It will be an experience where theory and practice can cross over to build new ideas and forms of collaboration. Starting from the proposals and the work of the young people, in collaboration with the best known economists, experts of sustainable development and entrepreneurs and today committed to a different economy.

To rebuild a global educational agreement that will educate to universal solidarity and a new humanism, with the view to face the challenges of a world in continuous transformation and crossed by multiple crisis. This is the appeal launched by Pope Francis to all those working in the field of education and research and to public personalities who, at world level, occupy places of responsibility and have at heart the future of the new generations, in view of a meeting on this theme. It will take place on 14 May 2020 at the Vatican. It is the moment for a great alliance between the people living on this Earth and our “common home”, meant to be an alliance of care and respect for the planet that will generate peace, justice and welcome among all peoples of the human family and of dialogue among the religions. The road is an education to always place the person at the centre.
Awesome
immaculate fortune
for you all creatures
of the kindom
have opened
and you have become queen
of our shadows
for you people
have taken
innumerable flights
created the hive of
thought
for you woman has risen
the murmuring of water
unique grace
and you tremble for your
charms
that are in your hands
and you have a dream
for every summer
a son for every cry
a doubt of love
for every hair
now you are woman
all a pardon
and so as it lives
the divine thought
will flower in secret
surrounded
by your grace.
[Alda Merini]

Every time that a woman fights for herself, she fights for all women.
[Maya Angelou]
Woman, you are not only the work of God, but also of men, who always make you beautiful with their hearts. Poets weave you a net with threads of golden phantasies; painters give your form always a new immortality. The sea gives you its pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens their flowers to worship you, to cover you, to render you always more precious. The desire of the heart has extended its glory on your youth. Half of you is woman, and half of you is dream. [Rabindranath Tagore]
JANUARY 2020

18 TO 25
OCTAVE OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
“THEY TREATED US WITH KINDNESS” (ACTS 28:2)

22
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF DON LIBERA
64TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARRIVAL OF M. FERNANDA RIVA
AT MUMBAI

26
FIRST SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD, THEME:
“HE OPENED THEIR MIND TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES”

AN APPOINTMENT OF ECUMENICAL VALUE

27
REMEMBRANCE DAY
OF THE VICTIMS OF NAZISM

28
EUROPEAN DAY
FOR THE PROMOTION OF DATA/FACTS

FEBRUARY 2020

2
XXIV
WORLD DAY
OF CONSECRATED LIFE

4
WORLD DAY
FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST TUMOURS

8
FEAST OF SAINT
JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

21
WORLD DAY
OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

26
ASH WEDNESDAY

27
160TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST CANOS.
MISSIONARIES FOR HONG KONG
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<td>International Day of Women</td>
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<td>World Day of Water</td>
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<td>The Economy of Francis</td>
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<td>XVII General Chapter of the Institute: &quot;Women of the Word Who Love</td>
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<td>Without Measure. Reconfiguration to a Life of Holiness in and for</td>
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I address myself to you, Sister Iolanda, born in Bergamo and professional in charity, you belong to that group of thousands of Canossian sisters who continue to spend their life in mission lands. You have strong roots that sustain you wherever you are to share your experience. Your manner, seasoned by the gentleness of other times, subtend resilience and firmness in making concrete the non-negotiable Christian values in which respect for the person and their life excel. In you, virtue and fidelity are interwoven with rigour, intellectual and operative honesty.

Dearest, your passion for the “beloved poor”, entrusted by St Magdalene of Canossa, sheds its beneficial light on the small ones and the great. You are optimistic. Your motto is “no one is excluded” from the people that will cross the many missionary paths you will walk. You are more than convinced that a healthy education regenerates, as does the effect of “mercy” so often referred to by Pope Francis in his talks.

You have been “chosen” to be a staunch witness of the Canossian gift, active presence in the Church and in society. In these spaces you channel your energies, often with haste, but without appearing tired since you are not familiar with idleness.

It is the Word of life that moves you, hence, you retrace with serenity, combined with firmness, the imprints of Jesus. The big and small trials don’t deter you since your priority is “charity” that promotes, rehabilitates, gives that “more” that redeems and makes new.

Also your “word” becomes proclamation and opens horizons of hope without borders, without barriers where races, skin colour, class, culture and much more are unjustly confined.

Now, Sister Iolanda, let us begin by talking about your first mission. Departure from Vimercate, goal: the Philippines. As your first encounter you are met with the small faces of smiling infants, happy in the “slum” of Tondo. Here, poverty renders one invisible, a nothingness, a grave and painful form of marginalization more than having nothing. These very little ones are your first sanctuary, your mandate, your living Church, your house to protect and always cherish.
You call them your corner stones, rather than debris abandoned by the great “conquistadores”, who without a care have only crossed the history of this coloured land. The dream you carry in your heart is to see in this very toxic place, a project of new houses, filled of that light and joy that distinguishes this people. You walk on while continuing to search in those young faces, in those shoulders of women bent by struggle, in those elderly steps bent even further by the weight of failure, your “God alone” and you are certain: He is walking beside you, always.

Your charity is not the circulating basket among the pews during the solemn religious ceremonies, a respectable tradition but not a solution for the most unfortunate who continue to live anonymously and absurdly forgotten. The frightening statistics announcing the spread of poverty are not enough. Useless are the new strategic innovations of managers, expert in an economy of outcomes that might change the situations of poverty. It is your being in solidarity, dearest Iolanda that is the winning card, your gratuitous dedication and prevention.

