



JOURNEYING TOGETHER



HAPPY EASTER 2016

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"THE RETURN"

Arcabas is an artist who painted a pictorial cycle of eight panels dedicated to the Pilgrims of Emmaus. This is the last one, "THE RETURN".

The door is wide open, like their hearts and minds, which have been opened to hope after their disappointment and bitterness. The table is still laid: there are dishes, cutlery, glasses still full, a soup-tureen, candles blown out, the tablecloth in disorder and napkins abandoned, a chair knocked over... everything tells us about a rushed exit, because the door is still wideopen and outside one can see a clear and intense blue sky which is dotted by stars.

The threshold is open just like the hearts and minds that have been opened to hope and understanding. There is no time to comment on what has happened, but to proclaim it to their brothers in Jerusalem. The Lord is really risen and mysteriously accompanies his disciples.

The journey starts once again, not so much to escape from disappointment but to proclaim that Jesus is our travelling companion and the source of our hope.

May the encounter with the Lord encourage each one of us, like the disciples of Emmaus,
to proclaim our joy.

May the encounter with the Risen Lord become mission for us,
so as to communicate to everyone what has warmed our hearts.



Best Wishes! Happy Easter!

Adele Cremonesi - President-Coordinator

"I am Risen and always with you;
You laid your hand on me;
your wisdom is marvellous!"

Easter 2016

Dear Lay Canossians and Friends,

Happy Easter!

His empty tomb surprises us too just as it surprised the women and his disciples, who ran to see it. It strengthens our fidelity and our hope, it revives our lives once again.

**"I am no longer here ... I am Alive, I am Risen
and I am with you!"**

Today, through His gift, everything is recreated, our faith is consolidated, our relationships are re-qualified in trust, our energies are renewed through rebuilding our fraternity and sharing with everyone the surprises of the Gospel and the unheard-of mercy of the Father.

"Let us walk" with our brothers and sisters towards the One who is "Life" and, touched and attracted by His Light, may we always become givers of joy and witnesses through the strength of His Resurrection, messengers of mercy and charity so that the world may believe.

**Alleluia,
Easter Joy!**

Sr Anne Tan

Sr Annamaria Babbini

Sr Elma Escalante

Sr Sandra Maggiolo

Sr Tina Baiguera

Works of Mercy



Dear Lay Canossians,

When I was a child I used to go to Catechism and they used the text of Pius X. We had to learn everything by heart. One of the advantages of learning the catechism by heart was that it summarised in short concepts the great values of Christian life. Christianity needs to have principles but also a method to remember them easily so that the mind, heart and will can be involved at the appropriate moment. Memory is a great instrument in remembering and connecting the events of life with the proclamation of Gospel teaching.

I liked the title of a small book edited by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization entitled THE CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY. I stopped for a moment and tried to remember all the works of mercy. THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY focuses on the situations where mercy can be realised. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like “a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both ‘new and old’” (Mt 13:52). Magdalene often mentioned the term mercy as a brief refrain and asked her Sons to be “worthy ministers of His mercies” (Plan of the Foundation of the Sons of Charity). Let us remember the old catechism and conjugate it with St. Magdalene’s charism.

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

- Ø Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty. There is no need to explain these two corporal works because their meaning is evident; they are a response to basic human needs. Magdalene was well known in Verona because the poor “always received something to eat”. Even though we collaborate in our parishes with Caritas, which provides support for situation like this, let us continue to give with faith, knowing that “Every time you do this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40) We, too, hope to receive the same compliments that St. Magdalene received and that no one may go away without having received something.
- Ø Clothe the naked. There are often collections of clothing, their distribution, campanha do agasalho, jumble sales, etc. ... the one who takes on Christ’s sentiments, clothes his brothers and sisters who represent Him
- Ø Shelter the homeless. Often this work requires a more complex organisation,

structures and bureaucracy. The lay person lives in society and can insert himself in social organisations which, today, have been set up in all regions and cities, especially in Europe, because of the tragedy of migrants. We should be willing to risk more in this situation, just as Magdalene did taking part in various fraternities in Verona and activated charitable initiatives, using the today's term "networks". Magdalene moved around her city observing the conditions of poverty and tried to respond to needs. She collaborated with others in responding to these challenges. Let us give our concrete response too.

