

# Vivere Insieme



## Family of Providence

### FROM THE MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE

*Peace as a journey of hope: dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion*

#### 5 - *We obtain all that we hope for*

*The journey of reconciliation calls for patience and trust. Peace will not be obtained unless it is hoped for. In the first place, this means believing in the possibility of peace, believing that others need peace just as much as we do. Here we can find inspiration in the love that God has for each of us: a love that is liberating, limitless, gratuitous and tireless.*

*Fear is frequently a source of conflict. So it is important to overcome our human fears and acknowledge that we are needy children in the eyes of the One who loves us and awaits us, like the father of the prodigal son. The culture of fraternal encounter shatters the culture of conflict. It makes of every encounter a possibility and a gift of God's generous love. It leads us beyond the limits of our narrow horizons and constantly encourages us to live in a spirit of universal fraternity, as children of the one heavenly Father.*

*For the followers of Christ, this journey is likewise sustained by the sacrament of Reconciliation, given by the Lord for the remission of sins of the baptized. This sacrament of the Church, which renews individuals and communities, bids us keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, who reconciled "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). It requires us to set aside every act of violence in thought, word and deed, whether against our neighbours or against God's creation.*

*The grace of God our Father is bestowed as unconditional love. Having received his forgiveness in Christ, we can set out to offer that peace to the men and women of our time. Day by day, the Holy Spirit prompts in us ways of thinking and speaking that can make us artisans of justice and peace.*

*May the God of peace bless us and come to our aid.*

*May Mary, Mother of the Prince of Peace and Mother of all the people of the earth, accompany and sustain us at every step of our journey of reconciliation.*

*And may all men and women who come into this world experience a life of peace and develop fully the promise of life and love dwelling in their hearts.*



# Tears and dreams

*"Then an uncle took me away, to a far village, and they put a collar on me ... I was very young. I am 12 years old now."*

These are the stories of those people who try to dry the tears of little girls like Stella, in order to let them dream again. A journey among the Akha Burmese refugees, the illegal trade of opium, the subjugation of girls and young women in the "giraffe women" village, the victims of trafficking, the friendship of a group of sisters with a Buddhist monk. All of this is a brief summary of our experience among the Sisters of Providence in Thailand.

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In the Golden Triangle - an area between Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, which is also famous for the news for its illegal trade - stories of tears and dreams wave together. The Akha, the Lahu and the Kajan are Burmese tribes of Chinese origin, which are refugees without status, persecuted people often in extreme poverty... The Sisters of Providence - three Burmese, one Chinese and one Brazilian, in collaboration with the Buddhist monk Ven. Chaiwat - have been working

hard in paths of dialogue trying to give these girls a dream back. They have been putting a great effort into the struggle against trafficking in order to make girls and young women free



from the chains of slavery and of drug related consequences... And now they have a new dream: to open up a restaurant, the "Inn of Happiness", to give the girls a

better future.

Aurora Vision is a five-year-old film and event production company established to give voice to those ones who have no voice and to bring hope to the darkest corners. The meeting with the Sisters of Providence in Thailand gave meaning to our goals: we didn't only meet an open community ready to welcome those girls, but we even felt at home, like in a family. At the end one non-believer among us said: "If by chance God exists, I met him here."

The effort of each single day to give these girls a future becomes a tiny part of the Paradise painting.

The documentary film, lasting one hour, portrays the daily life of the hosted girls, together with the sisters. Moreover, it shows the life in the villages and the work of the missionary sisters, the harsh reality of the girls locked up in the "zoo" as "giraffe women", the nightmare of trafficking and the use of opium, the strength of dialogue with the Buddhist monk and the dream of opening up the "Inn of Happiness", which will give a work and a future to dozens of girls.

