



Guanella News

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Direzione e Redazione: Centro di Comunicazione

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Following the example of the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to freedom, spending more than forty years in the desert, we are also invited to move along this way of providence, that will take us to celebrate Christ's – and our own – Passover free from sin and from all hindrances.



«Through the desert God
leads us to freedom»

Dear Confreres, I wish you a good Lenten journey in the light and with the strength of what Pope Francis offered us in his Lenten message.

“Through the desert God leads us to freedom”.
Following the example of the journey of the people

of Israel from Egypt, from the Pharaoh, to freedom, spending more than forty years in the desert, to the promised land prepared for them by God, we are also invited to move along this way of providence, that will take us to celebrate Christ's – and our own – Passover free from sin and from all hindrances that are still present in our hearts.

In his message, Pope Francis recalls two aspects of this journey: “... *God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind and experience a Passover from death to life.*” And also, an unusual image in the desert: “*Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.*” Thus, “*Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love (cf. Hos 2:16-17)*”.

These two aspects of the desert could appear in contradiction, but they are interwoven and should be lived together. The desert is surely a hard and labouring journey requiring self-examination, renunciation, change of behaviour, overcoming ever-present obstacles and temptations. Nevertheless, it is a purification journey done together with Him, with the bridegroom of the Church, the caring and cheerful lover of any soul that puts her trust in him. The climbing is steep, but done hand-in-hand with the faithful groom of our souls, granting us that surely we shall attain the promised, new, happy land.

In his message, Pope Francis recalls that Jesus has already gone through this itinerary he is making with us. He went along with the people of Israel in the historical Exodus, but also did it in his personal experience, at the beginning of his mission as the One sent by the Father to announce the Good News to the whole world. The One who is going with us is experienced, he knows well the desert and our souls, the snares of the evil, and the values, constraints and frailties we carry within. He knows well what we should leave in the desert and what we have to carefully keep and carry, purified, into the promised land of Easter. “... *Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. Unlike Pharaoh, God does not want subjects, but sons and daughters. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken*”.

Allow me to highlight two more aspects present in the Pope's Lenten message.

- The first: “*The Church's synodal form, which in these years we are rediscovering and cultivating, suggests that Lent is also a time of communitarian decisions, of decisions, small and large, that are counter current. Decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation, and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon*”.

For us the Guanellians this is a period of Provincial Chapters, Delegation Assemblies, immediate preparation to the 21st General Chapter. Many have already given their contribution by means of the *questionnaire* expressing their idea, indication, direction for a prophecy still possible for our charism and mission. We are still needed, as Guanellians, in this world, in this church. We are needed, starting from the good example we can give by not allowing ourselves to be hindered by what goes wrong, by our personal, community, congregation failures; not to be hindered by the fear of losing a

standard of life, as if we could not live well as religious because of lack of money. Yet, we are the sons of a Father who always trusted only in Providence. He had nothing of his own. *“Providence has done everything: I did nothing!”*

- The second: *“... At this moment in time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history. We need courage to think like this”* ([Address to University Students, 3 August 2023](#)). *Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope, this small child, by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward”*.

This is also my Lenten wish, dear confreres. Let us open our eyes to what is happening outside our houses and Congregation. We are present in five continents, and surely they are not all the same. The conditions of each Country where we work are different and sometimes very far one from the other. Yet, it is often in the poorest places, where life is harder, that the wish of pope Francis becomes real, to live our life as an experience of birth and not of death, of dignity and not of doom.

I ask of the Holy Spirit, for me personally and for our Congregation, the power to open our eyes on the entire world, and not to be satisfied to look at ourselves or just around us. Those living in other continents are our Brethren, Children of God, men and women for whom Jesus died on the cross and is risen. They share the lot of the poor out of obedience, out of their Guanellian gift, because they made their home and family in our mission. May our Lent become peculiar and fruitful through the prayer for all our communities spread in the five continents and the concern for the brothers who – in the name of don Guanella – live in isolated places. This is the first family solidarity we can live.

Buona Quaresima!