- Ø Visit the sick. We carry out this work of mercy in the pastoral assistance of the sick, home visits, Eucharistic ministers, and this ministry of charity was Magdalene's first love. Let us be aware of the needs of our families and assist those in need, especially the sick.
- Ø Visit the imprisoned. We are not very present in this activity. If we listen to our inner voice, we could really dedicated ourselves to this ministry. In the world there are many inhuman conditions in prisons. We cannot resolve the problem of prisoners' conditions, but we can at least bring a smile where smiles no longer exist.
- Ø Bury the dead. Relatives have the duty to bury their dead, but we must do this with love. This is the great difference. Being present at these times of great suffering confirms our solicitude towards the deceased person, our solidarity with the relatives and our disinterested concern, since we are not a relative, but our heart is greater than that of a relative.

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

- Ø Counsel the doubtful. Listening to the doubtful, dedicating time to them, clarifying the truths of life, faith, the Church and human existence is a service that only the future will show how precious it was.
- Ø Instruct the ignorant. A person is ignorant when he "is not aware of the values of life". Not being aware of them means not valuing them and thus not applying them to one's life. Dedicating time to eliminating this ignorance means having a heart that has recognised this inner poverty and offers help.
- Ø Admonish sinners. This seems to be a useless work, but we cannot know how grace works in the heart of the sinner, bringing about a change of life. Let us always place hope even in the one who has made a mistake.
- Ø Comfort the afflicted. In times of affliction we always search for understanding, and consolation because we feel suffocated by anguish. Let us have an open heart ready to listen to the affliction of every brother and sister dedicating to them time so as to help restore peace to sorrowful hearts.
- Ø Forgive offences. Non forgiveness has a devastating effect on our hearts and those of

others. Resentment, hate and revenge take root in our refusal to forgive the offences we have received. We want to respond to evil with evil. Forgiveness always brings good fruit. Violence can only be overcome by forgiveness, anger is overcome by goodness.

Ø Bear wrongs patiently. Those who do wrong do not always recognise their errors and so they do not change their ways. Here it is necessary to be patient and not worsen the situation, trying to conserve a positive attitude that encourages change.

Ø Pray for the living and the dead. Only the grace of the Lord touch the conscience of a person. It is a good thing to pray for the living and for our deceased relatives and friend since we do not know how much help they need to be joined to the Father.

Thus, how many things do we have to do? It is true, there are so many situations in which mercy acts. To have a merciful heart means recognising that around us there are so many needs. Do you wish to find a person willing to help you? Always ask someone who is very busy and you will find they are ready!!! A person that does not help, even if he has the time, always finds excuses to say he cannot help.

The Charism of St. Magdalene is within the heart of the Lay Canossian. She has invited us to nurture a "most generous spirit". This "most generous heart" will help us, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, to be attentive to the 14 Works of Mercy which we brought back to mind by remembering the catechism.

I express my best wishes for a Happy Easter, not mine, but those who, during Lent have incarnated the most generous spirit of Jesus. They will express themselves the same wishes for a Holy and Joyful Easter, because their lives may shine in the Risen Lord!

Christ has risen al l el uia!



P. Giorgio Valente - Superiore Generale

I am searching for a Cross

Thus it is every Easter; kneeling, we are present at the foot of that wood, carrying all our burden of sorrow, that sorrow which arrives on tiptoe or through its blighting force, that sorrow which lacerates, tears, fogs eyes and heart.

We lay down our burden before that Man on the Cross with open arms and pierced hands ... so as to gather together the crumbs of hope.



"My friend, I am looking for a cross. Look, I have a Christ without a cross, that I bought at an antique shop. Mutilated and so beautiful. But not on the cross. So I had an idea. Perhaps you have a cross without Christ. The one only you know.

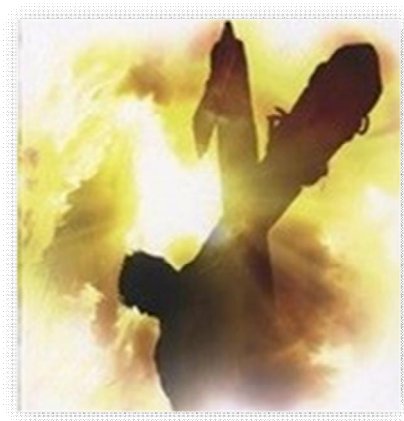
My Christ cannot rest because He has not got a cross.

You do not like this cross because it lacks Christ. Why don't give your empty cross to Christ? Both of us would profit. You will see. You have a solitary cross, empty, icy, fearful, senseless, a cross without Christ. I quite understand you: suffering is illogical. I don't understand how you could put up with it for so long. A cross without Christ is torture, the logical beginning of desperation. Don't suffer alone. Come on, give me this empty and solitary cross. Give me it.

In exchange I will give you a mutilated Christ, restless, without a cross.

