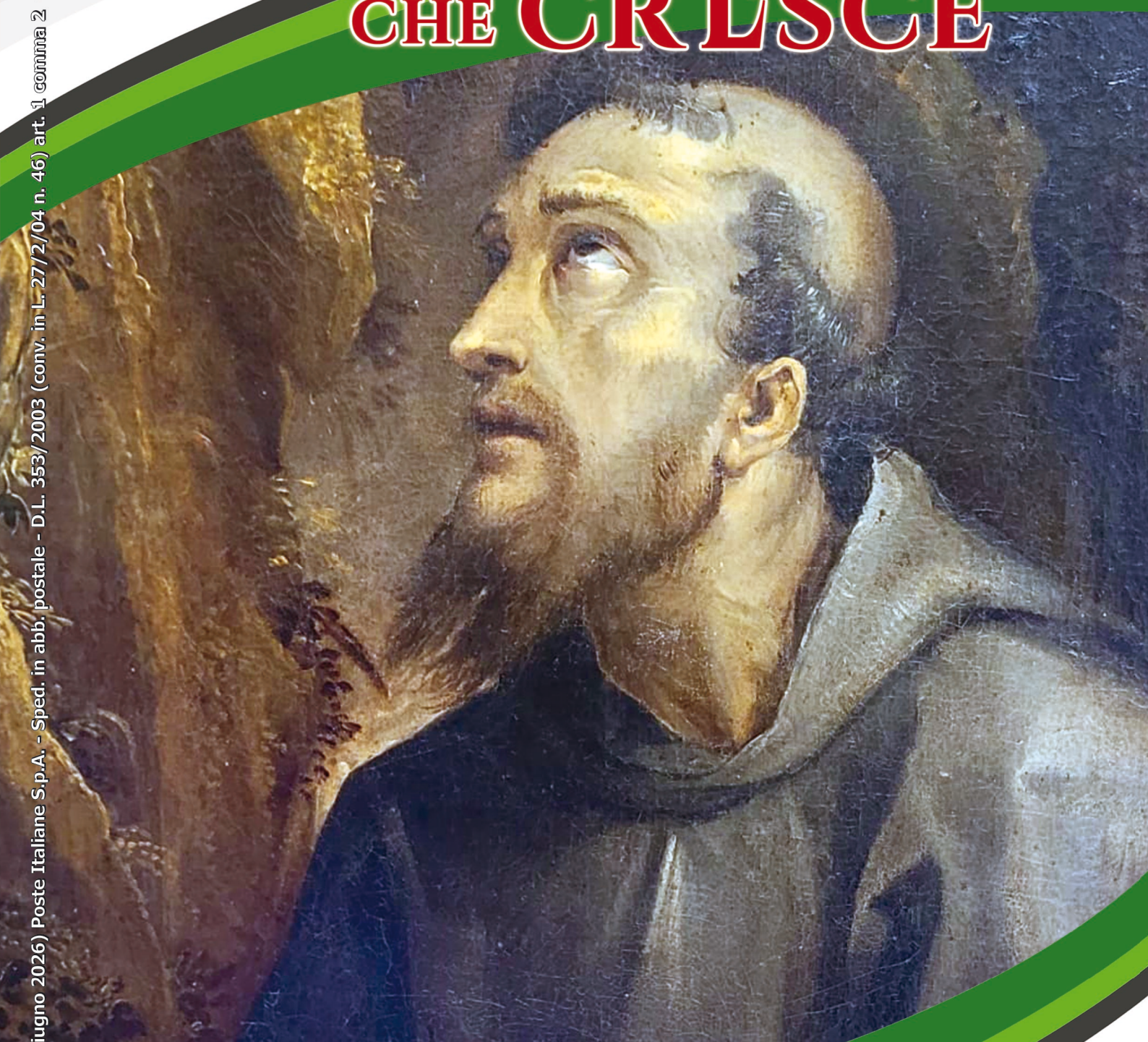


ACCOGLIENZA CHE CRESCE



***La pace del Cristo risorto, una pace disarmata
e una pace disarmante, umile e perseverante”***

(Papa Leone XIV)

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A MOTHER'S HEART

*The mother was sitting in front of the door
with her daughter nestled between her
and the doorstep.
The little girl had her eyes closed.
Perhaps she was sleeping, perhaps... perhaps...
The mother's eyes were wide open
and she was stroking her head
as if she wanted to gather
one by one all the little girl's dreams
to make them grow tall, tall, beautiful
up there...
... up to the sky... and even higher.
In the way that certain trees
seem to be longer
than the distance from heaven to earth
and from earth to sky
and if they have roots,
they are hidden only
in the secret of a mother's heart.
Every mother has a treasure chest
in which she often returns to check
if the key is well kept
that can open the door to Heaven for her children.
And she does it when her children
fall asleep...*

*That mother's name was Anna.
That little girl was Maria.*

Pierino Montini



Sophia Ocsiani

Welcome and Listening

In the latest issue of the Magazine, as we exchanged Easter greetings in a climate of hope—the fruit of our perseverance as Pilgrims of Hope and inspired, more recently, by the teachings of Pope Francis—we concluded that a worthy and full welcome must encompass, in its entirety, concrete works of hospitality, listening, dialogue, integration, credibility, responsibility, humility, and holiness of life.

And this in recognition that our Master, Christ Jesus, has shown us that he is and must be, for all of us, our teacher, light, way, and life.

The first call we have, therefore, to achieve a worthy welcome, in my opinion, is to listen, which certainly constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of human relationships, as it encompasses empathy, non-judgment, and openness toward others. A healthy form of listening, free from personalism or egoism, from politicization of various kinds, but fundamentally linked to a lively and sincere respect for the dignity of every human being, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

On the eve of each World Communications Day, the Pope consistently reminds us of the centrality of listening in communication. Finally, both Pope Francis and Leo XIV have reiterated the need to listen to others with total interior openness, as taught in different eras by Saint Augustine and Saint Francis of Assisi. This is a need that AI will never be able to satisfy, because no machine can replace a human heart.

Moreover, already in 2022, Pope Francis expressed himself as follows on the occasion of the 56th World Communications Day:

We Christians forget that the service of listening has been entrusted to us by the One who is the hearer par excellence, in whose work we are called to participate. "We must listen with the ear of God, if we want to be able to speak through His Word." Thus the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that the first service we owe to others in communion consists in listening to them. He who does not know how to listen to his brother will soon no longer be capable of listening even to God (...) In pastoral action, the most important work is the "apostolate of the ear." Listen before speaking, as the apostle James exhorts: "Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak" (1:19). Giving a little of one's time freely to listen to people is the first gesture of charity. Listening, according to the Fathers of the Church, is an "active act of docility" to the Spirit and His Wisdom, a particular willingness to ensure that one's heart is open to a serene, cordial, and effective encounter. Listening, therefore, does not simply mean "hearing with the ears," but first and foremost welcoming the

Word and will of God into the depths of the heart and, consequently, the words of our neighbor who addresses us as a request for help, relief, and consolation.

Saint Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, in his Rule asks us to "listen with the heart," demonstrating how, to avoid arrogance and haughtiness, it is necessary to seek the counsel of others.

In a world like today's, where lack of communication, selfishness, and the cult of the "I" prevail and condition many relationships at all levels, I believe there is a great need for listening also, and perhaps above all, to avoid misunderstandings, misinterpretations that often lead to precarious situations.

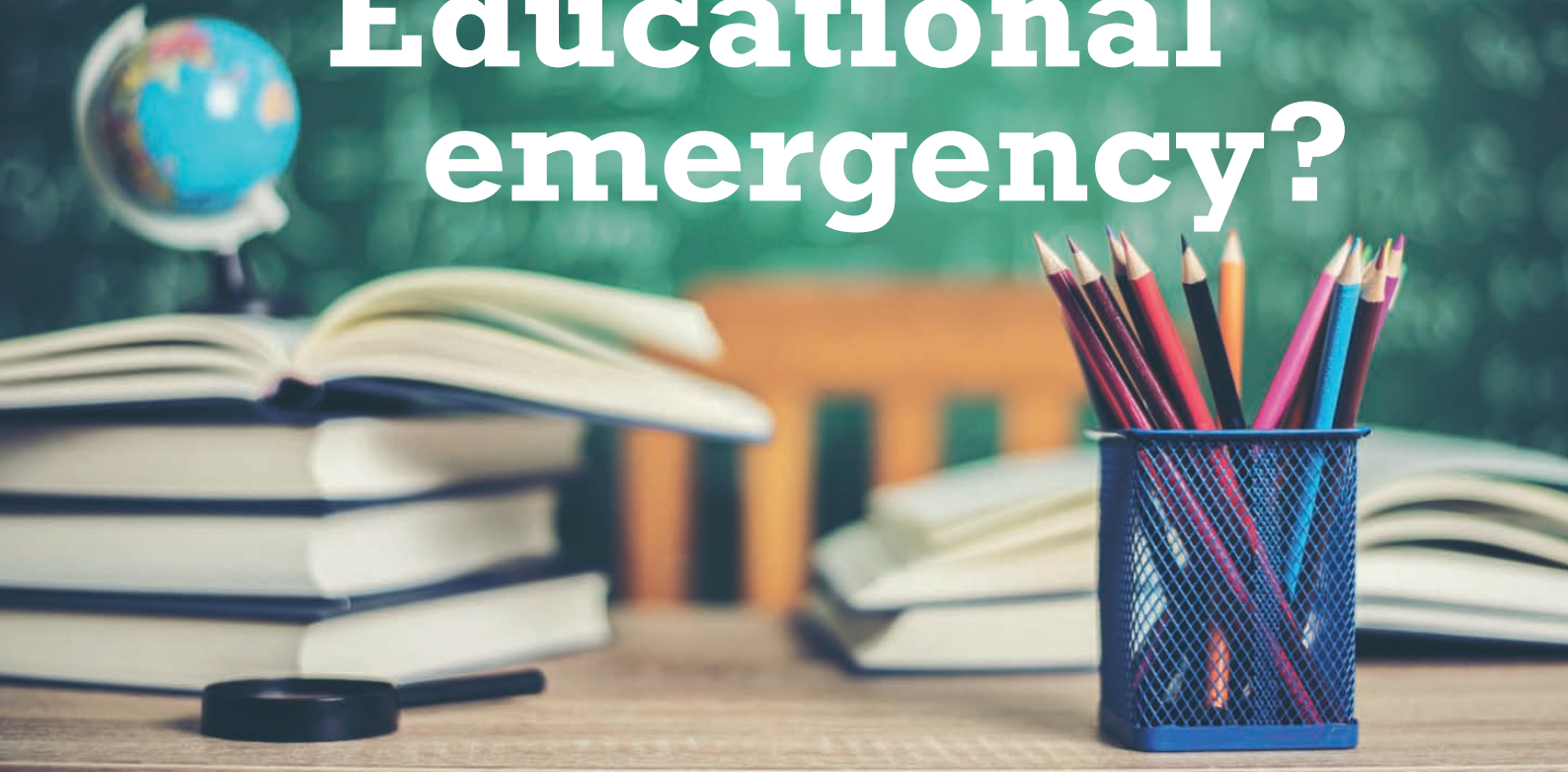
It's a common habit to "talk over oneself," that is, to speak at the same time as others to the point of not understanding each other, but also to fail to convey one's own point of view, one's reasons, and one's arguments to the audience.