Your inviting recollections, sometimes comical, are concrete facts and not opinions, virtuous stories that are contagious and helpful at being more attentive and good towards reality. Nothing relative holds you back. Good and evil are well distinct and you are fully aware when from the Philippines you land in Timor. It is still a primitive island with a strong desire to be redeemed. You can walk across it both ways to give your life to save others, because this is your determination. This is part of your story and immediately you feel at home in finding yourself once more “poor among the poor”. You become quickly aware that in such a context, evangelization does not consist in teaching theology, but in living the joys and sufferings of a people afflicted by poverty, sickness and illiteracy. You affirm to have learnt much from the people who are simple, humble, discriminated against or illiterate. Yet, these very people have a deep knowledge of life and can interpret what one reads in the Gospel, “The things hidden to the wise and intelligent, God reveals to the little ones”. It is an experience that you have “touched” in various, countless occasions and manifested in the solidarity and as-
sistance that is shared between families and communities that are rejected, but recognized above all, in the extraordinary and creative way of finding solutions to their problems and difficulties.

You speak of good initiatives that every day take place in those schools in the open, under solemn and giant trees, or in the personal relationships among the market fruit stalls and various objects, mostly laid on the ground because there are no structural supports. You speak with a catching enthusiasm, your way for conveying an immediate visual of extreme situations in many parts of the world. You want to shout that good exists and you find it also in your last missionary place: Indonesia.

Here, still today, the majority of Indonesians live at the threshold of poverty and the danger is to condemn the young generation to a lack of basic education. To this people you give of yourself beyond every measure, tirelessly, preparing for them a menu consisting of instruction, formation for young women, dialogue with the various faith groups and excluding every form of exploitation, but “doing well what is good”, never encrusted by your thought alone. You feel the custodian of all these people and to succeed you activate faith, internal freedom and courage.

You are “like Paul” in the evangelical inspiration and in the ease with which they bring you to en-counter the different. You are moved by the enormous strength and resilience of the abandoned little ones and adults. Admirable is their infinite patience and adaptability in finding valid solutions to the daily adversities: violated rights, families deprived of necessities, impossible social conditions. From your heart there erupts a cry for “dignity” and from your respectful voice emerges a cry for life that, in spite of everything, finds a way to overcome every form of death. For us who are reading this, your adventure is a masterful lesson! Even in advanced years, you have decided to remain in that land that you consider a frontier open to the world. You transform every new encounter into a special invitation, whether as a provocation to confront yourself whether with what you discover to be most unpublished and beautiful around you. What is your call? “To be gift!”

Summoned by these constant novelties, you tirelessly spend yourself to re-translate the teaching of Jesus in that motto, “May no one feel abandoned”. It is for this that we acclaim you as “testimony” of an original and urgent initiative promoted in collaboration with the Canossian Foundation Voica.

“MORE” OF A WOMAN
tion, at Tofa/Kupang: a well, with the relevant rigging, for an area totally devoid of water. You will be elected as the guardian for the well of drinking water: a feminine genius at the service of the poor-est!

If, on one side, we must learn from you to give the best attention in rendering reality more human, on the other, you urge us to continue to invest, with adequate projects, in the preparation and formation of the local young women that can bring real results for their future: an indispensable domestic and social change that cannot be postponed, for a quality of life for everyone.

Dearest Sister Iolanda, we are speaking of the future for the children of Tofa, already at the door, and I hear the echo of your reply: “We must try! Making the water flow is the most beautiful and healthy thing to do.” Just like in a fantastic fairy tale, one sees those children playing around the marvelous spring of water that, like a miracle, gradually branches out in a dozen other fresh rivulets.

The well is a gift for the whole village because, apart from providing fresh water, it offers many possibilities and brings joy to the area, an act of justice before being a choice to solidarity!

Sister Iolanda, your heart ever free “that wants to embrace everything and everyone” is a school for those, women in particular, who don’t want to follow conventional ways and be like everyone else wants them to be, but women of the “Word”, joyful and happy to share. Women, not nomads, who are of and for the mission, in love with the “little ones” of the Gospel who shine a light that illuminates the world in a pure and most beautiful way. Consecrated women, full of feeling and emotion for every aspect of life, who entrust their goodness to the poor and the rich without fear of the truth because love renders us free!

Missionaries are not made, they are born missionaries!

It is a call within a call, an invitation to give always, untiring, without surrendering to routine of what one will offer tomorrow. It is to repeat a daily “Yes” in fidelity to His Word, to follow him, Jesus.

“The secret? Be gift because the world is a small village.”

Goodbye, sister Iolanda, thank you!

Sr. Liliana Ugoletti
SPECIFICATIONS

In reference to the article “At the roots of interculture - Story of the first missions in America and in Africa” that appeared in VitaPiù No.9, September/December 2019, we publish the following photos accompanied by some specifications.

“Santos - the community ready to distribute the plate of soup to the poor”, in reference to “The Canossians in Brazil”, p 10, 1st column, second-last paragraph: “In the photo we see the small community being ‘Servants of the Poor’ by serving the plate of soup.”

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Come Holy Spirit,
You who make all things new
with your breath of life, in the silence,
restore and feed the flame
of our faith and hope.
May Your Light guide each of us,
in this time of preparation
for the XVII General Chapter;
to walk with commitment on the way of Holiness.
Come, Holy Spirit,
make us constant to the daily listening of the Word.
to live it with coherence, with truth,
with generosity and with humility.
Come Holy Spirit,
help us, with all the sisters of the Institute,
to receive with docility and to manifest
to the world the richness of that
GREATEST LOVE that breathes nothing but Charity.
Come Holy Spirit!