The film preview has come out at the Edera Cinema in Treviso and then it started its "world trip" on the 31st of August in Virginia (USA) with a show at the Indie Vision Film Festival and later in Chile at the Cineotro Valparaiso Film Festival

on the 12th of September. Moreover, Andrea Morghen, our producer, presented it at one of the most important Russian festivals, the Eurasia Yalta Film Fest on the 22nd of September with a hall of 300 people and a debate of almost two hours after the show. On the 27th of September in Lulea, Sweden, it received the first recognition for the Nomination as “Best Documentary”! The showing was introduced by Karin, a Swedish friend of ours. On Saturday the 12th of October we were in Ravenna invited by the Islamic community of Romagna which started a small fundraising for the nuns.

Then many showings followed at festivals around the world, such as England, Spain, India and Russia, and the film received some other important international awards. An example is the “Best Director Award” which we received on the 31st of October at the Indie Doc Pro in Barcelona. Soon after - on the 17th and on the 20th of November - we also received the awards for “Best Documentary” and “Best Cinematography”: the former in Mexico at the Festival Mundial de Cine de Vera Cruz, and the latter in India at the Picasso Einstein Buddha International Film Festival.

It does not mean that we want to collect prizes just to “show off” but they are an important recognition for the work done by the Sisters of Providence given by artistic communities of different

cultures that would have never been touched by stories of providence.

Furthermore, we also experienced a really intense moment with the official screening - introduced by the journalist Alessandro Gisotti (former Pope's spokesman) - together with Sister Sandra and the apostolic nuncios Monsignor Tomasi and Monsignor Bressan on the 2nd of December at the Vatican Film Library, in Palazzo San Carlo. The Vatican Radio, together with Vatican News, has even created three reports, which have been translated into many languages and have then travelled around the world.

In a few weeks the documentary will be distributed on DVDs by the Multimedia San Paolo in Italy. These are only the first outcomes which suit the mandate given me by Pope Francis a few years ago: “Lia, do not stop telling about charity. If we stop spreading the good, this will soon disappear. Carry on, you can do it!”.

So, we cannot do anything but going ahead, with courage, thanking the sisters who got involved - facing the difficulty of watching themselves on a screen - for a greater good.

*Lia Giovanazzi*



## Is there any woman with the pain of childbirth?

The hospital phone rang around 9 p.m. The ANM (Auxiliary nurse midwife) staff who attended the phone, hurriedly came to me and said, " Sr. Gracy, there is a woman who is about to give birth" . Since the mobile network is poor, I couldn't immediately get all the details of the case, but understanding that the village is quite far, the road is bad and the family asks for an ambulance and also by considering the difficult situation, I had no other choice but to reply affirmatively.

At the same time I turn to the Lord, making Him aware that, perhaps, this is His Christmas gift for me. I know neither the village nor the language; trying to know more could waste my precious time. I wonder if I should attend the birth in the village or on the road, while within me many other questions alternate. The driver is ready with an ambulance. With the blue emergency light on and in the company of the roaring sound of the siren, we leave. During the journey, we often try to contact someone in the village to understand the exact location of the patient's home, but everything is useless. Even the phone is constantly out of the coverage area: it almost feels like a leap in the dark!

I am literally trembling, but I remember a suggestion given to me by my mother when I was a young girl: in difficult situations, pray the "Memorare" to the Madonna (Prayer of St. Bernard), so I start this prayer many times, but I never manage to complete it.

Dark pitch and terrifying silence. In the darkness, the tobacco plantations look like thick forests, no signs of houses. The driver assures me that we are not going through the forest, but they are only tobacco trees, cashews, pepper plants, etc., beautiful to see during the day, but not so good at night. This decreases my anxiety somewhat. I say to myself that, perhaps, mine is a more problematic journey than that of St. Joseph with pregnant Mary.

At around 11.00 pm we stop in a place similar to a village, it is a dead end street. Still profound silence and no sign of life, the telephone network is absent. Slowly the dim moonlight begins to spread and so, about 100 meters below, I see the waters of a river flowing silently. I propose then to the driver to sound the horn: he does it for about fifteen endless minutes!