Your cross is no longer only yours, at the same time it is also that of Christ.

Come on, my friend, take your cross, your cross with Christ. You will no longer be alone in your suffering. There will be two to carry it and share the weight".



So every Easter, on our knees, we remain before that tomb to listen to those same words. Words that penetrate the heart of life, of sorrow and of death. Words that become life and hope and strength. Words that transform and transfigure. Even sorrow, even death. Words that restore joy. A joy and hope that should shine out on the faces and in the lives of all Christians. An obstinate and stubborn hope we are given at Easter, a hope that must become more and more visible in daily actions of tenderness and gratuitousness. Celebrating Easter means sowing life, joy and peace. Celebrating Easter means bringing about the resurrection of the world.

Don Mirko Bellora.



XLIX WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2016 ***Overcome Indifference and Win*** ***Peace***

We continue to trust that 2016 will see us all firmly and confidently engaged, on different levels, in the pursuit of justice and peace. Peace is both God's gift and a human achievement. As a gift of God, it is entrusted to all men and women, who are called to attain it.

Sadly, war and terrorism, accompanied by kidnapping, ethnic or religious persecution and the misuse of power, marked the past year from start to finish. In many parts of the world, these have become so common as to constitute a real "third world war fought piecemeal". Yet some events of the year now ending inspire me, in looking ahead to the new year, to encourage everyone not to lose hope in our human ability to conquer evil and to combat resignation and indifference.

They demonstrate our capacity to show solidarity and to rise above self-interest, apathy and indifference in the face of critical situations.

Along these same lines, with the present Jubilee of Mercy I want to invite the Church to pray and work so that every Christian will have a humble and compassionate heart, one capable of proclaiming and witnessing to mercy.

It is my hope that all of us will learn to "forgive and give", to become more open "to those living on the outermost fringes of society - fringes which modern society itself creates", and to refuse to fall into "a humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine which prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism!"

There are many good reasons to believe in mankind's capacity to act together in solidarity and, on the basis of our interconnection and interdependence, to demonstrate concern for the more vulnerable of our brothers and sisters and for the protection of the common good.

This attitude of mutual responsibility is rooted in our fundamental vocation to

fraternity and a life in common. Personal dignity and interpersonal relationships are what constitute us as human beings whom God willed to create in his own image and likeness. As creatures endowed with inalienable dignity, we are related to all our brothers and sisters, for whom we are responsible and with whom we act in solidarity.

Lacking this relationship, we would be less human. We see, then, how indifference represents a menace to the human family. As we approach a new year, I would ask everyone to take stock of this reality, in order to overcome indifference and to win peace.

Building a culture of solidarity and mercy to overcome indifference

Solidarity, as a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion, calls for commitment on the part of those responsible for education and formation.

I think first of families, which are called to a primary and vital mission of education. Families are the first place where the values of love and fraternity, togetherness and sharing, concern and care for others are lived out and handed on. They are also the privileged milieu for transmitting the faith, beginning with those first simple gestures of devotion which mothers teach their children.

Teachers, who have the challenging task of training children and youth in schools or other settings, should be conscious that their responsibility extends also to the moral, spiritual and social aspects of life. The values of freedom, mutual respect and solidarity can be handed on from a tender age. Speaking to educators, Pope Benedict

XVI noted that: "Every educational setting can be a place of openness to the transcendent and to others; a place of dialogue, cohesiveness and attentive listening, where young people feel appreciated for their personal abilities and inner riches, and can learn to esteem their brothers and sisters. May young people be taught to savour the joy which comes from the daily exercise of charity and compassion towards others and from taking an active part in the building of a more humane and fraternal society."

Communicators also have a responsibility for education and formation, especially nowadays, when the means of information and communication are so widespread. Their duty is first and foremost to serve the truth, and not particular interests.

For the media "not only inform but also form the minds of their audiences, and so they can make a significant contribution to the education of young people.

It is important never to forget that the connection between education and communication is extremely close: education takes place through communication, which influences, for better or worse, the formation of the person."

Communicators should also be mindful that the way in which information is obtained and made public should always be legally and morally admissible.

Peace: the fruit of a culture of solidarity, mercy and compassion

While conscious of the threat posed by a globalization of indifference, we should also recognize that, in the scenario I have

just described, there are also many positive initiatives which testify to the compassion, mercy and solidarity of which we are capable. Here I would offer some examples of praiseworthy commitment, which demonstrate how all of us can overcome indifference in choosing not to close our eyes to our neighbour. These represent good practices on the way to a more humane society.