P. Umberto

**“For faith and charity take hope,
this small child, by the hand!”**

21ST GENERAL CHAPTER
LECTIO DIVINA - LENT 2024
FOR A LENTEN JOURNEY



JESUS WALKS ON WATERS AND PETER WITH HIM

Matthew 14: 22-32

22 Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.

24 Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. 25 During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. 27 At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." 28 Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 After they got into the boat, the wind died down.

The Word of the Lord

I. INTRODUCTION

With the first **Lectio**, during Advent, we tried to share with simplicity some thoughts about the Gospel passage of Matthew 14: 22-32 that will be the background of Father General's Report on the theme of the 21st General Chapter: *Faithful and creative in the charism, co-responsible in the mission. With Christ, we take up the challenges of our time!*

In this second **Lectio**, during this Lenten time, staying on the same Gospel page, we are going to analyse the context: the geographical, social, evangelising environment that surrounds so well the episode chosen as the kernel for the reflection of the 21st GC.

In the central part we will meditate on **two points, that we consider the most important** in the passage: *the Boat/Church and Peter's lack of faith.*

At the end we will try to lead you to possibly face an important aspect of our Founder's life, when he invites us, his spiritual children – as we also saw in the previous **Lectio** – to become more and more ***“used to contradiction without ever losing heart: there we find good strength, like the rowers who become strong by rowing with their arms in the midst of the tempest”***.

In this Lenten time, a strong time for strong determinations, let us take up again our journey, or our sailing, starting from a meaningful place in the Master's life, from the stormy waters of the lake of Galilee the place where Jesus spent almost the whole of his public life.

The light for our reflection comes again from the Gospel of the storm, of the strong headwind, of the fear. Yet, we are not going to rest only on this episode, but to widen the

gaze on the shores, with their villages of fishermen, like Capernaum, and on the hills crowning the best-known lake in this world. The Gospel mentions often *the Lake*: “Jesus was walking along the sea of Galilee”, “he came out of the house, and sat on the shore of the lake”, “Jesus entered a boat and crossed to the other shore and reached his town”, “Jesus entered a boat and went on the other side of the lake in a desert place”, crossing the lake “he went to the land of Gennesaret”, “Jesus walked on the water of the sea”, “he commanded the sea”.

2). HINTS FOR THE LECTIO

A). The Lake of Galilee:

The lake itself, usually calm and sometimes stormy, contributed to enrich the lessons for life given by the Master to his disciples.

This is Jesus' lake! When we visit today the Holy land, sometimes we may feel somehow disappointed, because it is difficult to imagine how it was in Jesus times. This disappointment disappears at the shore of the lake, because it is as it was at that time: it is the same that was seen by His eyes. We see it as He saw it, we can walk along the shore as He did.

The Evangelists tell of two miracles that happened on the lake, which are our interest and, as we said, aren't simply “casual accidents”, but **true lessons of spiritual life**, necessary for the formation of his disciples. I mean the **calming of the storm (Mk 4:35 – 5.1) and Jesus walking on waters (Mt.14:22-36)**. These episodes (especially the second, that we tried to comment in the first Lectio) are important and meaningful, but cannot express how much the lake and its shores were the setting of the building up of the first group of disciples, who will become the first apostles.

In this place we can admire the sailing, the hard work of the fishermen who daily have to repair their nets. We can imagine the many hours spent on the boat, sometimes without results. Or we can imagine the boat with Jesus sitting as a teacher, using the natural background for his preaching. That world, so down-to-earth, was very conducive to unite the group of friends, to form them, and to communicate the great truths of faith. Most especially, to help them change the “religious schemes” to which they were clinging since their childhood.

But on the lake of Galilee we can live especially the SCHOOL OF LIFE, OF FAITH, OF FRIENDSHIP for the first group of close collaborators, those destined to receive the secrets of Jesus' heart, and know the Father's plan for each of them but also for the entire humankind. As Jesus calls the disciples to this wonderful adventure, day after day he is their teacher, friend companion along the way. And this way little by little becomes “metanoia”, conversion, change in ideas and thoughts. Every daily happening, every moment, every season, with good and bad weather, with the sun or with the moon, becomes an opportunity to be pondered over with his disciples. Jesus is the formator, educator par excellence, the man that can give question marks, exclamation marks, and make summaries. Christ is one of those rare teachers who make people think. Little was needed to set a problem: see that woman who made her offering in the temple's treasury? “Truly I tell you ...” (see Mk 12:41- 44); see these great buildings? “There will not be one stone left upon another” (see Mk 13:2); “What is your opinion?” (see Mt

21:28); “Are not you more important than they (the birds of the air)? (see Mt 6:26); “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” (see Mt 12:48) ...