A ray of hope: I see the light in some houses, the driver, in the local dialect, loudly asks if any woman is about to give birth in this or some other nearby village. Some men take care to go to their wives who, without a doubt, are able to give us a correct orientation. After consulting them, they advise us to reach a village on the other side of the river: the road is steep and the river is wide and deep; also can see a narrow bamboo bridge and a steep climb about 90 °. Believe me: I am still unable to complete the "Memorare". With great enthusiasm and with the special march inserted, the ambulance begins to cross the river: I

You're not listening to something that comes from the maternity ward of an ordinary hospital, nor are these the words of a gynaecologist or of a nurse on duty, instead it is a question that goes round in a distant village of India, where a new birth is taking place!

It was my second day of night duty... as I was struggling to dig out from the back of my brain all those nuances of nursing and midwifery which I studied 20 long years back. I am in a Primary health Centre of the Government of India... a remote village in the state of Meghalaya. I'm new to the place; the local language was like Aramaic for me. The people of that area is so used to home deliveries, so, as a result the maternal and infant mortality rate is so high in the state. In order to face this problem the state government has introduced a scheme for the Pregnant mothers to avail transportation to and fro for the institutional delivery. So any hour of the day or night we must be ready for this particular service.

close my eyes, squeeze the door handle firmly and, after about ten minutes, we find ourselves on the top of a hill.

We see a little light: we have finally arrived at our destination! A group of about ten people, including some children, walk slowly accompanying the pregnant woman and bringing with them various material: a bucket, firewood, blankets, bags, etc. In a joyful procession, they approach the ambulance. The pregnant woman looks really in conditions of great suffering. My concern is increasing, because the birth can take place at any moment. Will we arrive at the dispensary on time or will she give birth along the road? I turn to St. Joseph and Mary, telling them to be in the same situation, as they did in that time. I ask for help, the woman cries in pain, I think the child is about to come out, but luckily nothing has happened yet. The woman asks to take something that will serve her: after a while, someone brings a big spoon. Let's go with her and some of her family members.

The journey is distressing, both for the precarious conditions of the road, and for the great fear that the birth takes place during the journey. Instead, we reach the dispensary where at 1.30 a.m., a beautiful girl comes to light who is in her mother's arms about half an hour later.

Mission accomplished: thank you, Jesus! The phone rings: another woman, near giving birth, has been in labor since the day before, but luckily the village is near and the mobile network is good: mission easier than the previous one.

It is a special Christmas, because we have been able to save the lives of mothers and children who, under different conditions, would certainly have lost it.

*Sr. Gracy Sebastian Salmanpara, Meghalaya*

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*Salmanpara is a rural suburban village, located in the state of Meghalaya, where we, the Sisters of Providence, collaborate with the Diocesan Pastoral Centre and the District Government.*

*Due to the high infant mortality rate, especially during childbirth, the Government established some dispensaries in the villages to provide assistance and care for pregnant mothers and newborns. It has become indispensable above all because of ignorance, the superstitious attitude of*



*the people and the treatment by the staff working in government centres.*

*Currently the sisters carry out an essential service: they assure assistance during the childbirth both in the dispensary and in the houses in case of emergency and they work to create awareness programs in the area: all, of course, with respect for the dignity of the people. In addition, the dispensary works to fight malaria and other deadly diseases through the vaccination campaign.*

*With satisfaction we can say that our presence and our work are appreciated by the Government, which for three consecutive years has been offering awards in cash and ambulances for our highly qualified and satisfying service.*

*Furthermore, this year one of our sisters received the first prize for competence in the field of nursing: all this constitutes a great encouragement for us and for the staff who work in the dispensary and who works well with us.*

*This is also a rich opportunity for evangelization according to the charism of our founder, Saint Luigi, who exhorted his daughters with the following words: "Jesus Christ be served and honored in the person of his poor children".*





## COMMUNITY OF S. TERESINA THE HEART OF THE PROVINCE

**G** The Santa Teresina Community of the province of Nostra Signora Aparecida of Brazil, united in the mission, resides in the provincial house, in Sorocaba. All together we are 24 sisters including superior, assistant and nurse, and all are attentive to the sisters who are in fragile situations due to old age and always with precarious health.