In conclusion, let us return to Pope Francis who, very significantly, in the speech he gave to the Roman Curia on 21 December 2023 on the occasion of Christmas greetings, stated, among other things: (...) "Listen, discern, walk: (...) three verbs for our journey of faith (...) "Listen, O Israel" (Dt 6:4), because before any precept it is important to enter into a relationship with God, welcoming the gift of his love that comes to us. Listening, in fact, is a biblical verb that does not refer only to hearing, but implies the involvement of the heart and therefore of life itself. Saint Benedict begins his Rule thus: "Listen attentively, O son" (Rule, Prologue, 1). Listening with the heart is much more than hearing a message or exchanging information; it is an interior listening capable of intercepting the desires and needs of the other, a relationship that invites us to go beyond the patterns and overcome the prejudices in which we sometimes pigeonhole the lives of those who He is beside us. Listening is always the beginning of a journey. (...) Sometimes, even in our communication with one another, we risk being like predatory wolves: we immediately try to devour the other's words, without truly listening, and we immediately throw our own impressions and judgments back at them. Instead, listening to one another requires inner silence, but also a space of silence between listening and responding. It's not a "ping-pong game." First we listen, then in silence we welcome, reflect, interpret, and only then can we respond. We learn all this in prayer, because it broadens the heart, brings our egocentricity down from its pedestal, teaches us to listen to others, and generates within us the silence of contemplation.

Have a good summer holidays.

Educational emergency?



I would like to return to the reflections I made in the last editorial and to the reflections I shared during that sensational moment I experienced during my recent visit to the relics of Saint Francis in Assisi. I want to take a look at the present, at today's world, at our society, at that part of technological evolution that has now enslaved us to mechanical systems and, at the same time, is increasingly distancing us from a healthy and life-giving spirit of true humanity, exposing our selfishness, our violence, our self-righteousness as the gods of our lives and all that flows from them. Our age still suffers from a profound crisis of human identity and an increasingly profound educational emergency at all levels, a situation that has matured in its severity over the course of many years. The Church, which has always been concerned and continues to be concerned about issues related to education, particularly among young people, once again sounded the alarm in the 1980s. In a speech given on March 9, 1985, Saint John Paul II, referring to the Church's longstanding educational mission, addressed what could then be called an "educational emergency," but which today, more than 40 years later, has certainly become chronic and assumed decidedly

worrying proportions. John Paul II stated: "Unfortunately, the picture of contemporary society, which otherwise contains many positive aspects, appears fraught with shadows, indeed, with dangerous negative factors. Ambiguity, ideologies, injustice, violence, and various enticements, from unbridled and publicized sexuality to the spread of drugs, multiply situations that, instead of facilitating the educational process intended to build humanity, end up fueling disintegration, especially among young people who, more defenseless, are the first victims." This is pure prophecy given what we are forced to witness daily, and, unfortunately, we must acknowledge it among an increasingly younger population. Sociologists and psychologists are increasingly convinced that this state of affairs stems from various factors, including a profound crisis among adults who struggle to offer authoritative role models, and a widespread family fragility that causes a "failure" in some family contexts, often excessively indulgent or absent, and failing to transmit responsibility. The use of technology plays a crucial role, and certainly, those mentioned above, along with others, more or less obvious, can be addressed by rebuilding an alliance bet-

ween educational agencies (especially families, schools, and parishes) and serious investments in teacher training, promoting an "educational community" that does not abandon young people.

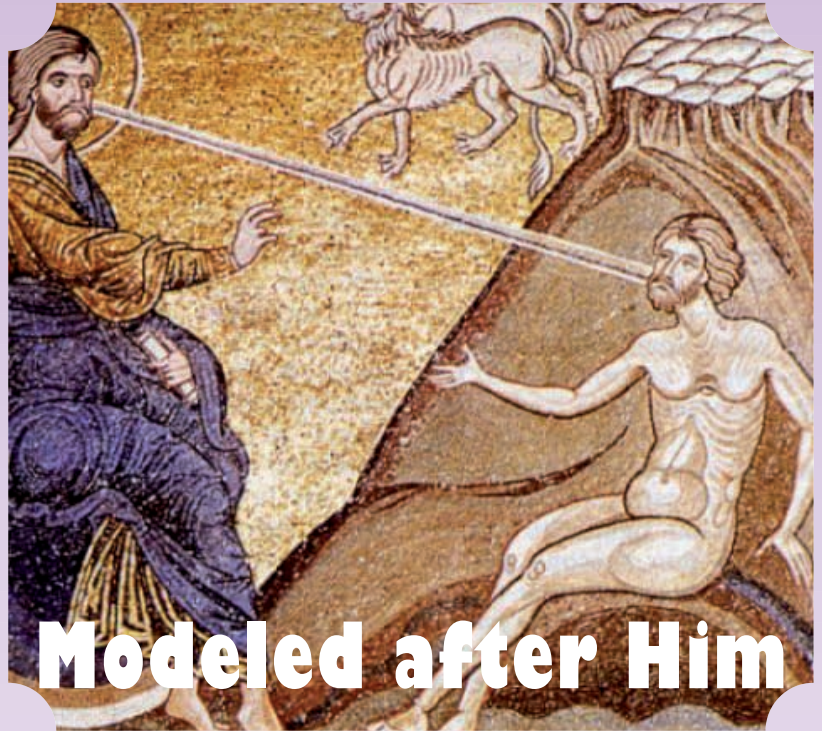
John Paul II's thinking, while on the one hand, connects to the teachings of his predecessors on education in faith and life, on the other, is considered complementary to that of his successors, Benedict XVI and Francis, in recognizing the need for a renewed commitment to education in a society undergoing profound cultural transformation.

Benedict XVI, in a letter addressed to the diocese and the city of Rome on the urgent task of education on January 21, 2008, wrote, among other things: "Finding the right balance between freedom and discipline. Without rules of behavior and life, enforced day by day even in small things, character is not formed and one is not prepared to face the challenges that will inevitably arise in the future. However, the educational relationship is first and foremost the meeting of two freedoms, and successful education is training in the proper use of freedom. (...) As the child grows, he becomes an adolescent and then a young person; we must therefore accept the risk of freedom,

always remaining attentive to helping him correct wrong ideas and choices. What we must never do, however, is indulge his mistakes, pretend not to see them, or worse, share them, as if they were the new frontiers of human progress."

Subsequently, on the same issue, after repeated interventions in support of a renewed education that would bring with it a decisive turning point and a truly effective contribution to the resolution of the so-called 'educational emergency', Pope Francis in a meeting on the global educational pact "Religions and Education" on 5 October 2021 stated, among other things: "Dear brothers and sisters! I am happy to welcome you on this significant occasion to promote a Global Educational Pact. (...) to 'dialogue on the way in which we are building the future of the planet and on the need to invest in everyone's talents, because every change requires an educational journey to develop a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society' and to 'rekindle commitment to and with the new generations, renewing the passion for a more open and inclusive education, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding', inviting everyone to 'join efforts in a broad educational alliance to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentations and oppositions and rebuilding the fabric of relationships for a more fraternal humanity.'"

This was echoed, most recently—but certainly not the last—by the Petrine Magisterium for a healthy, effective, and useful intergenerational re-education, in the Apostolic Letter "Drawing New Maps of Hope" by Pope Leo XIV on October 28 of last year, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*. In this letter, among other things, we read: "October 28, 2025, marks the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* on the extreme importance and timeliness of education in the life of the human person. With that text, the Second Vatican Council reminded the Church that education is not an accessory activity, but forms the very fabric of evangelization: it is the concrete way in which the Gospel becomes an educational gesture, a relationship, and a culture. (...) Educating is an act of hope and a passion that is renewed because it manifests the promise we see in the future of humanity. The specificity, depth, and breadth of educational action is that work—as mysterious as it is real—of 'making being flourish [...] is taking care of the soul,' as we read in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (30a–b). It is a 'profession of promises': one promises time, trust, competence. (...)



I am who I am, not who I was, nor who I will be. It is the journey of life. In every human being there is a path, a maturation that changes ideas and behaviors. Each of us is a mystery that is discovered through living, embodying our own destiny. In every change, a transformation occurs within the person, a step toward ever-advancing holiness. The "new" person comes to light, the "true" person hidden within each of us, the real reason we were born. We will be happy only when we are like the Lord, created in His image and likeness (Gen. 2:26-27). But reaching God is a journey, it is pain, it is birth; to be born new, we must die to the old, allowing divine redemption to restore the original human being, created in the image of God in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24 - Colossians 3:10). For our transformation, the Father gave us a model, His Son Jesus Christ, and, as with a handcrafted product, even the human creature will never be "beautiful" until it is perfectly identical to its model. We know that Adam, before sinning, truly reflected the life of God! He had received the gift of a mysterious likeness to Him, so much so that he was not subject to death. By disobeying the Lord, man sought self-determination by placing himself in His place, causing a separation from God that was then transmitted to humanity as an inclination to sin. The desire for eternal happiness, which we all carry within us, remains within us, but whose trajectory we must discover. Our guide is the Word, which God left us to guide us along the path of life. It is not a limitation on our freedom, but the loving prompting of a Father who loves and has loved His children so much that He gave His own life. All the indications of the Word of God the Father have a single principle in common: love. A three-dimensional love, for God, for our neighbors, and for ourselves. For the Lord, the source of life, for our neighbor, who is also a child of God and therefore our brother, and for ourselves because we belong to the Lord, provided it does not lead to idolatry of the self or selfishness. It is humanly difficult to achieve the perfection in Love required of us by Jesus: "...as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34-35), but it is possible with the help of the tools Jesus left us: the Word and the sacraments.



The Red Apron of Dignity

Nico Acampora and the PizzAut Revolution

There's a man who travels around Italy wearing a red apron and a story that gets to you before he's even finished telling it. His name is Nico Acampora, and when he speaks—in front of audiences or business people, on television, in public squares—something rare happens: people stop what they're doing and really listen. Not because he's a perfect speaker, but because what he says comes from an authentic, visceral, human place. It comes from a father.

It was 2010 when the diagnosis of autism hit the Acampora family like, as he himself puts it, "a tsunami that overwhelms everything." His son Leo, still a toddler, had severe autism. From that moment, daily life changed radically.

Going to a restaurant? Impossible. "In restaurants, there are unsuitable lighting, sudden noises, and unpleasant olfactory stimuli. And then your son might start running, and the restaurant owner wouldn't like his behavior. So stop. Stop going out, stop hanging out with friends, stop doing so many things you used to take for granted."

But Nico Acampora isn't the type to give up. A trained educator and expert in social planning, he began to observe: his son, in the kitchen, seemed calm, confident, capable. "I thought: if he can do it, even though he has severe autism, why not someone else?" From that question, an idea was born. And the idea was born, literally, in the night. "I woke my wife at 1:30 and said: we

have to open a restaurant run by autistic kids. She looked at me and replied: tomorrow I have to wake up at 5:30, please sleep." The next day, Nico was already at his desk creating the logo and slogan: We nourish inclusion.

The journey wasn't easy. At first, Nico asked restaurateurs to lend him their premises for a night so the kids could work. On the third, try someone said yes, and it was a success. Then, in 2017, the PizzAut association officially saw the light of day. In 2021, the first real pizzeria opened, followed by a second location. Today, PizzAut has two restaurants with 400 seats and—the number Nico always proudly cites—41 autistic kids employed full-time and permanently. With a thirteenth salary. With a



Wearing his red apron, Nico steps onto any stage and transforms the audience. He talks about Leo, he talks about Lorenzo, who as a child "used to hit himself in the head with a fork" and who today serves tables with that same fork. He talks about Letizia, who couldn't speak or write and who today takes customers' orders. He talks about Andrea, who lived under the influence of medication and who today doesn't even take a pill. Stories that seem like miracles, but which are actually simply the result of an environment that finally believed in them.

"Pizza has the precious flavor of hope and dignity," he says. And it's true. Because every pizza these kids bake is a small declaration to the world: we exist, we work, we matter.

fourteenth salary. With the rights of any other worker.

"They told me that if I really thought I could do it, I was more handicapped than my kids," he says with a smile. But he never stopped. Not in the face of skepticism, nor in the face of the real challenges of building a truly inclusive work environment: large, quiet kitchens, ?200,000 invested in soundproofing, color-coded floors, uniform lighting. Because inclusion, around here, isn't a slogan: it's a meticulously planned project.