There are many non-governmental and charitable organizations, both within and outside the Church, whose members, amidst epidemics, disasters and armed conflicts, brave difficulties and dangers in caring for the injured and sick, and in burying the dead.

I would also mention those individuals and associations which assist migrants who cross deserts and seas in search of a better life. These efforts are spiritual and corporal works of mercy on which we will be judged at the end of our lives.

I think also of the journalists and photographers who shape public opinion on difficult situations which trouble our consciences, and all those devoted to the defence of human rights, especially the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women and children, and the most vulnerable of our brothers

and sisters. Among them are also many priests and missionaries who, as good pastors, remain at the side of their flock and support them, heedless of danger and hardship, especially during armed conflicts.

How many families, amid occupational and social difficulties, make great sacrifices to provide their children with a “counter-cultural” education in the values of solidarity, compassion and fraternity!

How many families open their hearts and homes to those in need, such as refugees and migrants! I wish to thank in a particular way all those individuals, families, parishes, religious communities, monasteries and shrines who readily responded to my appeal to welcome a refugee family.

Finally, I would mention those young people who join in undertaking works of solidarity, and all those who generously help their neighbours in need in their cities and countries and elsewhere in the world.

I thank and encourage everyone engaged in such efforts, which often pass unobserved.

Their hunger and thirst for justice will be satisfied, their mercy will lead them to find mercy and, as peacemakers, they will be called children of God. (cf. Mt 5:6-9)



PEACE AS A JOURNEY AND, WHAT'S MORE, UPHILL

To tell the truth, we are not accustomed to connect the term "peace" to dynamic concepts. Rarely we hear people say, "That person struggles in peace", "fights in peace", "hangs on to life in peace". We are used to hearing expressions such as, "he is sitting in peace", "he is reading peacefully", "he meditates in peace" and, obviously "he rests in peace".

Thus, peace seems to recall a person in a state of tranquillity and peace rather than an adventurer laden with his backpack. It suggests an image of the

comfort of a home rather than the dangers of the roads; the homely fireplace rather than the workshop bustling with problems; the silence of a desert rather than the traffic of a metropolis; the atmosphere of recollection in a Church rather than a trade union meeting; the mystery of the night rather than noise of midday.

Perhaps we need to change our mentality so as to understand that peace is not something given but something conquered.

It is not a commodity to be consumed but the product of our efforts; not the starting line but the finishing line. Peace demands struggle, suffering and tenacity. It has a high cost in misunderstanding and sacrifice. It refuses the temptation of self-complacency. It does not tolerate a sedentary attitude. It does not eliminate

conflicts. It has nothing to do with the banal expression "a peaceful life".

Yes, rather than being a destination, it is the journey to get there. It is, as well, an uphill journey.

This means that it has its

speeds and rhythms, its preferred itineraries and its time, its moments of slowing down and acceleration. Perhaps even times of rest. If this is how things are, we need patient waiting.

And a peacemaker will be blessed, if he does not claim to be at the finishing line without ever having set off, but is the one who sets out. Someone like this only catches a glimpse of a resting place, even if on earth it can never be fully reached.



Don Tonino Bello

Contemplation in order to Witness

"We wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21)... the men and women of our own day ask believers not only to "speak" of Christ but, in a certain sense, to "show" Him to them. Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate, if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face. (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 16)



How to see Jesus

- attentive to grasp His presence in the web of events
- in listening to His Word
- in the poor and in the least
- unifying faith and daily life
- in the Eucharist
- in a profound availability to the Father's will

How to witness to Him

- by pointing out the Father's gratuitous love through proclamation, witness of life and fraternal love
- by bringing peace, unity and joy in the family, in social and pastoral commitment
- by promoting life
- in a loving service for the poorest
- by making the Father's love and mercy shine
- in evangelical commitment within temporal realities
- in personal, family and community prayer

How to contemplate Him

- Contemplating Love Crucified
- Open to Love that shines out from the Cross
- walking in His presence
- We need to be able to always recognise Him when He passes in our lives or even see Him when He was naked, sick, hungry ... one of those from whom we turn away our gaze to avoid seeing them
- Living every encounter as if it were an encounter with God

Contemplation in order to witness: *INSPICE ET FAC* and contemplating Him I, too, am invited to listen to the words, *Inspice et Fac secundum Exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est*. But I am also invited to contemplate Him not as a habit but to imitate Him in a practical way: *INSPICE ET FAC*.