In our present mission, we try to widen our hearts by looking at the whole world, with the strength of our poverty and offering, united spiritually with the sisters who are in the active mission and who radiate our charism where they are, with zeal and ardour of charity. We learn from St. Teresa, our patroness, to be *"the heart of the Province"*, that is LOVE, transforming our limits and fragility into acts of love, offered and immersed in the forgiveness of Jesus' love.

Very often we have surprising visits by relatives, orphans of the Rosa Mistica Orphanage, ex alumni, workers and people with whom we lived our mission during the years of intense apostolic activity. These visits lead us to thank the Lord whom we serve and perceive that we are, even today, a vocational community. Yes, a vocational community because the people who come here express the joy of the time spent with us and have esteem for the values cultivated by the religious life of the Sisters of Providence.

We can still respond to some requests by our very presence in the gatherings of people whom we accompanied in our pastoral service, in the novenas in preparation for commemorative events, etc ... We also share good experience lived with people of all ages in the last year, 2019. They were surprised to see the way they were welcomed and lived with us in an atmosphere of



peace, joy and serenity, noting that it is possible to grow old in a peaceful and joyful environment.

In our daily life, in addition to the mutual assistance according to the possibilities of each, we dedicate ourselves to some small craft works: sewing clothes for poor children made of remnants, wool shirts, covers for babies, paintings on fabrics, statuettes and rosaries. In addition, we accompany people who wish to visit the "memorial" which shows the history of the journey made in Brazil by the Congregation since the arrival of the first sisters.

We wanted to make ourselves known by sharing our life, but the main motive for this communication is to express our joy for the enchanting "virtual journey" that we were able to do by reading the booklets "From their fruits you will recognize them" that the general Council recently offered us.

The wonderful description we have received of the various communities in which we find ourselves, through you, dear sisters, speaks loudly of the missionary ardour in the countries in which we are and have the strength to draw closer to you, to each community, to each sister, and with you to all the people to whom you dedicate your service.

This vision offers us the opportunity to know what God works in and through our humble and poor Family of the Sisters of Providence of our dear Father St. Luigi; it helps us to love our Family more, from its origin in Italy to far Asia.

We perceive the apostolic ardour marked by dedication, simplicity, admirable hospitality and above all by the charity of the sisters, a presence that continues to be desired and hoped for, always, by many people and that our Father St. Luigi does not cease to desire from us, his daughters. In this way, we can be sure that God loves our service to



the poor and that we can continue, with a sure step, the path of our Family, so that the Kingdom of God is concretized in the world.

Thank you, thank you so much, dear sisters! May the Spirit of God unite us ever more and the trust in His divine mercy strengthen us; may His love as Provident Father introduce us to this world which is so thirsty for concrete charity towards the poorest brothers and sisters and all may be solely to His glory.

Be sure of our presence, because love overcomes distances.

"A big hug to all of you".

*The sisters of the Santa Teresina community*



*This life is a merry go round that  
spins with us, never stopping  
Every life knows that it  
will be reborn in a flower  
that still lives*



And so, with a refrain from the well-known cartoon "The Lion King", we want to share our experience with our dear mothers.

Cormons is a school... on the "carousel of life", on the value of relationships, of listening, of a presence, of a glass of water, of a smile, of a hug, of a good morning without rushing, while looking into the eyes and one tries to listen also to the "unspoken", and why not... a school on the point of death and life called to be reborn?