I've met Nico Acampora more than once, and each time I've been struck by the same thing: his ability to make you feel part of something. He's not asking you for a favor. He's offering you an opportunity. The opportunity to understand that the world can be made differently. That work—real, paid, dignified—is not a privilege to be distributed to the fortunate, but a right of every person, regardless of how their brain functions.



Hope remains alive



Pope Leo XIV's words at the conclusion of the Jubilee offer valuable insights into the significance of this event of faith. The Pope said: "It is beautiful to become pilgrims of hope. And it is beautiful to continue to be so, together! God's faithfulness will continue to amaze us. If we do not reduce our churches to monuments, if our communities remain homes, if we unitedly resist the flattery of the powerful, then we will be the generation of the dawn."

The first consideration concerns being pilgrims of hope. I am convinced that one of the most enduring fruits of the Jubilee is precisely the call to hope. In our discussions, the reference to faith and charity is the most immediate, while hope is the great unknown. It's true. It's much simpler to speak of faith and charity because they are the most frequent in the life of the believer. Yet, without reference to hope, the other two virtues also suffer an impoverishment. As the poet C. Peguy said, it is hope that carries faith and charity and animates them to be always ready. And he adds: "Because Faith sees only what is, but she sees what will be. Charity loves only what is, while she loves what will be. God gave us hope. He began. He hoped that the least of sinners, that the most insignificant of sinners, would work at least a little for his salvation." As if to say: God has placed true hope in each of us because he himself hopes in us and makes us capable of great things.

For the Church, keeping hope before our eyes as a constant goal means knowing how to look beyond the difficulties of the moment to build something that lasts over time. It is necessary to move beyond fragmentation and

stay on the path of hope, because it empowers each of us to experience a form of positivity, the fruit of the certainty that the Lord is alive and present among us. The Jubilee allowed us to dust off this virtue, to remove the patina that obscured it, to make it a companion on the journey and illuminate the path to be followed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The motto of the Jubilee consisted of the words of the Apostle: "Hope does not disappoint." How many times has this phrase been repeated; likewise, the expression "Pilgrims of Hope" has been etched everywhere for an entire year. This call continues to be a provocation to set out on a journey, not to stand still and immobile because hope does not allow it. It is therefore necessary to maintain the enthusiasm that accompanied the Holy Year to transform it into a new "dawn" that allows the Church to proclaim the Gospel of salvation with the same credibility as at the beginning. The Jubilee has concluded, but the pilgrims' responsibility to be a ferment in the world for a new humanity commits us to look to the future with the certainty that springs from Christian hope. A witness that becomes visible and fruitful wherever our communities are a true sign of welcome.

Nanay Delia's Story

Bobbin lace from the Western Visayas Sanitarium in Santa Barbara, Iloilo..

"I am someone who was cured of leprosy. The disease left its mark on my body, but it did not deprive me of my ability to create, learn, and live with purpose. When I discovered bobbin lace, I didn't know if my hands—altered by my past illness—would still be able to execute the delicate movements this technique requires. The threads are thin, the patterns complex, and the work requires patience and precision. At first, every twist and crisscross of the threads seemed like a challenge. But little by little, I learned. With every pin placed and every thread woven, I discovered something deeper: my hands may have changed, but they are still capable. They can still create beauty. They can still tell a story.



Bobbin lace has become more than just a skill: it has become my voice. Through it, I express resilience, dignity, and hope." Each completed piece is proof that a person cured of leprosy is not defined by their limitations, but by their strength and perseverance.

This craft has also taught me patience, not only with threads, but also with myself. It has reminded me that healing is not only physical, but also emotional and social. Even though the disease is curable, stigma often remains. And this is the greatest challenge we continue

to face. Through my work, I want others to look beyond the label. I want them to understand that we are capable, talented, and deserving of opportunities. We should not be feared or pitied: we should be respected. My lace is more than just decoration.

It is a symbol of survival.

It is a declaration of capability.

It is a call for inclusion.

Let us weave a society where no one is judged by their illness, but appreciated for their humanity.

Antiqua et Nova

Note on the Relationship between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence (II)

A Comprehensive Understanding of Human Intelligence

26. In this context, human intelligence is more clearly seen as a faculty that is an integral part of the way the whole person engages with reality. Authentic engagement requires embracing the full breadth of one's being: spiritual, cognitive, embodied, and relational.

27. This interest in reality manifests itself in various ways, as each person, in their multifaceted uniqueness, seeks to understand the world, relate to others, solve problems, express their creativity, and seek integral well-being through the synergy of the different dimensions of intelligence. This involves logical and linguistic abilities, but can also include other modes of interacting with reality. Let us consider the work of the craftsman, who "must be able to discern in inert matter a particular form that others cannot recognize" and bring it to light through his intuition and expertise. (...)

28. At the heart of the Christian vision of intelligence is the integration of truth into the moral and spiritual life of the person, orienting his actions in the light of God's goodness and truth. According to His plan, intelligence, understood in the full sense, also includes the ability to savor what is true, good, and beautiful. Therefore, one can affirm, in the words of the 20th-century French poet Paul Claudel, that "intelligence is nothing without delight." (...)

Limits of AI

30. In light of the above, the differences between human intelligence and current AI systems are clear. Although it is an extraordinary technological

achievement capable of imitating some operations associated with rationality, AI operates only by performing tasks, achieving goals, or making decisions based on quantitative data and computational logic. (...)

31. However, even if AI elaborates and simulates some expressions of intelligence, it remains fundamentally confined to a logical-mathematical

On this page, we would like to continue our exploration of the document published by the Church on the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This document, "ANTIQUA ET NOVA" – Note on the Relationship between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence, was prepared by the Dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Culture and Education of the Holy See. The text was approved on January 14, 2025, by Pope Francis, who ordered its publication.

We will extract some salient passages from this document, though certainly not exhaustive, referring the reader to the entire text, given that, as we all know, the topic is a daily topic in our social, family, and even religious life.

domain, which imposes some intrinsic limitations. While human intelligence continually develops organically over the course of a person's physical and psychological growth and is shaped by a myriad of experiences lived in the body, AI lacks the capacity to evolve in this direction. (...)

32. Consequently, although AI can simulate some aspects of human reasoning and perform certain tasks with incredible speed and efficiency, its computational capabilities represent only a fraction of the broader possibilities of the human mind. For example, it cannot currently replicate moral discernment and the ability to establish authentic relationships. Furthermore, a person's intelligence is embedded within a history of intellectual and moral formation experienced at a personal level, which essentially shapes the individual's perspective, involving the physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions of their life. (...)

33. Human intelligence does not consist primarily in completing functional tasks, but rather in understanding and actively engaging with reality in all its aspects; and it is also capable of surprising insights. Since AI does not possess the richness of corporeality, relationality, and the openness of the human heart to truth and goodness, its capabilities, even if seemingly infinite, are incomparable to human capacities for grasping reality. (...)

34. (...). However, a person's value does not depend on the possession of singular abilities, cognitive and technological achievements, or individual success, but rather on their intrinsic dignity, founded on being created in the image of God. Therefore, such dignity remains intact beyond any circumstance even in those unable to exercise their abilities, whether they are an unborn child, a person in an unconscious state, or a suffering elderly person (...)

35. In light of this, as Pope Francis observes, "the very use of the word 'intelligence'" in reference to AI "is misleading" and risks overlooking what is most precious in the human person. From this perspective, AI should not be seen as an artificial form of intelligence, but as one of its products.

IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI

37. Seen as a fruit of the potentialities inscribed in human intelligence, scientific inquiry and the development of technical skill are part of the "collaboration of man and woman with God in bringing visible creation to perfection." At the same time, all scientific and technological achievements are, ultimately, gifts from God. Therefore, human beings must always employ their gifts with a view to the higher purpose for which He has bestowed them.

38. (...) Like every other human endeavor, technological development must be directed at the service of the person and contribute to efforts to achieve "greater justice, greater fraternity, and a more human order of social relations," which are "more valuable than advances in the technical field (...)"

39. To respond to these challenges, attention must be drawn to the importance of moral responsibility grounded in the dignity and vocation of the person. This principle also applies to questions concerning AI. (...)

40. Like every product of human ingenuity, AI can be directed toward positive or negative ends. When used in ways that respect human dignity and promote the well-being of individuals and communities, it can contribute favorably to the human vocation. Nonetheless, as in all areas where human beings are called upon to make decisions, the shadow of evil looms here too. Where human free-

dom allows for the possibility of choosing what is evil, the moral evaluation of this technology depends on how it is directed and used.

41. However, what is ethically significant is not only the ends, but also the means used to achieve them; furthermore, the general vision and understanding of the person embodied in such systems are also important. (...)

42. Therefore, both the ends and the means used in a given AI application, as well as the general vision it embodies, must be evaluated to ensure that they respect human dignity and promote the common good. (...)

Support for Human Freedom and Decision-Making

43. The commitment that AI always supports and promotes the supreme value of the dignity of every human being and the fullness of their vocation is a criterion of discernment that concerns developers, owners, operators, and regulators, as well as end users, and remains valid for every use of the technology at all levels of use.

44. An analysis of the implications of this principle, then, could begin by considering the importance of moral responsibility. Since full moral causality belongs only to personal agents, not to artificial ones, it is of utmost importance to be able to identify and define who is responsible for AI processes, particularly those that include the possibility of learning, correction, and reprogramming. While empirical (bottom-up) methods and very deep neural networks enable AI to solve complex problems, they also make it difficult to understand the processes that led to these solutions. This complicates the determination of responsibility, since if an AI application were to produce undesirable results, it would be difficult to determine who should be held responsible. (...)

(continued)

“The Lord gave me brothers”

Second stage

Our second step in the footsteps of Francis—after the one that occurred through his association with lepers—comes from another passage in his Testament:

“And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I must live according to the form of the holy Gospel”.

Francis's conversion was not born of an idea, but from a series of events. His faith flourished through the “disgust” he felt for lepers: from contact with the flesh of the sick and from his fear of them. He had not reflected abstractly on evil: he had encountered it in person, experienced it, and emerged transformed. From there also came what he himself calls “the exit from the world,” followed by another decisive passage: “The Lord gave me brothers.”

Francis's brotherhood, like conversion, is also a gift, an event that happens. It doesn't arise from proselytism, not even from a vocation campaign: it happens through a work of God who gives us someone to live with, and in the saint of Assisi it becomes an encounter that revolutionizes the way of being in the world, making him the initiator of a new sociality. In his order there are no fathers, only brothers, because—as Jesus teaches in the Gospel (Mt 23:9)—there is only one Father: the one in heaven. And from that same and unique origin he also receives as brothers and sisters the sun, the moon, and all of creation,

who, like us, share origin and destiny in God the Father, brothers and sisters as sons and daughters.

Nothing romantic or disembodied:

“And those who came to undertake this life distributed to the poor all they could get; and we were content with a single habit, patched inside and out, for those who wanted it, with a cord and trousers, and we wanted no more. We clerics said the office, like the other clerics; the laity said the Pater Noster, and we very willingly stayed in churches. And we were illiterate and submissive to everyone.”

“We wanted no more”: fraternity cures the need to accumulate things and itself becomes a wealth made of living, fruitful, and liberating relationships. It is these relationships with our brothers and sisters (with the people the Father puts in our path) that make us happy and joyful; not the things or money that always tyrannize and take away peace and inner freedom. By choosing to accept brothers, Francis chose to shift the center of gravity of his life and that of his brothers: no longer possess, but receive; no longer dominate, but serve.

Within fraternity, there is also how Francis lived and taught how to live—fraternally, precisely—his relationship with authority. In a time like the Middle Ages, where everything was hierarchical (that is, orders, dignities, precedence, rights), religious life was also structured by degrees, superiors, and codified rules.