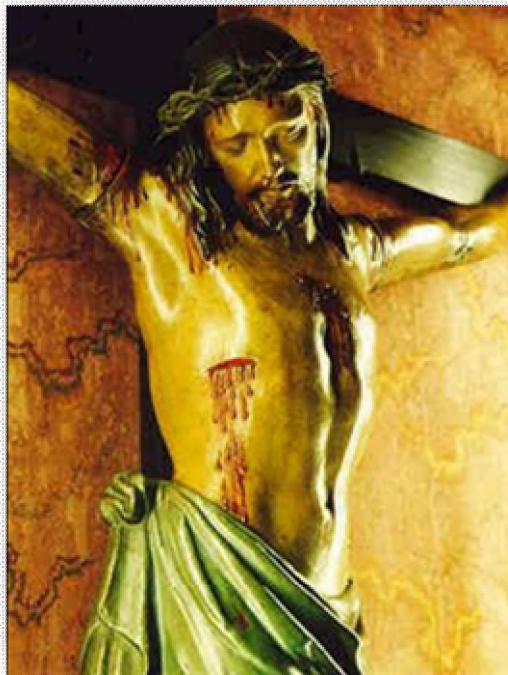
In her Memoirs, Magdalene says, "During Holy Week while reading in a small

meditation book the verse "Inspice et Fac secundum Exemplar ..." I experienced an inner stirring, so strong that it remained with me for several days. I felt urged to follow the Crucified Christ.

She learns to deeply contemplate (inspice) the mystery of the Man of the Cross and to draw from Him untiring energy in order to work (fac).

THE COUNTENANCE OF JESUS FOR MAGDALENE

"Magdalene received from the Spirit the gift of penetrating the unfathomable riches of God's Love in its most sublime expression: Jesus Crucified. The understanding of this Greatest Love formed within her a mother's heart and an apostle's zeal, urging her to become, in the times in which she lived, an efficacious witness of the mystery of salvation."



Many times Magdalene underlines, in her daily experience, the need of poverty, weakness, suffering and solitude as the fruit and the desire for communion with the Crucified One. She measures herself constantly with the charity which she learns and interprets in the light of Jesus' Cross. Very often she fixes her gaze on the Crucified Lord and she feels involved by the vision of the One who was "truly stripped of everything when he almost breathed his last" and she saw Him as a presentiment of her future solitude and lacerating spiritual dryness. Many times she sees the cross

only by perceiving it as a symbol of her suffering: "interiorly she understood that she had to prepare herself for the Cross, rather than suffering was a cross for her." She fears it, it daunts her, she is confused and in certain concrete circumstances she understands its meaning. This cross becomes synonymous with temptation, distraction in prayer, the demanding responsibility of the Institute. In her weakness she encounters

the same weak love of the Lord. In fact she sees Jesus, the Lord, in a state of exhaustion and great fragility, when, notwithstanding his extreme powerlessness, he gave his life for our salvation.

She underlines the reality of His annihilation and suffering. She contemplates Him "so wounded and bleeding", crowned with thorns and

SHE SAW JESUS TRULY STRIPPED OF EVERYTHING

The Memoirs constitute a long and uninterrupted account of Magdalen's encounter with her Crucified Lord. They allow us to catch a glimpse of the loving relationship lived in her daily life and her actions, as well as in her prayer and in her silence.

oppressed by the weight of the cross, "stripped of everything".

Magdalene often recalls the expression of Isaiah 63:3: "I have trodden the winepress alone, of the men of my people not one was with me." Looking at the Crucified Model she discovered once again the possibility, better still the fruitfulness, of loving in the same way, that is in her weakness. Her desire of following the Crucified Lord takes shape in a fruitful journey of activity enlivened by the logic of the gospel: that of the wheat grain that must fall and rot in the furrow so as to give life.

THE DESIRE TO COMFORT JESUS

From the beginning, Magdalene feels a precise call to "imitate Jesus Christ more closely, especially in his poverty, humility and actions ... to live poverty as much as

she can." She desires to imitate Jesus Christ, to live in communion with Him and be abandoned in Him, leaving everything through radical detachment and the acceptance of every humiliation for His sake.

By accepting the gospel demands of the radical following of Jesus Crucified, she understands that God not only leads her to an evermore generous service of her brothers and sisters, but also to live "truly without any kind of help just as so many other times He had made her desire."

Often Magdalene found herself alone while perceiving the attraction of this solitude lived in the company of God alone: "it seemed to her that God wanted her to search only for Him and that she must not ask Him anything, but live completely abandoned to God and His Divine Will."



It seemed to her that even God Himself was placing her gradually in situations of total detachment from everything, but remaining with the desire for God alone.

Our Mission in the Church

What aspect of being Lay Canossians are we called to make shine in the Church, in our communities and social environments?