However, the strongest thing you learn in that community is the value of gratuitousness! When you work with children it is different... they learn your name, they bring you flowers, the drawings, they run towards you to embrace you, they then come back to greet you and say thank you for what they have lived and learned from you... With the elderly, especially when they are sick and lose the memory, it is possible to experience an even truer love: the one that leads you to make small or large gestures towards those who will not remember it just 10 seconds later. It does nothing! The joy of knowing that for that moment you have given love and offered a sense of comfort to someone, fills your heart and makes you think that every manifestation of attention, affection and charity is so important.

The heart feels the call to exercise the motherhood for which we, women, were created; and it's so beautiful! At



the end of the day you feel tired and ask yourself: but how did they manage to work so much? How have they managed to take care of the sick throughout their lives, such heavy and delicate work, without having succumbed to such exhaustion?

Cormons makes you think that our only task there is to say thank you: while ironing, cleaning the floors, helping to unload the van, preparing a fruit salad, entering without haste and with empathy, take a walk in the courtyard accompanied by a chat or a song, offer a cup of broth, listen to the same stories 10 times as if it were the first, help to find the breviary page, to finish the Ave Maria started, offer a word of hope in front of one vent...

In short, there are countless opportunities to thank them for having prepared the road on which we are going today, because without their YES and their incalculable sacrifices we would not have been able to say our Yes in this Religious Family. Our mothers testify to us, with their life of total oblation to the Bridegroom Jesus, how to radiate serenity in all



circumstances of life. They teach us the precious value of mortification, sacrifice and constant union with the Bridegroom as a source of joy and consolation.

That's why each of us, young people, wants to go to Cormons every summer! It goes far beyond the "debt" we have with them for continued support in prayer. In fact, we have always trusted it to be able to carry out our task of preparing ourselves professionally in order to better serve our recipients. And how many times have we touched the signs of their presence with us!

We have yet another "thanks"

to say: to those who send us there and to those who welcome us there! Without this school we would not have been able to understand many things about ourselves, about our call, about the value of small things and above all about the preciousness we have "at home". Thank you dear mothers, thank you for the good you want us and we feel this every time we see your smiles and your open arms at our every arrival! Thank you for your youthfulness and all your life given for the good of the brothers and sisters, for every time we have seen you pray in silence before the Unique Sense of your Yes! Thank you for

your courage to continue on this path with Him and for Him until the last breath.

And...goodbye! To Cormons or where our beloved Father Luigi is waiting for us, with Mary, Mystical Rose and Jesus, our Bridegroom!

And again... have patience! We will never be able to stop telling you: we count on your fond memory in prayer, but we too remember you with much affection and gratitude!

We love you a lot! ♥

*The young sisters*



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## **MYSTICAL ROSE SOCIAL COOPERATIVE: a different look**

The fourth year has just begun with three new schools, which have been opened up by the charisma of Fr. Luigi, managed by the Mystical Rose Cooperative.

It has been a long time since that 1st September 2016, the day in which we accepted the invitation from the Congregation to manage the Immaculate School kindergarten in Udine and the Mystical Rose preschool of Cormons - together with the Kindergarten and the Mystical Rose integrated nursery of Belvedere from which we started as a cooperative.

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Probably we were neither completely aware of the path ahead, the challenges we would have to face, the experiences we would have put into practice to build up a new perspective of an interregional reality, nor how much this adventure would have been surprising!

In support of our “journey” we have tried to choose those tools marked by our Founder, starting our research into his several writings and into the memories and habits of the sisters who had worked at his side.



From this point of view we realised that what seemed to be simple traditions of the sisters actually had a deeper and precious cultural meaning like early childhood educational and instruction services, more than a mere place of care.

The priority has been (and still is) the creation of a sense of belonging and a tight relationship with the educating community, which encourages mutual help between sisters, welcomes talents and diversities of each one of them, and supports a familiar and simple lifestyle.

From accepting a common story and sharing a clear pedagogical identity, it has gradually become possible to reflect and try to develop innovative educational projects. We hope they would meet the needs of today's children and families.