Jesus’ words always undermine their certainties and force them to derive teachings from every event, even a storm on the lake.

B). Jesus left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea (Mt. 4:13).

Jesus chose this place because it was a larger town, on the crossroads between the Way of the Sea and the King’s Way leading to Damascus. These were the two main roads for trade in the Mediterranean area, used not only by merchants, but also armies, the communication between the two regions. Therefore, it was a strategic point to spread the Good News. It was a town populated by simple people, poor, mainly fishermen. A village on the shore of the lake of Galilee, and on these shores most of Jesus’ action will take place. Many encounters, many miracles happened among the hills surrounding the waters of the lake.

Capernaum becomes a second home for Jesus, because here is his family of faith, the disciples who have become friends. The public ministry was started in the synagogue of Capernaum, where Peter and Andrew were living, those who were the first called together with James and John. Capernaum was, for Jesus, both home and place of work: as he was coming out of Peter’s home, that was now also his home, he met people, stayed with them, listened to them, healed them. The houses were almost reaching the shore of the lake, mingled with the boats ready to sail for the catch.

Capernaum and the surrounding hills become a place of great evangelical concentration: here we have small events (Peter’s mother-in law’s healing, the paralytic lowered down through the roof) and big events (Peter’s primacy, the multiplication of loaves and fish, the bylaw of Christianity with the hymn of the Beatitudes, the synagogue where Jesus revealed himself as the “life-giving bread”, the discourse in parables). Without forgetting the apparitions of the Risen Christ to the apostles to send them for the mission he had started.

C). From Capernaum an example of synodality

Everybody talks much about synodality, today, as a theme cherished by the Holy Father. To understand the deepest value of the synodal journey we could simply look at what Jesus did with his disciples during the three-years apprenticeship to the Kingdom: he was walking with them to help them discover the sense of life, the authentic roots of faith, the meaning of their action. He was side by side with his community, his Church, he was *walking with them*, sharing labours and suffering.

Synod is not a relaxed chatting among friends, a group work, some panel techniques, but a living journey, climbing to the cross in an itinerary of Resurrection.

Jesus did not run his race alone, without anybody’s help, but together with his friends! The Synod will not be fruitful if there will be “only one man directing” nor if “everyone believes to have already the solution”, but if all are ready to take off and walk side by side.

A Synod is not a meeting where something is decided, it is a way of life, experiencing communion with those who are close, with those afar, with those who – apparently – have nothing to share with us. Synod is a lifestyle, the yardstick of our being

Church, the measure of faith. One cannot believe in Christ without considering that He walks with us and we walk together. It is not a stroll, but a journey.

Synodality is also dreaming with Jesus.

When Jesus calls his disciples, he prepares them, first of all, to share with him the dreams of a different world... then he sends them in pairs, that they may learn how to dream together. When a man dreams on his own, that remains a dream. When many dream the same thing, the dream becomes real.

Jesus desires persons that can discover and foster his dream, which is the Father's dream: God is in love with us and we are his dream of love. God's dream is so great that he can't do without any one of us: different, unique, unrepeatable and irreplaceable. God's dream is the good of humankind, wherever they are, work, live, struggle, and suffer, following any banner.

The *Open-air School* that was Capernaum, the lake, and the surrounding hills, used by Jesus to form his disciples was recalled in a wonderful way by Pope Benedict XVI to offer the whole Church a summary of his eight-years papacy.