In this context, Francis chooses the



word ‘minore’, from the Latin *minoritas*: littleness, being last, not directing from above. The authority exercised with his brothers is actually a service of unity; the governance he must exercise is understood as care (the superior is called a guardian, meaning “he who is attentive, who takes care”), and responsibility as humility. The Lord had given Francis brothers, and he had accepted and welcomed them. As Saint Paul teaches: “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom 15:7). Therefore, anyone who receives brothers and sisters from God, and whom God himself has placed in a situation of common life with other Christians, can learn what it means to have brothers and sisters. “Brothers in the Lord” is the title Paul addresses to his community (Phil 1:14). Only through Jesus Christ are we brothers and sisters. I am a brother to another only because of what Jesus Christ has done for me and in me; the other has become my brother because of what Jesus Christ has done for him and in him.

(continued)

Rewarding merit?

This is the provocative question with which the author of this volume, published by Armando Editore, seeks to respond to the "trend" that occasionally springs up in various quarters to pontificate on the desire to ensure that unbridled careerism, with the complicity of relatives, friends, benefactors, and so on, is abandoned in all workplaces at all levels.

A valued contributor to our magazine "Accoglienza che cresce" for many years, Lucarini is a doctor and surgeon, having served at various levels, up to the highest levels, as a teacher and volunteer in African countries, and has also held various other prestigious positions.

As part of his narrative, he cites an episode that occurred many years ago:

"Here, things are done by those who know how to do them": these words, spoken by Christian Barnard, the surgeon responsible for the first heart transplant, in response to a provocative question from one of our professors during his visit to our university in the spring of 1968, elicited thunderous applause from us students: I was then at the end of my fifth year of studies.

This affirmation, throughout his education, was always accompanied, as Lucarini writes in the preface to his book, by a "constant commitment to academic study, accompanied by consistently excellent results and the regular acquisition, through merit, of a substantial scholarship, awarded by a private association. It had shaped me in the belief that, in order to nurture aspirations and hope to achieve

goals, it was sufficient to commit to putting one's talents to good use.

Having climbed the first steps of my career, accelerating every step and moving solely on personal merit, nurtured a "confident expectation" in that simple yet transparent concept, despite having already occasionally to acknowledge the occurrence of favoritism of various kinds.

My first attempt at a primary position was an opportunity to observe how the principle of rewarding merit was, on the contrary, systematically betrayed in favor of alternative mechanisms.

Fifty-seven years after the recounted episode, hearing inappropriate talk of "merit" and witnessing our political system's hypocritical attempt to reward it, has prompted the author to seek to make public, a series of professional experiences that reveal how phenomena of "familism," "friendism," "belongings and affiliations" are, in fact, true historical and chronic illnesses at the root of our society.

The book describes in detail autobiographical episodes, strung together in such a way as to make the reader believe they can easily be extended to a variety of realities.

The intrinsic characteristics and stark veracity of the facts, based on direct testimonies, have led to the decision to encrypt the dates and use fictitious names. Nonetheless, the transparent



and detailed account of the reported events is intended as a civil complaint that fully highlights a serious social problem. The author himself does not believe he is exaggerating this, believing that this very aspect can be attributed, on the one hand, to the cause of most of our country's shortcomings and, on the other, to the phenomenon of the so-called "brain drain," which contributes to its severity.

Leonardo Lucarini, "Rewarding Merit?", Armando Editore, Rome, pp. 131, euro 14,00



We offer our readers excerpts from the Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 59th World Day of Peace - January 1, 2026. The Holy Father has repeatedly emphasized, and continues to emphasize, the call for an unarmed and disarming peace in recent times—also given international events. The rereading we propose can help us reflect on the Pope's text and treasure it even for our own simple lives.

TOWARDS AN UNARMED AND DISARMING PEACE

Pace be with you. This ancient greeting, still a daily occurrence in many cultures, was filled with new vigor on the lips of the risen Jesus on Easter evening. "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19, 21): this is the peace of the risen Christ, an unarmed peace and a disarming, humble, and persevering peace. It comes from God, God who loves us all unconditionally.

The Peace of the Risen Christ

It is the Good Shepherd who conquered death and broke down the walls of separation between human beings (cf. Eph 2:14), who gives his life for the flock and who has many sheep beyond the fold of the sheepfold (cf. Jn 10:11, 16): Christ, our peace. His presence, his gift, his victory reverberate in the perseverance of many witnesses, through whom God's work continues in the world, becoming even more perceptible and luminous in the darkness of the times. The contrast between darkness and light, in fact, is not merely a biblical image to describe the travail from which a new world is being born: it is an experience that passes

through us and overwhelms us in relation to the trials we encounter in the historical circumstances in which we find ourselves living. Indeed, seeing the light and believing in it is essential to avoid sinking into darkness. This is a need that Jesus' disciples are called to live in a unique and privileged way, but one that, in many ways, can find its way into the heart of every human being. Peace exists, it wants to dwell within us, it has the gentle power to enlighten and broaden our understanding, it resists violence and conquers it. Peace has the breath of eternity: while evil is shouted "enough," peace is whispered "forever." The Risen One has introduced us to this horizon. Peacemakers live in this presentiment, and, in the drama of what Pope Francis has called a "piecemeal third world war," they still resist the contamination of darkness, like sentinels in the night.

The opposite, that is, forgetting the light, is unfortunately possible: we then lose realism, giving in to a partial and distorted representation of the world, marked by darkness and fear. Many today call narrati-

ves devoid of hope, blind to the beauty of others, forgetful of the grace of God that always works in human hearts, however wounded by sin, realistic. Saint Augustine exhorted Christians to forge an indissoluble friendship with peace, so that, by guarding it in the depths of their spirit, they might radiate its luminous warmth all around them. Addressing his community, he wrote: "If you wish to draw others to peace, have it yourselves first; be steadfast in peace, above all. To enkindle it in others, you must have its light burning within you."

Whether we have the gift of faith or feel we don't, dear brothers and sisters, let us open ourselves to peace! Let us welcome and recognize it, rather than consider it distant and impossible. Before being a goal, peace is a presence and a journey. Even if it is thwarted both within and without, like a small flame threatened by the storm, let us preserve it without forgetting the names and stories of those who have witnessed it to us. It is a principle that guides and determines our choices. Even in places where only rubble remains and where despair

seems inevitable, today we find those who have not forgotten peace. Just as on Easter evening Jesus entered the place where the fearful and discouraged disciples gathered, so the peace of the risen Christ continues to pass through doors and barriers with the voices and faces of his witnesses. It is the gift that allows us not to forget good, to recognize it as victorious, to choose it again and together.

An Unarmed Peace

Shortly before being captured, in a moment of intense trust, Jesus said to those who were with Him: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." And He immediately added: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid" (Jn 14:27). The disturbance and fear could certainly have been related to the violence that would soon befall Him. More profoundly, the Gospels do not conceal that what dismayed the disciples was His nonviolent response: a path that everyone, Peter first, contested, but which the Master asked them to follow to the very end. Jesus' way continues to be a source of disturbance and fear. And He firmly repeats to those who would defend Him: "Put your sword back into its sheath" (Jn 18:11; cf. Mt 26:52). The peace of the risen Jesus is unarmed, because his struggle was unarmed, within precise historical, political, and social circumstances. Christians must become prophetic witnesses of this newness together, mindful of the tragedies in which they have too often been complicit. The great parable of the Last Judgment invites all Christians to act with mercy, aware of this (cf. Mt 25:31-46). And in doing so, they will find at their side brothers and sisters who, in different ways, have been able to listen to the pain of others and have internally freed themselves from the deception of violence.

Although many people today have hearts ready for peace, a great sense of impotence pervades them in the face of the increasingly uncertain course of events. Indeed, Saint Augustine already pointed out a particular paradox: "It is not difficult to possess peace. It is, at best, more difficult to praise it. If we want to praise it, we need skills that perhaps we lack; we search for the right ideas, we weigh the phrases. If, however, we want to have it, it is there, within our reach and we can possess it without any effort.

When we treat peace as a distant ideal, we end up not considering it scandalous that it

can be denied and that war is even waged to achieve peace. We seem to lack the right ideas, the considered statements, the ability to say that peace is near. If peace is not a reality experienced and to be protected and cultivated, aggression spreads into domestic and public life. In the relationship between citizens and governments, it is considered a fault that we are not sufficiently prepared for war, that we are not prepared to react to attacks, that we are not responding to violence. Far beyond the principle of legitimate defense, on the political level, this opposing logic is the most current aspect of a global destabilization that is becoming more dramatic and unpredictable every day. It is no coincidence that the repeated calls to increase military spending and the resulting choices are presented by many governments with the justification of the danger posed to others. Indeed, the dissuasive force of power, and, in particular, nuclear deterrence, embody the irrationality of a relationship between peoples based not on law, justice, and trust, but on fear and the rule of force. "Consequently," as Saint John XXIII wrote of his time, "human beings live under the nightmare of a hurricane that could break out at any moment with unimaginable force. For the weapons are there; and while it is difficult to believe that there are people capable of assuming responsibility for the destruction and suffering that a war would cause, it is not excluded that an unforeseeable and uncontrollable event could ignite the spark that sets the war machine in motion."

Well, in 2024, global military spending increased by 9.4% compared to the previous year, confirming the uninterrupted trend of ten years and reaching the figure of 2,718 trillion dollars, or 2.5% of global GDP. Furthermore, today, the new challenges seem to be met not only with the enormous economic effort for the Rearmament, with a realignment of educational policies: instead of a culture of remembrance, which preserves the awareness developed in the twentieth century and does not forget the millions of victims, communication campaigns and educational programs are promoted, in schools and universities, as well as in the media, which spread the perception of threats and convey a merely armed notion of defense and security.

However, "whoever truly loves peace also loves the enemies of peace." Thus, Saint Augustine recommended not burning bridges or persisting in rebukes, preferring the

path of listening and, as far as possible, engaging with the reasons of others. Sixty years ago, the Second Vatican Council concluded with the awareness of an urgent dialogue between the Church and the contemporary world. In particular, the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* drew attention to the evolution of warfare: "The characteristic danger of modern warfare is that it offers, as it were, an opportunity to those who possess the most advanced scientific weapons to commit such crimes, and, through a certain inexorable chain of events, can push men's wills to the most atrocious decisions. So that this never happens again in the future, the bishops of the world, gathered now, implore everyone, especially government leaders and supreme military commanders, to continually consider, before God and all humanity, the enormous weight of their responsibility.

Reiterating the appeal of the Council Fathers and considering the path of dialogue to be the most effective at every level, we note how further technological advances and the military application of artificial intelligence have radicalized the tragedy of armed conflicts. A process of de-responsibilization of political and military leaders is even emerging, due to the increasing "delegation" to machines of decisions regarding the life and death of human beings. This is an unprecedented destructive spiral of the juridical and philosophical humanism on which every civilization is based and by which it is protected. We must denounce the enormous concentrations of private economic and financial interests that are pushing states in this direction; But this is not enough if the awakening of consciences and critical thinking is not simultaneously fostered. The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* presents Saint Francis of Assisi as an example of such an awakening: "In that world filled with watchtowers and defensive walls, cities were experiencing bloody wars between powerful families, while the impoverished areas of the excluded peripheries grew. There, Francis received true peace within himself; he freed himself from every desire to dominate others, made himself one of the least, and sought to live in harmony with all." It is a story that wants to continue within us, and which requires us to join forces to contribute to a disarming peace, a peace born of openness and evangelical humility.

(continued)

The Melancholy of Saint Francis

The first saint we mention, from this perspective, is Saint Francis of Assisi. Although he has been, is, and will continue to be talked about this year, Paul Sabatier, in the Introduction to his valuable 1894 book, *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, writes, "Embellishments have made us forget the true Saint Francis, infinitely more beautiful" (Mondadori, p. 47): too many words, too much saying, perhaps distract us from accepting the recollection that Saint Francis himself is always capable of giving us..

From our perspective, however, it is essential not to distract ourselves from the scope and sense of the true impact that the young Francis experienced within himself, as a wealthy and bold man. His encounter with the leper certainly contributed to this. We cannot, however, undervalue what Pope Leo XIV wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation on Love for the Poor, *Dilexi te* (I Have Loved You), in the chapter "A Church for the Poor," in the section "Witnesses of Evangelical Poverty": "In the thirteenth century, faced with the growth of the city, the concentration of wealth, and the emergence of new forms of poverty, the Holy Spirit gave rise to a new type of consecration in the Church: the Mendicant Orders" (no. 63).