For this reason we have been working on several topics such as:

- a single way of organising documents in order to express unity and common objectives;
  - the structuring of administrative and management tools to base responsibility on criteria like competence, transparency and sustainability;
  - organising three educational training
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events each year, in which pedagogical and charismatic perspectives merge together with the enhancement of a common planning.

This has allowed us to develop increasingly shared and co-designed educational proposals: after the first year with "Alice in the Land of Rights", we offered children the opportunity to discover "Books for a year" throughout 2017-2018. The aim was going deeper into the roots and values of our country together with "Mrs. Constitution" and also starting a journey "To Tokyo 2020" in September 2019.

At the end of year 2019 there were 37 active members of the non-profit cooperative Mystical Rose, 368 children attending kindergartens, and the Spring class of Cormons (in its second year of life).

Yet three years are still a short lapse of time and we are expecting many challenges...

During the last few years, we cannot certainly say that the protection of children and families has spread: children carry their own experiences and memories and that ones of their parents, which are not always coherent, resolved or positive stories...

Managing three schools means having a heart, supporting the professional growth and going along the several stages of life of over 40 employees - from graduation to marriage, from children's birth to their growth. Because of the fragility of the target we address, the selection, the staff training, and the work as a cohesive group are important processes which influence the quality of training and above all the well-being of children, the real way to measure

the sense of our work.

The foundation of our cooperative lays in the coordination of schools, in close collaboration between coordinators, pedagogists and delegated advisors, for monitoring, supervising, and defining strategic and operational lines.

Our cooperative is that special place where life - in all its aspects - has been welcomed and arranged to match the needs and the resources of each person.

These are the knots of our daily work and decision-making moments that we entrust Father Luigi so that He illuminates our choices and leads us in carrying out his Mission through the charitable Work he began.

*Elisa Golin*



## With Jesus ... for a pastoral ministry capable of welcoming and supporting those in suffering



12 With great joy we share with the readers of "Vivere Insieme", the experience of our pastoral mission in the maternity ward of the Frei Galvão hospital during this year 2019, where we have observed, in various professional collaborators, a growing desire in deepening the spiritual experience and personal encounter with God.

Month of March onwards we have been helping the managers of various sectors to motivate their collaborators in order to create a moment of prayer and reflection on the Word of God at the beginning of the working day; an ecumenical moment in which everyone can express their faith and share the experience of God. The initiative has been welcomed in a positive way and there is a generous commitment by the groups to participate in it.

We realized that the moments of prayer and sharing have created greater unity and openness in fraternal relationships within the staff. It's nice to see the sensitivity of our employees, who pray for the intentions of the hospital, the recipients and the needs of the team members.

The Eucharistic Adoration, which ta-

kes place once a month in the hospital chapel, is one of the numerous occasions to revive the spiritual life of the community, where collaborators and visitors have the opportunity to find a privileged space of serenity to open their hearts, talking to Jesus, present in the Eucharist, praising and thanking God for the graces received.

Another monthly appointment is the meeting of the group of the Family of Providence, animated by moments of prayer, sharing and formation, which counts on the participation of lay people from the ecclesial community, doctors, nurses and other hospital employees. During this year, we have also been able to reserve two days dedicated to formation on charism and mission inherited from Father Luigi for this group.

It is a strong testimony for us to see that many collaborators long for those moments of personal encounter with Jesus and enjoy their free time, such as the coffee break or lunch time, for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, to pray the Rosary or to make the personal meditation. These moments become nourishment for living an incarnate charity, which manifests itself in a greater sensitivity, in the service to the sick and in contact with their families, helping us to live our Christian vocation where the Lord calls us.



The weekly presence of a priest is a gift for the hospital community, as it allows individual assistance for the sick and the administration of the sacraments. This grace is also possible for the staff and family members of patients who request it and it proves to be an occasion of strong support and comfort for many people in difficult situations.