It is to retrieve "our identity" as Lay Canossians and to retrieve our own "essence".

The identity of a Lay Canossian must be that of being open to the family, to educating young people, open to helping in the formation of Christian families, being versed on social problems, trying to overcome political illiteracy, giving importance to problems regarding education, the sphere of work and the parish. He/she should be involved in occasional catechesis with adults encouraging them to place the Gospel at the centre of their day by meditating and praying with it. He/she should know how to use social means of communication.

We cannot exclude ourselves from the social and historical context in which we live.

We must present our identity as lay people which "helps to value and promote life", that is able to experience harmony with oneself, peace with others and experience the great merciful love of the Father.

What itineraries are possible?

We recognise that it is important to be open to and nurture relationships. The human being can only live by means of relationships and his life develops through social interaction. It is of great importance to know and understand the state of social structure and identify forms of solitude in relationships and marginalization. There are many indicators that show the state of relationships: the condition of the elderly, children, migrants, women, young people; these categories often risk isolation.

What kind of discipleship is necessary to make our identity shine forth, as well as our charismatic gift

at a personal and group level?

The greatest discipleship is "the school of Jesus": this means basing one's identity on Jesus whose centre is not so much doctrine but a way of living, a way of being, in function of serving others. Our project of life is the person of Jesus and this is true at a personal and group level. We should invest energy in Biblical, Charismatic and Spiritual Formation and be open to world problems facing them with a Christian vision.

What kind of discernment do you think necessary in order to allow the Spirit to show us His ways and permit us to be surprised by His proposals that are faithful to the charism received?

I think it is important to establish a correct and active relation with the total reality of Canossian Laity, taking an interest in its life, remembering and meditating on the invitation of Jesus to know how to judge the times we live in (Lk 12:54-56), recognising that the Lord is always present. We should observe the vital context in which the Lay Canossians are present in the light of the Gospel, taking to heart certain important indicators such as poverty, relationships and values.

Poverty – the Gospel has always placed before us the preferential option for the poor; knowing and understanding different kinds of poverty and living alongside those who are crushed by it, so as to help them, has always been one of the essential tasks of the Church.

Relationships – the group of Lay Canossians to which we belong is the primary ambit of creating relationships, a place in which we learn how to trust one another, to experience our common faith, a place in which relationship becomes a gift for those who receive it but also a task and responsibility for the one who gives it.

Outside the group, relationships must become the driving force which encourages us to "broaden our horizon" so as to face the future, setting out and leaving our security to take on a basic attitude that can be consolidated or eventually to bring it into being if absent.

Opening our minds beyond prejudices and common judgements encourages us to leave safe ground and encounter, listen, allow ourselves to be changed and be willing to share.

Values – These represent the driving force of social action and orientate each one of us and the communities in which we live. It is very important to be attentive to the reality to which we belong and in which we live so as to understand which are the values that inspire us and especially in which direction they lead us.

How would you apply these five verbs: GO FORTH, PROCLAIM, DWELL, EDUCATE, TRASFORM to our presence in the Church and for our journey as Lay Canossians?

Go forth: take the initiative, go towards others, search for the lost and stand at the cross roads and

welcome the outcasts. (E.G. 24) A Lay Canossian must be able to leave his own restricted context so as to help as many people as possible in difficult social contexts which are so distant from ours.

Proclaim: offer mercy, the fruit of having experienced the infinite mercy of the Father (E.G. 24); know how to diffuse the gospel message with courage and determination in any social context the Lay Canossian works in. This message must always be accompanied by works of charity and this means showing a concrete example of helping others according to the spirit and teaching of the Gospel.

Dwell: get involved, take responsibility for life by taking on the “smell of the sheep” (E.G.24); know how to realise one’s lay vocation where one lives, in contact with welfare and formative institutions and structures present there.

Educate: accompany the human person in all the phases of life no matter how difficult or lengthy this may be. (E.G.24) In today’s world it is always more difficult to propose and teach certain values and Christian culture. Globalization, a digital world, modern technological progress certainly do not favour Christian values to take root. Education is an art: each person must know how to transform and apply it according to the needs and problems of this world, being in direct contact with social reality we meet every day.

Transform: bear fruit; an evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants it to be fruitful. (E.G. 24) We need to celebrate every small victory, every small step forward, in the Eucharistic celebration. The power of the Sacraments offers our human condition to God giving it back to us “transfigured” and able to share in solidarity. The Lay Canossian must act in the world urged by the desire for spiritual conversion, living the present with its challenges and promises, aware of all the difficulties that he will meet in this mission of helping others.