And it was also the period of clashes between cities, over the assertion of their autonomy or the supremacy of one part over the other: Perugia against Assisi, the bourgeoisie against the nobility, to the detriment of serfdom. It was the year 1202: the clash took place in the plains, at Ponte San Giovanni. And Francis? Francis was taken prisoner. Vito Cutro, in the precious text '*Madonna Povertà e Francesco d'Assisi*', points out: "His fighting spirit and enthusiasm for the glory of military honours, suffers the first crack that will become more evident after his release from prison, at the moment of wanting to undertake a new military expedition" (*Il Ventaglio*, p.53).

And P. Sabatier specifies that the agreement between the two warring parties was reached only a year later, in 1203.

And that, subsequently, "the prisoners held in Perugia were released. Francis returned to Assisi. He was 22 years old" (p. 68).

Brother Carlo Carretto in '*I FRANCESCO*' (Cittadella, Assisi-Messaggero, Padua) imagines this monologue about his time as a prisoner: "Prisoner: what a humiliation! During the year

of imprisonment in Perugia, I realized that war wasn't really my calling, but I didn't know what to do. What was left for me if I didn't want to be a merchant, and weapons, the kind that make blood flow, weren't suitable for me, such a dreamer?

It was a sad year. The prison was hard, even though my family, through their friends in Perugia, had managed to send me news and provisions. I fell ill.

I spent my days and nights thinking; I lived inside myself, sinking into the abyss of my own poverty and drowning in melancholy...

I, who later discovered joy, the true joy of living, must say that

during that time I savored all the melancholy of a young man who doesn't know where to turn and make decisions...

Back in Assisi I was embraced from head to toe by my mother, who, just to have me at home with her, was, I think, even happy to see me sick...

Pain had dug where a bad upbringing based on permissiveness and weakness had only hardened the ground.

I understood that the long illness had ultimately been a grace. It had served as the plow that overturns the earth, breaks it, and makes the outbreak of spring possible..." (pp. 21-22).

And Pope Leo XIV, in *Dilexi Te*: "Saint Francis of Assisi became the icon of this spiritual springtime. By embracing poverty, he wanted to imitate Christ, poor, naked, and crucified... His life was a continuous stripping from the palace to the leper, from eloquence to silence, from possession to total gift... His holiness sprang from the conviction that one can truly receive Christ only by giving oneself generously to one's brother" (n. 64).





La Cometa news

a cura di Concita De Simone

What joy. What fun. What joy. Always running with the ball at my feet, and Christ in my heart. For over thirty years, the Santa Caterina soccer school (linked, by proximity, to the SOM) has been a staple for boys and girls, girls and boys in the Appio Latino neighborhood. Professional stuff, yes, but one of welcome and community. From the first kicks of the ball by about fifteen teenagers invited by some parents—Pietro, Luca, and Angelo—on the pozzolana field made available to the parish by the Marianist Fathers, to the record 160 registered in 2016, the young people who have been part of this community of passion and generosity have reached the threshold of one thousand. Thanks to the intuition of Father Aldo Zega, who wasn't particularly fond of soccer but was a man of many, the Santa Caterina soccer school was immediately born as something different. Because there was no technical selection process for admission, the tryout that excludes; Because there was never the idea of competitive play, and therefore no A or B team, but all together, young soccer players, both talented and less talented; and also because there was no registration fee, but a small voluntary contribution used to purchase equipment. Not even a club uniform was ever mandatory; the only sense of belonging was always that of the slogan printed on the sticker album launched in 2012: "Simply passion." For soccer and for the human dimension, to be nurtured and cultivated through sport and togetherness. This is why Santa Caterina has always been an open soccer school. Girls, first and foremost, were included to play alongside the young soccer players when women's soccer wasn't yet in fashion. Thus, the space in Piazza Galeria has seen

Carolina, who later chose field hockey, and Ljuba, who later moved on to the "professional" schools of Romulea and Roma. But children of other religious faiths, Judaism or Islam, have also been welcomed as brothers and sisters. And without ever questioning the spiritual formation reserved for the Catholic priest, in a space between training and the Saturday match. "When people ask me what has made it possible for this institution to last and grow continuously," says the school's president today, "with non-professional coaches and on a dirt pitch that couldn't be played on due to the rain, I always answer the same thing: Santa Caterina is unique, both in passion and in nature: it doesn't call upon footballers, but upon little men and women. What he doesn't mention, as president of La Cometa Association, is the support the football school has provided over the years to the missions of La Cometa, the nonprofit organization founded in the early 2000s by the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy, who for decades hosted the community of Santa Caterina faithful in their chapel. From fundraising for wells in Africa to raising funds for earthquake victims in Amatrice, a strong bond. Its emblem is the group of children from the poor southeast of the world, gradually adopted over the years for educational and medical assistance. There were 12 of them in total: essentially an extended football team that has always played and run alongside the many children of Santa Caterina from afar.

Vincenzo Del Signore
Presidente Ass. Volontari
la Cometa Aps

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"Se molti uomini di poco conto, in molti posti di poco conto, facessero cose di poco conto, la faccia della terra potrebbe cambiare"

A bell for the Parish of Kesibere (Rwanda)



A precious gift has reached the Parish of Kesibere, Rwanda: a new bell, the fruit of the generosity of the community. and the closeness of the SOM community through donations to La Cometa. Placed on the bell tower overlooking the church, the bell will now mark moments of prayer and celebration, drawing the faithful together and strengthening the sense of belonging to the Christian community. This simple yet meaningful gesture represents a concrete sign of communion between the different missionary realities: a sound that transcends borders and unites hearts, testifying to how charity can become a voice calling to the hope and joy of the Gospel.



Sowing the Future in Lempira: The Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy in Gracias

In the mountainous department of Lempira, western Honduras, the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy run a shelter in Gracias that offers girls from remote villages an educational and humane welcome.

Aimed at students in the "Básicos" (middle school) level, the facility provides food, educational guidance, academic support, and tutoring, enabling young women to overcome isolation and poverty and access opportunities for personal growth. The initiative is part of a broader season of social ministry in the Diocese of Gracias, which over the past five years has launched ongoing projects such as the Hogar de la Esperanza (addiction recovery center), a nursery in Consolación, the Hogar Nuestra Señora de las Gracias (homeless center), and the Verbo Encarnado women's residence in Intibucá. These works embody a pastoral approach focused on human dignity and social change.

Supporting the Sisters' home means investing in a more just future: protecting, educating, and training the girls of Lempira is equivalent to sowing hope for entire communities. The Church, civil society, and people of good will are called to understand, value, and support this mission. And we want to be there!



From India: Two News Items, One Big Dream

Here are two important milestones for the SOM community in the tribal village of Shantinagar, India: we purchased a new jeep that will facilitate the transportation of people, materials, and access to essential services, connecting the village with nearby centers and supporting project activities.

At the same time, a new group of young women recently graduated from sewing classes, the result of one of the association's longest-running and most productive projects. The new graduates will receive tools and support to start small family businesses and put their acquired skills into practice. These steps strengthen the community's economic autonomy and social participation. Thanks to those who made this collective dream possible: supporters, volunteers, and the precious SOM!



Papamma's House Before and After...

Papamma, an Indian woman from Andhra Pradesh, was left homeless with AIDS. Thanks to the generous hearts of our supporters and the tireless work of the SOM on site, Papamma now has a welcoming, safe, and clean home: a space where she can be cared for, rest, and feel respected.

It's not just a shelter, it's a tangible embrace that rekindles hope and dignity. This project reminds us how solidarity can transform lives—and how together we can continue to stand by the most vulnerable.



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THOSE AFTERNOONS SPRING

... Because that little girl, normally intelligent, grew up interested in geography and history, and her father was an airplane pilot. Every time he returned from a distant trip, he would tell her about the places he had traveled for work. But every time he left, she awaited his return with a certain apprehension for the dangers that, nowadays, one runs when dealing with such a job: not only breakdowns, but even attacks, wars and wars...

And so it was that, during a spring afternoon in 2026, with little to study, she asked her father if he would tell her a little about the journey that Saint Francis had taken, when he met with the Arab Emir of his time. Her father, as was his wont, took advantage of those few hours to spend more time with the little girl.

And so it was that, during another

spring afternoon in 2026, feeling less inclined to study, she asked her mother to help her understand the difficulties one experiences when one moves house... when one has no home... when one begs for something to eat... when one is mocked and described as "crazy, crazy, crazy, like Saint Francis... because that's what my grandfather told me." And her mother took advantage of the opportunity, too, to spend a few more hours with her little girl.

And so it was that, during another spring afternoon in 2026, feeling like watching TV, that little girl turned on the TV, but... programs and programs dedicated to cooking and baking. Propaganda dedicated to advertising this and that product to eat or to use to appear to be what one is, when one wants nothing to do with what one is. And Grandma also took advantage of

the opportunity to be "alone, all alone with my little girl." Grandma told her that every time she felt like that.

And so it was that, during one of the last spring afternoons of 2026, having already read the chapter entitled "Chiara, My Sister" in Brother Carlo Carretto's book, the little girl felt a great desire to ask "my grandpa and no one else's" even more about Saint Clare.

And her grandfather began to tell her: "... she was beautiful. She had beautiful hair... Carlo Carretto has Francis say of Clare: 'I hadn't seen her often, but enough for her to appear on my horizon and recede like a stupendous dream'... And yet... and yet the first thing she accepted was knowing how to do without her hair..."

And her grandfather and grandmother told her again, that Chiara...

SERVANT OF GOD TERESA ORSINI

Mercy is love in action (VIII)

We continue, with the author's kind permission, the publication of the text "Servant of God Teresa Orsini: Mercy is love in action." This thesis, written as a graduate thesis, enabled Antonella Di Turi to earn a degree in Religious Sciences from the "Mons. A. Pecci" Institute of Religious Sciences at the Theological Faculty of Southern Italy in Matera.

The work in those years was intense, but the fruits of this hard work were not long in coming.

In 1834, five years after the princess's death, the first Superior General was appointed: Eleonora Bartolomucci, and the number of nuns who took vows grew to thirty-eight.

In the years that followed, around 1854, cholera spread, immediately drawing the attention of both civil and religious authorities. Because of their profession, the sisters were exposed to contagion, but they never allowed themselves to be influenced by it; by invoking Our Lady of Mercy, their protector, and fasting for five years on the eve of the feast of their patron saint, the danger providentially disappeared.

During the Second World War, Roman hospitals were overrun by war wounded. The workload, therefore, multiplied enormously.

But the sisters continued their work commendably, never denying moral and spiritual support, and necessary medical care. Soon, they reached

other hospitals, first in Rome, then throughout the rest of Italy, and finally abroad, extending their missionary spirit.

On February 7, 1966, under the guidance of the then Superior General, Sister Rosalia Borzi, five nuns, considered pioneers of missionary activity, left for the United States of America (New Jersey): they were entrusted with a maternity clinic.

Sisters Elisabetta Longhi, Gabriella Cadoni, and Paola Iacovone arrived in the small town of Chengalam, in Kerala, India. They were joined by about thirty young Indian women, thus bearing witness to their faith in Christ in their homeland. Subsequently, other communities of Hospitaller Sisters arose, providing assistance primarily to the poor, the sick, and even lepers.

Then came Madagascar. Cardinal Razafimahatratra and the civil authorities requested the Hospitaller Sisters' help to care for the sick, primarily in the city of Tananarive.

The missionaries' charitable work continued to bear fruit and to rejoice

in their initial successes. From 1974 to 1983, many young women officially entered the Congregation.

In addition to the joy of the Christian community, recognition also came from political authorities.