The active participation of one of our sisters, who is the coordinator of Health Pastoral Care, is fundamental to guarantee the accompaniment and preparation of patients for the sacraments of Confession and the Anointing of the Sick, as well as to involve the hospital community in liturgical animation and in preparation of novenas of Christmas, of the feasts of St. Luigi Scrosoppi and of Nostra Signora Aparecida. It is also important to underline the daily and generous presence of the ministers of the Eucharist who pray together with the sick and bring each one the presence of the Eucharistic Jesus. This mission aims to be a presence of solidarity, of human and spiritual comfort for patients and for their families in critical situations and suffering, respecting the individuality and religious belief of each person.

Another significant moment was the pilgrimage to



the nearby Sanctuary of the Madonna Aparecida, made by staff from the various sectors of the hospital. It was an opportunity to cultivate the faith and strengthen the bonds of brother/sisterhood, consolidating the unity between the collaborating



members of this great body which is the hospital community.

We recognize the importance of cultivating the life of prayer and the formation of our collaborators so that our mission is ever more human, welcoming and capable of bearing witness to the Christian values in which we believe. Therefore, we want to grow even more in strengthening this pastoral care in our community, so that Christ, the doctor par excellence who heals the wounds of humanity, can be increasingly present in the lives of all the people who attend this work of ours, and that those who profess a different faith can feel respected and treated with dignity in their needs.

May Mother Mary help us grow in faith and availability in the service of the Kingdom.

*Community of Holy Family  
Guaratinguetá - Brasile.*

# On a mission... on behalf of God!

It is almost ten years since we organize Motobenedizione in Tricesimo (UD) and we have decided to donate all the proceeds, always for the mission of the Sisters of Providence in Africa. In return we received news, photos, videos but above all a lot of love and gratitude!

And so we said to each other: we have to go to know them, to see, to touch, and we started moving ...

At the arrival in the capital of Togo, Lomé, we received the first blow to the stomach: a humid heat that takes the breath away, but that is accompanied by the welcoming and radiant smile of Sister Veronique.

We arrive in the house of the sisters, crossing increasingly shabby streets and not only due to the bumps, but also the stalls scattered a little everywhere and dirty to an incredible extent, chasing traffic and open-air drainage channels.

The next day we go to the Holy Mass and the streets are always those of the day before, but there is something different: children, women, girls, all dressed in colours that light up the day and that contrast with the dust and plastic bags that they flutter everywhere.

As we get closer to the church the colours increase, it's all a flourishing of voices, sounds, rhythm of the drums and it doesn't matter if the church is for now made of poles and sheets that



once was the shelter of hens; for them it is the first stone that they put up to construct, tomorrow will be a masonry building that holds inside thousands of people. Then there will be benches, doors, installations, altar; and for now, they fill it with songs, colours, smiles and prayer!

The hours and the days overlap and run fast, enriched with emotions and encounters: visits to the sick of the locality touch the heart. In the stifling heat that it becomes impossible in poor houses, which often only shacks, we meet people with cancer, and those who are malnourished and affected by AIDS. Along with some medicines, sisters offer a listening ear, a smile, a little rice, recommending to come to the centre for the milk powder to give to the children.

At the end of each visit, they always ask us to pray together and they want a blessing; our eyes light up by seeing theirs light up...

And then we see, a sign of life that comes out from a dim gara-

ge at the next door; once you get your eyes accustomed to the dim light, it is discovered that is a small shop where soap, rice, a few cans of coke and other junk are sold but above all our attention turns to the mother who proudly cuddles a beautiful baby of a few months old.

It is Africa's strongest hope: to bet, to take risk, to trust in the life that is born! Whether in a modest little shop or in the noise of the streets, dirty and hungry that peeks out of the doors or gleaming with colours and laughter while going for Mass, it does the same.

We move to Vokutime, a village lost in the savannah where the sisters are building a centre to help children and young people with AIDS.

We go there to pay our visit and also we thank Yamaha Italia who will be helping to dig a well for drinking water, for watering crops and raising animals.