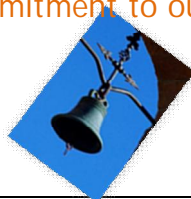
Which task do we want to set ourselves this year?

Without any presumption or illusion, let us try to broaden the horizon of the reality of the Lay Canossians.

We want to develop a sensitive heart that allows us to question ourselves, interpret the “signs of the times” in the society in which we live, leaving behind pessimism and trying to encourage words that save.

We can see an image of this year’s task in the words Pope Francis expresses in EG 27: “I dream of a missionary option, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.”

To carry out such an itinerary, it is important to concentrate on charismatic formation suitable to the present time and to continue serious commitment to our personal and group discernment so as to interpret the Lord’s call to us today.



Convention ALC, Italy

Magdalene and the promotion of women

Magdalene was certainly not a feminist by ideology, but she tackles problems in a concrete and effective manner.

Her aim in life is very clear: to sanctify herself, loving through the effective practise of charity, only God and the neediest of our neighbours.

This is the goal she proposes also to her companions and to her lay friends both noble and common who share her humble way of life.

She prefers poor women, girls "coarse, ignorant and very unfortunate, who grow up in the streets with no principles whatsoever because their parents also have none."

Magdalene is perturbed, her head whirls at the sight of their pitiful condition. She wishes to give them the Light of Faith. Within her there is more than a glow of light; she is aflame with the ardour, the certainty that with "a continual practise of charity and patience, it becomes very sweet to prevent and to hinder sin."

The "preventive" method condenses the essence of the Canossian pedagogy, in the promotion of women. It consists in avoiding the sad necessity of having to

punish by taking away the occasions of wrong doing.

"Never correct (the young girls), Magdalene writes, in the impetus of passion, but only in view of the great spiritual good of the young girls themselves."

This presupposes "a knowledge of their nature, their character, their families.

To be able to know them, let them talk a lot, without ever being astonished at anything they say." Magdalene is a person who listens. She listens to God in prayer; she listens to the cry of suffering humanity with its disorderly passions and anguish. After having listened, she "invents" strategies and plans of action, the "Branches of Charity" to embrace all. Her charity is universal.

She wants to promote the good of every woman, at every age, better still, she cares deeply for any lost creature of God, be it even a man, young or old.

And for that, her dream of a male Congregation, has become a flourishing reality.



Magdalene is convinced that there can be no promotion without moral education, supported by prayer and the Sacraments. And so with great zeal, she opposes the so-called Democratic catechism with true Christian Doctrine.



With discreet and respectful vigilance, both firm and steady, she turns to the young women urging them to learn the elementary notions of reading and writing and to acquire a skill.

Work has a very strong preventive power; it is not only "an opportune means of keeping the poor far from the danger of offending God", but it is useful "in order to gain one's bread honourably" as long as "priority is given to the Kingdom of God over human interests."

Magdalene outlines a new image of a woman. To the aristocratic woman who leads a life without commitment and without any particular enthusiasm, rooted in the idea that a woman is circumscribed within the four walls of her home, and finds an outlet for her frustrations in the frivolity of useless occupations, Magdalene offers the contrast of a responsible lady, to whom is entrusted the very difficult task of assuring the members of her family an assiduous



educative care, the right formation in Christian habits, a fervent piety and rich faith. A mother is not only the educator of her children but the guardian of ethical and religious values on which a good and honest society is built.

"You have a duty, Magdalene openly tells those who attend the Spiritual Exercises, to keep watch that the country folk live in the holy fear of God." The holiday time must not be an occasion of evil, a stumbling block for poor women. "She must always keep in mind the poor country folk, who besides having to live in inadequate houses also lack the necessities of life."

Nothing of what concerns the person escapes Magdalene's attention. Every person, and in particular every woman, is a holy and sublime being, the summit of human dignity, a master-piece of the loving Creator. This Christian principle is a bright idea of Magdalene and finds confirmation in the Apostolic Letter "Mulieris Dignitatem".

"Man is a person, man and woman equally, so since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God."

"After having procured to receive, educate and assist the girls during their childhood and adolescence with the

schools and catechism, and guiding young and adult women with the fear of the Lord to lead a good life, to look after the education and needs of their families", who can put a limit to charity?

When all becomes repugnant to our human nature, more luminous and ardent becomes the love of the one who, like Magdalene and with Magdalene, immolates himself to Jesus Christ, whom he recognises in the suffering.

The genuine fecundity of Magdalene's zeal for promotion is explained by the word "self forgetfulness." "Show compassion and take interest in the sick", bring them comfort, "instruct and prepare them to make a good Confession".