On September 13, 1963, the Minister of Health, the Hon. Angelo Giuseppe Iervolino, awarded the Institute of the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy the Gold Medal for "Merit in Public Health," uttering memorable words:

"[...] the Gold Medal, which I have the honor and joy of entrusting to your Institute, consecrates you, Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy, as Missionaries of religious, moral, familial, civil, social, political, and economic salvation for the sick to whom you have given your care... For this reason, all of us present here... applaud your work, and..., confirming our trust in you and renewing our admiration, we remind civil society (which sometimes mocks your apostolate and very often ignores you) that you are among the most shining gems of Christian civilization. We all express the hope that your Institute—preserving its distinctive character, spirit, and charitable works—will multiply its branches and be enriched with new foliage to gather under the shade of the tree new souls thirsting for good.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of its foundation in 1971, the

Institute received numerous other attestations of benevolence: the gold medal from the Mayor of Rome and the President of the Hospital Physiotherapy Institutes, the gold plaque from the President of the United Hospitals of Rome, and the honor "Pro Ecclesia et Romano Pontifice" from Pope Pius VI, with the flattering motivation:

"That the impetus for charity and sacrifice, which has always guided the members of this Institute, may find ever more solid and effective manifestations of zeal."

The Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy have continued their work, always following the rules imposed by the Constitutions.

They have always described themselves as the first female hospitaller religious congregation, born from the great spirit of the princess, but also from the pastoral solicitude of Pius VII, Leo XII, and Gregory XVI, who authorized their first steps by approving the Constitutions by which they have always adhered.

The Second Vatican Council, however, officially revised the Special Chapter opened in 1969 and approved the decree of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes on July 5, 1977. Since then, some regulations have been made adapting the fundamental laws of the Congregation to the new times, but the Spirit of the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy has never changed.

New liturgical books containing the Congregation's rituals were subsequently approved by the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship.

In 1990, the Constitutions underwent further amendments to adapt them to the new Code of Canon Law.

Strengthened by their missionary mandate and confident in the protection of their founder, Teresa Orsini, the nuns still serve throughout the world today, bringing a smile where there is only suffering and caressing those faces in which they see the image of Christ reflected.

Moreover, on May 16, 2011, the Sisters Hospitallers of Mercy began preparations for the 2nd Centenary of their foundation.

The fundamental theme of this journey is to create the conditions for memory to become an ever greater source of innovation, updating them with the times, always keeping alive the flame that the princess lit.

3.2. The Memory of Teresa Orsini in Gravina

The city of Gravina has learned and rediscovered the great work of Teresa Orsini, thanks to the work of Fr Carlo Caputo, pastor emeritus of the parish of San Domenico.

One of his missionary works in the church of SS. Pietro e Paolo began on Wednesday mornings, when he decided to meet with the mothers of catechism children, focusing on their cultural and spiritual formation.

Thus the first weekly meetings, began with a moment of prayer, continued with Bible study, and then delved deeper into the life and works of the Gravina Princess. This was followed by days of spirituality and volunteer work serving the poor and the sick.

Starting with this small group of



mothers, Bishop Caputo decided to found an association, taking as a role model his fellow citizen Teresa Orsini, whom he had heard about in Rome from a hospitaller nun.

Thus was born the Teresa Orsini Association, and its work was supported by Father Michele Capodiferro, Professor Enza Picciallo, and Deacon Enzo Savino. Later, the figure of Deacon Professor Antonio Tremamunno, who led the Eucharistic Adoration Day, was of great help.

The official approval of the Association took place, not coincidentally, on the same day commemorating the death of Servant Teresa Orsini: July 3, 2007, in accordance with Canon 301 of the Code of Canon Law, by Bishop Mario Paciello.

(continued)

A STRANGER, NAKED, HUNGRY, SICK...



Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – after 394), the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea, was appointed bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia by him. We have already discussed Gregory of Nyssa several times; it is worth remembering that the Second Council of Nicea (787 AD), also known as the Seventh Ecumenical Council, crowned him the "Father of the Fathers," having produced a remarkable theological literary work, biblical commentaries, biographies, and homilies on various subjects. Between the latter two, there are homilies on love for the poor; from the second of these, we transcribe an extract. This rereading is also taken from the "Anthology of the Church Fathers," edited by Lisa Cremaschi.

It is good to remember who we are when we reflect on others: we are men dealing with men, and in terms of our common nature, we are no different. The entrance into life is the same for all (cf. Wisdom 7:6), the way to live is the same for all: eating and drinking; the vital force is similar, the conformation of the bodies and the conclusion of life are the same (cf. Wisdom 7:6). Everything that has been made falls apart. There is no reality that is endowed with a solid structure; our vital breath, tied to the body, vanishes in the time of a bubble of water; and then we are extinguished, leaving not even a trace of this fleeting breath in life. On the steles, the stones, the inscriptions there is a memory of us, but not even these things remain forever. Refer all this to yourself. Do not be proud, as the Apostle says, but fear (Rom 11:20); perhaps you yourself are the one who imposes hardness on yourself. Tell me, do you flee the sick? What reproach do you have for him? The stranger, the naked, the hungry, the sick, the prisoner—and everything that is said in the Gospel—this person is for you. He wanders around, homeless and naked, and sick, destitute of everything due to the poverty caused by his illness. Deprived of a home of his own, he cannot even rent one because he lacks all the necessities of life, shackled as he is by illness. Here you have the opportunity to fulfill the commandments fully and make the Lord of all your debtor (cf. Prov 19:17) by showing yourself full of love for this man. Why then wage war on your own life? To refuse to remain united with the God of all is nothing other than to become violent towards oneself, for just as God comes to dwell in those who keep the commandment, so He withdraws where there is hardness.

Zarephath Focaccia

Who doesn't love focaccia, especially freshly baked? Just think: the one we're offering today is mentioned in the First Book of Kings (17:7-16) in the Bible, where the widow of Zarephath, during a famine, uses her last resources—a handful of flour and a little oil—to bake bread for the prophet Elijah, who was then miraculously multiplied by God.



Ingredients

- 150 g g whole-wheat barley flour;
- 150 g Khorasan wheat flour (Kamut)
- 20 g fresh brewer's yeast or 7 g freeze-dried brewer's yeast;
- 100 ml extra virgin olive oil + more for greasing;
- 1 medium-large white onion;
- fresh rosemary;
- warm water to taste;
- salt to taste (if you like, you can add a few flakes of coarse salt on top)

Method

Wash and peel the onions and chop them. In a bowl, combine the two sifted flours.

If using fresh yeast, dissolve it in a little warm water with 1/2 teaspoon of sugar; otherwise, add the freeze-dried yeast directly to the flours and mix.

Add the salt, oil, chopped onions, rosemary, and a drizzle of warm water, kneading until the dough forms a compact ball. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it rise in a warm place until doubled in size. Knead the dough again on a floured surface and roll it out with your hands on a baking sheet lined with greaseproof paper. Grease the surface and let it rise again in a warm



place until doubled in size. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and serve immediately! It's definitely better warm, but if you can resist, it's also good at room temperature, perhaps with whatever filling you like!

Tradition

Let's read directly from the Old Testament: (Kings 17:7-16) "After some days the stream dried up, because there was no rain in the land. The LORD spoke to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and settle there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide you with food." So he arose and went to Zarephath. As

he entered the city gate, behold, a widow was gathering sticks. He called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." As she went to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a morsel of bread too." She answered, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing

baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." Then Elijah said to her He said, "Do not be afraid; go, do as you have said, but first make a little cake for me and bring it to me; then you shall make some for yourself and your son, for thus says the LORD: 'The jar of flour will not run out, nor the jug of oil empty, until the LORD sends rain on the earth.'" So she went and did as Elijah had said. She and he and her son ate for many days. The jar of flour did not run out, nor did the jug of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke through Elijah."

WE DON'T NEED TIME, BUT WE NEED MORE ATTENTION TO CHANGE

Life offers new experiences every day

The time we have at our disposal is far from limited, quite the opposite: Lucius Annaeus Seneca already realized this two thousand years ago, even though his life expectancy was far shorter than ours. From a child's perspective, the time a grandparent experiences is a huge amount, and he's absolutely right to think so; every day we accumulate experiences, events happen, subtle changes occur that will ultimately determine what was once our future. Yet, it's not uncommon to hear complaints about the time we have, whether it's a day or an entire lifetime.

When we find ourselves saying, to ourselves or others, phrases like "It seems like yesterday that..." it's worth asking ourselves a simple question: how much water has passed under the bridge in the space of time between today and the event that seems like it happened just yesterday? Changes never affect the individual, but the entire community: family, work, relationships at various levels, and from there, new interests arise, old habits are lost, and different life cycles are experienced. Considering an event that happened many years ago as recent ignores the many changes that have occurred in the meantime, and this indicates a loss of awareness of the immense value of life, which offers everyone a multitude of experiences to enjoy throughout their earthly existence. Time is wasted when we don't pay attention to everything that happens, to the wonder of the alternating different phases of life, to the intense savoring of our own age, to the wonder of accompa-

*Non è vero che
abbiamo poco tempo,
la verità è che ne
perdiamo molto.*

(Lucio Anneo Seneca)

nying a child in his growth into a young man, a childhood in which we were both spectators and important role models. We underestimate the changes that have occurred, we remain attached to a distant past, but in doing so, we fail to allow ourselves to live each day to the fullest, relegating today to a faded yesterday.

Life always offers small changes that will generate larger ones, and failing to notice them is equivalent to wasting your time, letting it pass without paying attention to what happens while you live. Appreciating even the smallest event provides such a sense of fulfillment, a variety of experienced nuances, that what happened years ago seems not so recent in time... because in the meantime, if you look closely, our world has transformed quite a bit!

LAPPO

Tells the incredible stories of the woods



Hello, kids! Summer is beautiful, isn't it? Spending longer outdoors without feeling the cold, with the sunlight lasting until late at night, being able to run and play in the meadows - as you well know, we bunnies love it too... Furthermore, as you can imagine, the longer the days, the more opportunities we have to meet so many little animals, some of which remain almost invisible in the winter. This time I'll tell you about an encounter that was super-brief, just a flicker of light on the water and off we went, so much so that I don't even know how I managed to hear that faint little voice with my big ears, which in just a few seconds told me things I didn't know. What I've learned from this new friend of mine is important, and so I want you to know what she told me, because no voice of the woods should be lost... Listen to this.

THE WATER FLEA, PROUD OF ITS WORK

Every living being has its role in the world

While I was lounging near the pond, under the warm but not overly hot late afternoon sun, I noticed some quick darts on the water, like little flashes of lightning, so light they made no sound... it was a tiny animal, so small that I couldn't make out its infinitesimal hops: a water flea! Small but very lively, it must have seen the amazement in my wide

eyes and, between one leap and another, revealed to me that it had a very important job to do in the pond: carefully clean every millimeter of algae and dangerous bacteria that, if it weren't for their little fleas, would infest the water until it became cloudy and unhealthy for all the fish. So, even if her life passes unnoticed or unappreciated, she is proud of who she is, because she knows

that - as tiny as she is - she too plays her part in this world, just like every other living being.

From that day on, I understood that if even a tiny water flea knows it has an important role, then we all must be happy to be on this planet and contribute to making it a better place.

Every form of life is precious to the health of the entire planet.