We have already donated two motorbikes to the sisters, in order to reach the sick children.

These journeys make them indispensable: the recent rains have made ditch in the middle of the road and if we get in it with the van we don't get out of it anymore.

From Togo we fly to the Ivory Coast.

Here, too, reality surpasses our imagination: a lot of poverty and it has the taste of confusion, of dusty roads and stalls where we see so much vegetables and meat or fish that are covered with black plastic bags to try to protect them from dust that creeps everywhere.

Sr. Giuseppina who accompanies us to the house of the sisters shows us an area where hundreds of thousands of people survive and explains that this is the district of Bobò, the worst of Abidjan, and, coincidentally, where the sisters live.

Here theft and violence are the order of the day, and even the sisters have experienced it and several times they have been robbed both in the house and on the street.

Their house is an oasis and a beautiful garden where many children and young people sing, play and pray with vitality and joy that has now entered in our hearts.

The next day we discover the beauty and preciousness of the presence of the sisters in that place: a hospital with 80 African employees and an average of 500 people received every day.

Then we reach Bouakè and the centre where the victims of war are received, which left painful consequences in the country and wounds in people's minds that are difficult to heal.

But the most affected are the young lives who bring that violence of the past with them in the future. It is pointless to imagine what they suffered and the price they paid. It is important to enjoy the future which they construct by themselves: an education, a job, a revival of their lives.

Our next goal is a small hospital, a sign of hope for a big problem in those regions i.e. Buruli's disease is a very aggressive disease that affects the tissues up to the muscles, tendons and bones that are slowly consumed.

The treatments are long and painful and, as always, they are children who pay the highest price.

Here too the tenacity and spirit of adaptation of the sisters blend with the desire to live for the sick. The difficulties are many, from being able to find medicines, to rehabilitative treatments done with means of luck, but the small yet significant miracles also take place here.

After the visit in Yamoussoukro, the political capital of the Ivory Coast, where we know another centre for the reception of girls and boys who reconstruct their future, we return to Abidjan from where we resume the plane to return home.

There are so many stories and the roads that we have crossed: hard roads, difficult to understand, humanly unsustainable. Roads

along which derives, the desire to respond, the desire that has also accompanied our Motobenedizione and that always buzzes in our heads. We have to do something, we have to keep on going.

Thus our projects and dreams start again, which are intertwined with those of the sisters and will keep us tied even when the miles are of several thousand.

But what is more true than the dreams, the hopes, the faith that unites us one another?

*Don Michele Zanon - Cividale*



# Warmth of smiles and hugs

*Luca, Mirella, Teresa, Caterina, Angela, Aurelia*



*We, a mixed group of 6 people, assorted randomly as well as by chance, had a beautiful trip to Thailand which lasted about ten days.*

*The only sure thing we knew on our departure was that we would stay with the sisters of Providence who reside in the north of Thailand, in a small town called Chiang Saen, with a mission where they welcome girls and boys in difficult situations. We started our journey according to some hints given by Sr. Sandra and Sr. Jandira and relying on their safe and confident smile without knowing anything else.*



*We have arrived in the mission on 5th October, in the morning. It was a beautiful coincidence since the feast of St. Luigi Scrosoppi, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence, is celebrated on the same day. We were welcomed by the sisters, the girls and the children with an incredible joy, making us feel immediately at home, surrounded by the warmth of smiles and hugs and by a harmony that, as if by magic, grew as the days went by.*

*We stayed with the sisters, by listening everything that was proposed to us and with the girls of the mission of our own accord, because our heart, so spontaneously, pushed us to stay there.*

*We had no intention of doing good but it was that Good, so evident in that place, among the sisters, among the girls, in those poor villages, to inebriate our eyes and to make our heart palpitate with those*

*faces, those people and their lives so fragile and apparently insignificant but so true and authentic as to make our eyes fill with tears devoid of pity but full of joy and gratitude.*

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