All this is possible only if "one is in love with the Lord". "Gentleness and prudence together with cordiality and sweetness must accompany the difficult task of assisting the sick and the dying."

Jesus known and loved, always present in Magdalene's life and the goodness of Mary, Mother of Charity at the foot of the Cross, are the models that give life to her work for the Christian promotion and evangelization of women.



Even today the "promotion of women" started by Magdalene continues. What she did then is confirmed by the teaching of the Church of today.

The letter of John Paul II that speaks about the fundamental significance of the vocation and dignity of the woman states that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way.

This awareness and this fundamental vocation speaks to the woman of their dignity that they receive from God Himself, and this makes them strong and strengthens their vocation. Thus, a "perfect woman" becomes an irreplaceable support and source of spiritual strength for other people who perceive the great energies of her spirit.

To Magdalene, who is the "perfect woman" we are now contemplating, we look with gratitude and admiration.

We, modern women, torn between hope and anxiety, we, the makers of a progress that exalts and frightens us for its ambiguity, will we not be fascinated by Magdalene? Will we not be ready to listen to her who, with motherly love, invites us to forget self for the sake of "her beloved poor"?

Marisa Gini



With great joy and asking for the guidance and light of the Holy Spirit, we announce to you all:

**VI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
LAY CANOSSIAN FAMILY 24th-31st July 2016
Centro Diocesano di Spiritualità S. Fidenzio
Via Pradelle 62, Novaglie – 37034 Verona (Italy)
Theme “INSPICE ET FAC”**

in the heart of the world with the joy of the Gospel

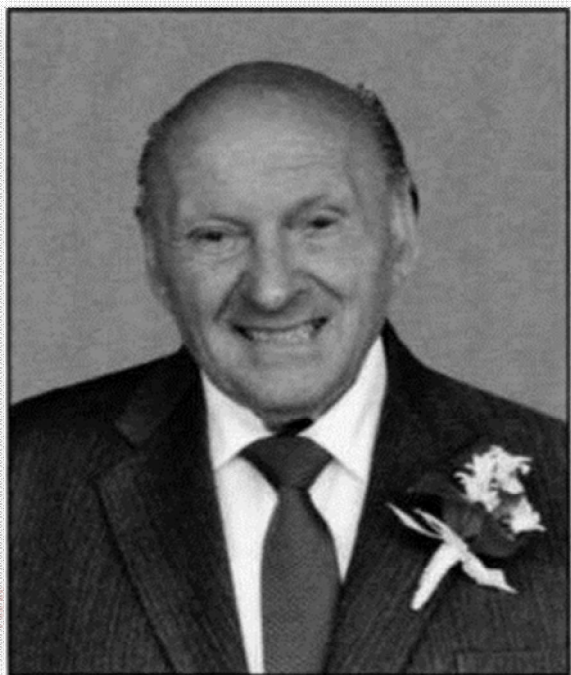
The first part of the International Convention of the Lay Canossian Family will be dedicated to the Lay Canossian Association and, during the following days 30th–31st July 2016, we will continue our encounter in communion with the representatives of the Lay Canossian Brothers and Sisters and the Secular Missionaries of St. Magdalene, in a journey of charismatic animation and sharing.

This is a meaningful time, an experience of being Church and living communion, during which the Delegates are called to share in an atmosphere of evangelical fraternity, prayer, listening to the Word of God, Eucharistic Celebrations, Canossian witnessing from different parts of the world, formation and new horizons so that Lay Canossian life may everywhere be an instrument of making Jesus, the Greatest Love, known and loved by trying to love as He taught us, in today's events according to the journey indicated by the Church.

The formative Commission announces “this favourable time” of the Convention after it has dedicated space to prayer, “union of hearts” and preparation for it.

We want to renew to each one of you an invitation to recite the “Wednesday Prayer” for the success of the Convention 2016, as Magdalene reminded us: “For every need it is always necessary to pray.”

We offer the attached official Prayer, as the united voice of the Lay Canossian Family in preparation for this event. Let us remember each other in our prayer and ask Mary, Mother of Charity at the foot of the Cross, to accompany us on our journey towards the Convention. May Magdalene's charism be a guide along our journey.



Let us remember and pray for

ALBERTO D'ALOIA

who left this world
on 7th March 2016,
in Adelaide, Australia,
Glory of the Heavenly Father.

As a Lay Canossian,
he dedicated his life to his family,
giving his dear ones affection and love.

May Jesus, the Greatest Love,
grant him His eternal Light
and joyful peace in His Kingdom.



HAPPY EASTER!