Ogni forma di vita è preziosa per la salute di tutto il pianeta

Riots in Abidjan

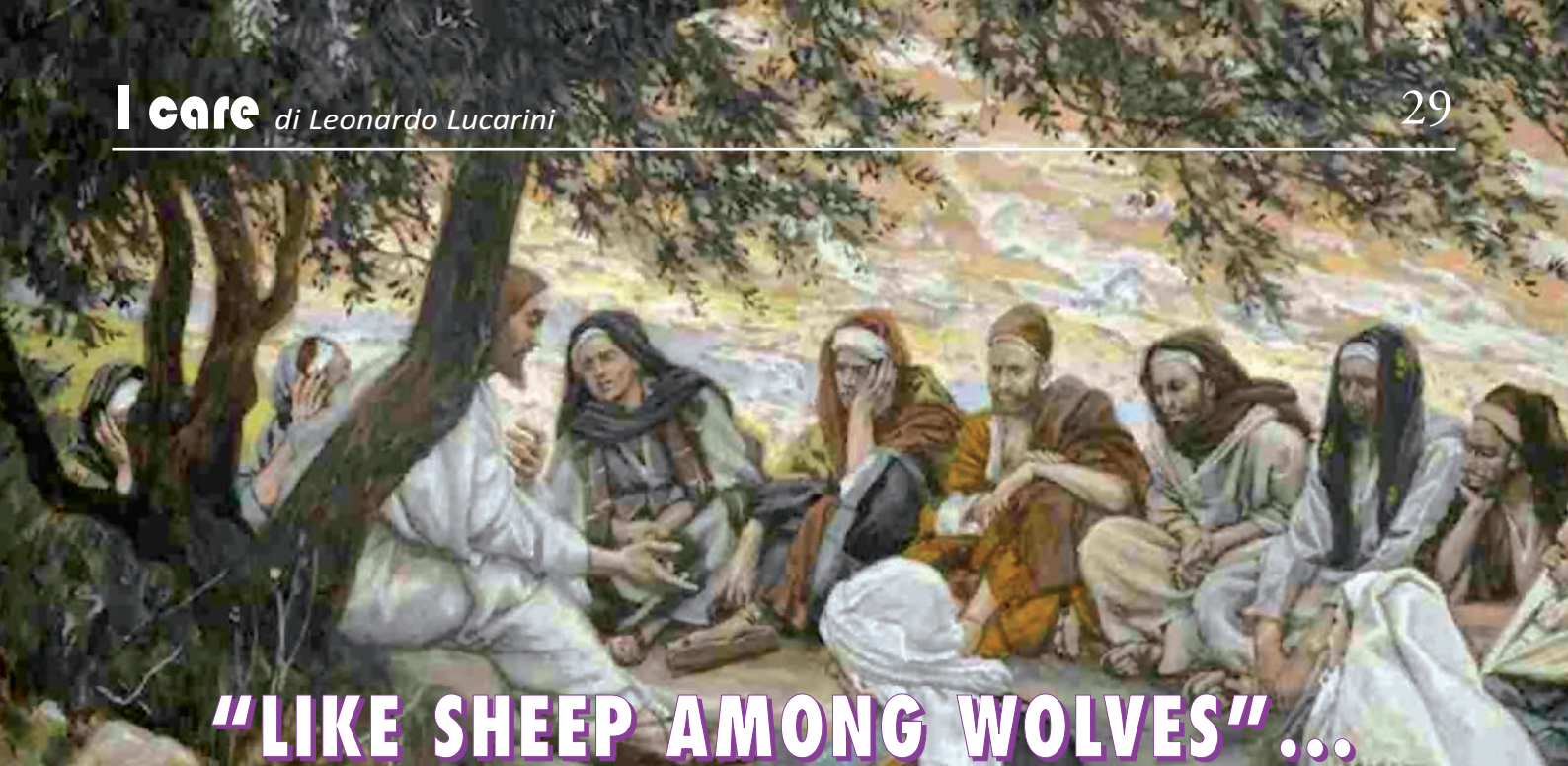
November 15, 2004

EUnrest related to the recent coup was ongoing; the suspension of flights had prevented our return to Italy on the scheduled date. Now, a couple of days late, at the Ambassador's urging, we were headed to the airport. Despite conflicting official information, we had been informed of a possible window for our repatriation, an opportunity we must seize promptly. Upon entering Abidjan, we were met by a wall of thousands of people waving placards with large photos of political leaders, unknown to us, and slogans that were difficult to interpret. Luckily, we are in the car marked "Hôpital Général d'Ayamé." I order the driver, unfortunately also white, to proceed slowly and with the utmost caution. I assume and force him to assume a condescending smile, which conveys our absolutely neutral intentions but somehow confirms, accompanied by gestures, our need to proceed... It seems to work. We cross like this, at a walking pace, with bated breath, but trying not to let our anxiety show, the approximately five kilometers of a real "human jam" that stands between us and the airport: exalted faces lean against the windows of the car, shouting incomprehensible phrases, some fists hit the hood with which we prudently open a path between man and man... I don't dare to think what would happen if we were to accidentally step on someone's toes... we barely keep our direction, without knowing for sure where we are passing, we rub like this, with forced indifference, along the entire side of a parked car... and finally we arrive in front of the airport... a narrow corridor between two lines of soldiers guards the access... I push Morena by the arm, we advance at a brisk pace... a hand reaches out, emerging from the barely contained crowd, and grabs Morena's bag... a soldier turns, delivers a fist and retrieves it, handing it back to the nurse.

It's 4 pm and once inside, we're completely unaware of what's happening outside the airport... The Ambassador gives me an idea, calling me to check on our condition. He urges me not to leave until a plane departs, and informs me that the crowd I've encountered 3 km east of the airport extends another 5 km west, toward the city center. I offer my best wishes to our driver (I'll learn during the night that he returned safely to Ayamé... the car has undergone a major makeover). Then, as I prepare for an indefinite wait, I ask Morena to tell me about her family, and I tell her about mine: at 5 am the next morning, we're boarding a plane for Paris.

Until then, I had only perceived an understandable aversion toward the former colonizers... as events unfolded, I had to acknowledge how burdensome and unclear the French "protection" still is over the Ivory Coast... and how it profoundly wounds the pride of its citizens. The events of the civil war, which broke out in September 2002, were triggered by a complex political and social situation, but certainly spilled beyond the country's borders, clearly revealing the games of the major international powers. The latest events, beyond the possible retaliatory gesture for the deaths of French soldiers, constitute a genuine violation of national sovereignty... the lighting of a fuse with unpredictable consequences... There was no need for this among the well-intentioned Ivorians I know, and among those who know how to make themselves known among them, by offering their help freely, even at "some" personal risk.





"LIKE SHEEP AMONG WOLVES" ... BUT WITH JESUS' "I CARE"

«**B**ehold, I send you out as sheep among wolves; therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.» (Mt 10:16). These are the words with which Jesus opens his missionary discourse to his disciples. Who knows if he was familiar with the fable of the wolf and the lamb by Phaedrus, his contemporary (15-20 BC - 50 AD). Indeed, 600 years earlier, the Greek writer Aesop had devised it as a lesson against arrogance and injustice, and judging by the simple and concrete clarity of its timeless morality, we cannot theoretically rule out that he himself was inspired by some earlier popular tale. The image was therefore undoubtedly widespread and effective, and in using it, Jesus wanted to forcefully emphasize that the mission he entrusted to his disciples was extremely difficult. He had indeed clearly warned them: "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake..."

Here too, there is a certain assonance with the consideration Phaedrus makes at the end of his text: "This fable was written because of those men who oppress the innocent with false excuses."

Unfortunately, this is the spectacle we are witnessing "live," and we can perhaps trace it back, among other things, to the meeting between Trump and Putin in Anchorage. During which, behind the scenes, a sort of tacit "non-interference" between the strong at the expense of the weak seems to have materialized... a mutual recognition between wolves and the realization of the possibility of an advantage, at least temporary, in the simple division of the spoils, limiting oneself at most to mere verbal skirmishes. We can also place in this perspective the words with which US President Donald Trump harshly attacked Pope Leo XIV, calling him "weak," "terrible at foreign policy," and "very liberal," adding "I'm not a big fan of his," and even ending by

stating that instead of criticizing him, he should be grateful to him because: "without me, he wouldn't be Pope."

On that very occasion, Jesus' reassuring promise, his "I care" for all the oppressed, seemed to come true: "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you are to say, for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you."

And here, in fact, are the words of Pope Leo who, taking up the recommendation "therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves," calmly responded: "I am not afraid of Trump and his administration. I do not want a debate with him. I will continue to speak out against war." (...) "Too many people are suffering. Too many innocents continue to be killed. It is the path of peace that I point out to all the world's leaders, so that they may cease their weapons."



Saint Francis. 800 years and still going strong...

The world's powerful consider global conflict an inevitable fate, the only means to resolve international disputes; rearmament is almost a dangerous but unavoidable game of escalation; and the deaths of thousands of innocents are an unfortunate but acceptable consequence of the struggle for global economic and political supremacy.

We've come to this!

The fear of war is once again making itself felt, and so is life, the example of Saint Francis, 800 years after his death. His figure today is more alive than ever in the present and materializes as the only lifeline in a world teetering on the brink of collapse. The reasons are simple: Francis lived in an era not so different from our own, characterized by hatred and violence, which he opposed with a substantial supply of "ammuni-

tion" such as fraternity, dialogue, and hope as rearmament, in the belief that peace could not be achieved except through the reduction of hatred, mutual understanding, and the recognition of others as brothers and sisters.

Themes so distant from the international and sovereignist "direction" that aims to govern the world like a long game of risk, based solely on the logic of profit at all costs and in contempt of any form of international law, as current events demonstrate. 800 years ago, Saint Francis was able to offer a new approach to the difficulties of existence, based on the values of tolerance and respect. The same values that today should form the foundation for lasting peace.

It is in this perspective that, 800 years after his death, his memory is as alive

and present as ever. And so is his example. Trust, sobriety, and openness toward others are the only values that, in a context marked by multilateral crises and a widespread sense of confusion, can provide the "secret weapon" capable of achieving the unattainable.

Celebrating this anniversary does not mean taking refuge in the past, but rather experiencing the present differently. The memory of Saint Francis does not offer immediate solutions to the problems of the 21st century, but it points to a direction: returning to the essential, putting Christ back at the center, rediscovering fraternity as a political, social, and spiritual value. The powerful will not understand this, but young people will.

They have already done it, or are doing it. Let's start again with them!

Active Life at Residenza Maria Marcella

Residenza Maria Marcella (RMM) is much more than a simple retirement home: it is a vibrant place, where approximately 140 residents share moments of socialization, well-being, and participation every day. Here, care for the elderly is also reflected in a rich weekly program of activities designed to stimulate body, mind, and, above all, soul.

The week begins and ends with gentle exercise. Mondays and Fridays, led by Sister Sara, offer valuable opportunities to maintain mobility and stimulate the body in a safe way. Tuesdays are dedicated to music: together with volunteer Mario, our residents gather to sing as a group, sharing emotions and memories. Wednesdays are reserved for breathing exercises, which promote relaxation

and improve lung capacity. On Thursdays, under the guidance of Silvia, guests participate in reading sessions that stimulate the mind and encourage dialogue. On Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m., singing rehearsals take place in preparation for the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, a deeply felt moment that unites spirituality and community.

This weekly program represents a harmonious balance of physical, cognitive, and relational activities. Each program is designed to enhance the residents' abilities and strengthen their sense of belonging, helping to make life in the Residence more active, participatory, and meaningful.

At the end of each month, our facility hosts a special event dedicated to cele-

brating our residents' birthdays. It is an eagerly awaited occasion, a moment of joy, sharing, and conviviality that strengthens the sense of community. The party brings together guests, staff, volunteers, and other guests and relatives in a serene and family-like atmosphere. Each participant contributes by bringing something to share: sweets, drinks, snacks, or carefully prepared small dishes. This simple gesture makes the celebration even more authentic and engaging. Throughout the celebration, music, dancing, smiles, and warm greetings abound, creating a festive atmosphere that makes every birthday unique and special. It's a way to value each person, celebrating together not only an anniversary, but also the pleasure of being together.



We are people, not producers

When we talk about the wealth of a people or a nation, one of the first economic terms we use is GDP, the Gross Domestic Product.

GDP could be said to be the quintessential indicator of a country's economic health. The economic consequence of analyzing production is that, based on its positive or negative trend, people are better off or worse off.

In a certain sense, this is true: an increase in GDP, and therefore an increase in production, is a positive factor for the entire country. The more production there is, the more wealth is generated, the better off we are. It is not incorrect to say that an increase in wealth within a country is a positive factor that positively impacts people's lives; the error lies in speaking of production and wealth in an absolute sense, removing humanity and the meaning of work from this process, dehumanizing it. Work, in fact, is not an end exclusively to production, but is a tool for the fulfillment of each person's vocation (cf. John Paul II).

The mistake, then, is to use GDP as a measure of individual happiness, going against the very nature of the indicator, which is "macroeconomic," meaning it looks at the whole (a nation, not individuals), while failing to exami-

ne the detail, that is, the individual, either from an economic or social perspective.

Then the mistake becomes to judge the person essentially as an "individual who produces," with the terrible consequence that if the person doesn't produce, they are simply not useful.

But how is it possible to reduce the human being to economic production, forgetting their value as a person, not as a producer?

The problem is not the economy itself, but judging everything from a productive perspective, a mindset that then extends beyond the sphere of work to enter the dynamics of everyday relationships. Yet not everything that is human and that does good is measurable, as the famous film "Dead Poets Society" reminds us: "Medicine, law, economics, engineering are noble professions, necessary for our sustenance. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are the things that keep us alive."



TESTIMONIANZA DAL MONDO SOM

NUNS HELP COMBAT DRUG CRISIS IN NORTHEASTERN INDIA



Hospitaller Sr. Merin Lukose, the director of Orsini Care Home at Bongaigaon town in Assam in northeastern India, conducts an art competition in connection with the International Day against Drug Abuse, held annually on June 26.

Mangalore, India — 9 Aprile 2026

Sudipta Das was 13 when a friend introduced her to cannabis. She struggled with addiction until she met a Catholic sister three years ago. "I was in a very bad state, mentally and physically, when I came to Orsini home where Sr. Merin Lukose treated me with love and care," said the 23-year-old woman from the northeastern Indian state of Assam.

Das is among more than 1,000 substance abuse patients helped by Orsini Care Home, managed by Sr. Merin's congregation — the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy — at Bongaigaon, a town in Assam state. Assam is considered the gateway to this region, which tops the country in substance abuse cases.

Sr. Merin Lukose, 57, said they opened the center in 2010 to confront growing drug usage among youth. The region,

which shares international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal, acts as a major transit route for heroin and synthetic drugs. The area is also a major drug consumer and production hub, Sr. Merin Lukose told Global Sisters Report.

She quoted a 2019 government report that said opioids are the most commonly used drug in the northeastern region. Methamphetamines, Cannabis and



Patients of the Orsini Care Home participate in a yoga and meditation session as part of the treatment program at the facility in Bongaigaon, Assam state

other synthetic drugs are also widely used there. According to the report, 22.1% people in Arunachal Pradesh used opioids, 25.67% in Mizoram, 25.22% in Nagaland, 14.22% in Manipur and 2.9% in Assam. Opioids, such as heroin and opium, are natural, synthetic or semisynthetic drugs that bind to receptors in the brain to reduce moderate-to-severe pain.

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Under such challenging circumstances, the Orsini Care Home has successfully treated people addicted to alcohol and various types of drugs, clinically known as substance use disorder, said Sr. Merin Lukose, who has served the center for more than a decade. According to Lukose, several congrega-

tions work in northeastern India, but only a few are involved in drug prevention and treatment services. The center is named after Princess Teresa Orsini Doria, who founded the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy congregation in Rome in 1821. The congregation's mission is to take care of the sick, elderly and needy. Das said Orsini's friendly environment and staff's personal care helped her recover. Sr. Merin "was like a

mother to me and I experienced real healing with her personal and professional care," Das told GSR. The Orsini Home now has some 40 patients — men and women — from all states in the region.

Sr. Merin Lukose said the center follows a treatment plan that helps drug users self-reflect and change their lifestyle. "Our motto is 'Realization, Recovery and Dignity,'" she added.

The care model uses yoga and meditation, therapeutic sessions, medicine, input sessions, counseling, group therapy, gardening, outdoor games, evening prayers and follow-up sessions.

But when the patients relapse, the sisters feel frustrated. Relapse is the nature of this disease, and we have to be patient, empathetic, caring and hopeful, if we have to survive in this field," she said.

Das, who has had three lapses, said she took different drugs with alcohol and tobacco during her addiction. "It is a common trend that people take whatever drug is available," she said, adding that she has vowed to remain sober after the latest treatment.

Bijoy Wary, who was on a follow-up visit to the Orsini home, said the treatment helped him kick addiction three years ago. "The therapy team helped me deal with my grief and depressive thoughts



Hospitaller Sr. Merin Lukose conducts a therapeutic session for the residents of the Orsini Care Home with substance use disorder at Bongaigaon, a town in the North Eastern Indian state of Assam



Hospitaller Sr. Merin Lukose and her superior, Sr. Juliana Mathew (left), plant a tree on the World Environment Day with young residents of Orsini Care Home at Bongaigaon, Assam state in northeastern India.

that strengthened me to give up drugs completely," the 43-year-old government employee told GSR.

Suor Merin Lukose said they sometimes face threats from drug peddlers and even her patients. "I was beaten up, kicked and verbally abused by my patients as they struggled with withdrawal symptoms. But they cooperated with me eventually," she said.

Once a woman hit Lukose hard on the head when she tried to stop the woman from running away from the center. She had to be hospitalized after being knocked unconscious. "Such incidents are common when we work with young people with substance use disorder," she said. "It is a brain disease which affects their thoughts, feelings and behavior." Her attacker is now leading a happy life in her native state of Arunachal Pradesh. "The threats have strengthened us further," she added.

Despite such challenges the Orsini Care Home's success rate is more than 60%, said Sr. Nithya Victor, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Vierzehenheiligen and one of Sr. Merin's two companions. The other is Franciscan Clarist Sr. Jessy Maria.

Victor, who joined the center three years ago, said she enjoys working with the patients.. "Moreover, early initiation

to drugs is common that makes addiction faster," Victor said.

North Eastern India is home to more than 200 diverse and culturally rich tribes. Since the region's tribal culture is female-dominated, women take more time than men for treatment and recovery, Victor told GSR. Currently, the center has 11 full-time staff including the sisters, and a few part-time doctors. The Hospitaller Sisters of the local community also help Sr. Merin Lukose as volunteers.

Dusu Loder, an employee of the

Arunachal Pradesh government who was treated at the center for alcoholism, said the home's "loving and professional care" has helped him remain sober for the past 18 months. "Alcohol is part of life for most people in my state, the government supplies tax-free liquor," the 39-year-old man said. The Orsini Care Home is also involved in prevention programs that conduct awareness classes in educational institutions and villages with the help of people in recovery and community leaders.

Sr. Merin Lukose said the center is also involved in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, which is linked with unprotected sex and needle sharing among drug users.

The Bongaigaon district administration honored Sr. Lukose on International Women's Day for her services in drug prevention and treatment. Lukose was also honored on June 25, 2025, International Drug Awareness Day, when she received the Best Performance Award from the Ecolink International Institute for her community awareness programs.

Lukose, who has applied for funds from the government, said the center faces a severe funds shortage, but continues their work trusting in the Lord.

"The mission to combat substance abuse is life-threatening and skills and professionalism are required to address the menace," she said.



Residents of the Orsini Care Home at Bongaigaon, Assam state in northeastern India, participate in an HIV/AIDS awareness rally on Dec. 1, 2025, World HIV/AIDS Day.

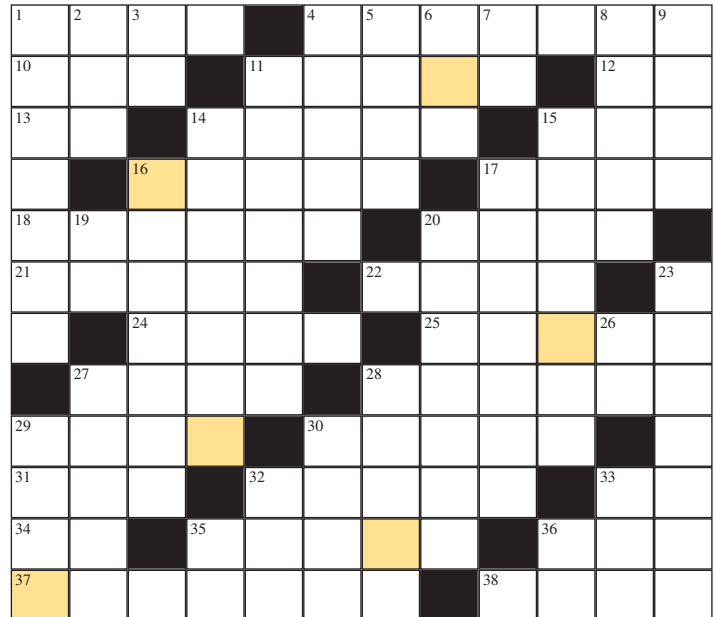
Anagrammando le lettere evidenziate, scoprirete il Gandolfo dove si trova una nota residenza pontificia.

ORIZZONTALI

1 - Quando si rompe, si ingessa. 4 - Togliere le spie-gazzature. 10 - Roma senza fine. 11 - Rifugio alpino. 12 - Parati senza pari. 13 - A Boston non è out. 14 - Fa danni nel guardaroba. 15 - Vale insieme. 16 - Il Maltese dei fumetti. 17 - È opposta alla poppa. 18 - Atto da villano. 20 - Era un grande lago asiatico. 21 - Gira intorno al Sole. 22 - Ente turistico. 24 - Slancio di avvio. 25 - Un comune cereale. 27 - La celeste dell'opera. 28 - Là dove la strada si fa più ampia. 29 - Un popolarissimo gruppo musicale svedese. 30 - Girano sotto il veicolo in movimento. 31 - Temono il codice. 32 - Accoppia i buoi nel lavoro. 33 - Fine di superbi. 34 - L'alieno che... telefona casa. 35 - È stellato nelle notti serene. 36 - Un battito di pendola. 37 - Lo è un abitante di Damasco. 38 - Il Renato che canta Mi vendo.

VERTICALI

1 - Scrisse l'Orlando furioso. 2 - Il regista Howard. 3 - Temperatura Media. 4 - Artigiano che prende le misure e cuce. 5 - Arbusto aromatico. 6 - La Nazionale sui tabelloni olimpici. 7 - Centro di Patrasso. 8 - Il Casadei del liscio. 9 - Ha pendici fertillissime. 11 - La giornalista Palombelli. 14 - Estremamente calda. 15 - Può crearlo una bomba. 16 - La zona di Cuba e Haiti. 17 - Lo è un affare personale. 19 - Fondo di frange. 20 - Somigliante, affine. 23 - Estremamente disordinato. 26 - Ci seguono nel dancing. 27 - Le conifere per il Natale. 28 - È calpestato da tutti. 29 - Fece ingelosire Efesto. 30 - Il niente... del croupier. 32 - Ma sì, proprio così!. 33 - Spaccio di aperitivi. 35 - La seconda consonante. 36 - Quello bianco è pregiato.



RIFLETTERE SORRIDENDO...



Tra chi invierà la soluzione del cruciverba entro il **31 agosto 2026** verranno sorteggiati graditi premi. Potete inviare le vostre risposte al seguente indirizzo:

Concita De Simone

Via Latina, 30 - 00179 Roma

c/o Rivista Accoglienza che Cresce

e-mail: accoglienza@consom.it

Vincitori numero 1/2026:

Giulia Romano - Vercelli

Soluzione cruciverba numero precedente: **Passione**

1	T	A	3	R	4	P	E	5	A	6	S	7	C		
8	O	L	I	O				9	L	10	A	P	I	11	N
12	M	E	S					13	A	Z	T	E	C	O	
14	B	X			15	S	P	A	T	Z	L	E			
16	R	A			17	B	A	R	R	I	O				
	A			18	F	U	C	S	I	A			19	G	
20	I	21	M			22	S	H	I	C			23	C	E
24	D	E			25	A	E			26	E	27	W	A	N
28	E	M	29	E	R	S	30	E			31	E	V	O	
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