This was given to the faithful on February 27, 2013, a day before his stepping down. It is clearly a theological way of reading, but it is charming to understand the Pope's mind. A long quotation, that is worth being completely given:

It has been a portion of the Church's journey which has had its moments of joy and light, but also moments which were not easy; I have felt like Saint Peter with the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee: the Lord has given us so many days of sun and of light winds, days when the catch was abundant; there were also moments when the waters were rough and the winds against us, as throughout the Church's history, and the Lord seemed to be sleeping. But I have always known that the Lord is in that boat, and I have always known that the barque of the Church is not mine but his. Nor does the Lord let it sink; it is he who guides it, surely also through those whom he has chosen, because he so wished. This has been, and is, a certainty which nothing can shake. For this reason, my heart today overflows with gratitude to God, for he has never let his Church, or me personally, lack his consolation, his light, his love.

With the words of Pope Benedict, so clear and vibrant of faith, we take up his appeal not to fear and to trust the Lord, who is with us in the Boat of the Church. Let us recall the passage of the *Lectio Divina* (**Mt 14:27**) always resounding in our ears with the sweet and reassuring invitation of Jesus: **"Courage, it is I, have no fear!"**; **let us sail the sea of humanity in the same boat with Jesus, because the world needs Jesus. The crew includes those who want to follow Jesus, the boat is the Church, the captain is Jesus, the course is marked by the direction toward the scattered humankind!**

3). WE OFFER TWO TEACHINGS AS FOCUS FOR OUR LIFE, DURING THIS LENT, AS A PREPARATION TO THE 21ST GENERAL CHAPTER :

LOVE FOR THE BOAT/CHURCH to evaluate our sense of belonging and to find again the bonds of faith for a renewed fraternity

THE BOAT: A SYMBOL OF THE CHURCH

The Boat is a symbol of the Church and of the Christian life. Tossed by the waves, she has “competed well to keep the faith and receive the crown” (2 Tm. 4:7). The Boat is the Church, the pilot is Christ – symbolised by the cross of the mast – leading to the haven of eternal salvation those who entrust themselves to her. But the boat is also the symbol of the community, the place of faith, of communion and sharing of a call to live together the same vocation. Reading the passage (Mt 14:22-32), **surely you noticed that the boat, at the beginning is without Jesus! Even more, Jesus “forced” the disciples to enter the boat without Him, just for a little time. It seems the Lord wanted to put them to the test, not as if assessing who could cope, but to let the disciples know the power and glory of the Son of God.** Once again a storm shakes the disciples’ hearts, but suddenly Jesus walks on waters and Peter, by the power of Christ, will have the same experience.

OUR TEMPTATIONS REGARDING THE CHURCH

Card. Giacomo Biffi in the introductory chapter of his book: *La sposa chiacchierata, Invito all’Ecclesiocentrismo*, Ed. Jaca Book. 1998. pg. 23, was questioning: What should we say about the Church? Is it something beautiful or ugly? Should we boast of it – we who belong to it – or should we rather be ashamed? Can we talk to others being proud and happy, or is it better to avoid the topic, because our bonds with the church are embarrassing, as with a relative or an acquaintance less respectable?” These are not theological questions, but true ones, because they really touch the heart of the believer. Who is right? Whom should we give credit to? With whom should we take side? Where and how can we find answers to understand the mystery of the Church? Once again, Car. Biffi offers an answer that satisfies any objection that could arise: “Let every question be analysed with a supernatural vision; every topic be pondered at the light of the word of God. The theological method requires everything to be put within the frame of the “catholic” vision, that is of the all-comprehensive and internally unified truth that was given us in Christ” (quoted work pg.26). How many temptations we have against this mother, whom we should only love! Some violent, yet clear temptations. Some more obscure, and more dangerous. Temptations recurrent at all times, and others more typical of our time. We could draw a long list of things that we don’t like, but we shall still be back to zero, because the Church “*is a Mystery of Communion and Mission*” (St. John Paul II). To make our reflection on the church more agile, I think the best declaration of love for this singular mother burst out one day from the heart of Carlo Carretto. I am sure it will do good for the hearts of the readers!

◆ YOU MADE ME SUFFER MUCH, O CHURCH, AND YET... (Carlo Carretto) [1]

How disputable you are, Church, and yet how I do love you!

You made me suffer much, yet I owe you much!

I would like to see you destroyed, yet I need your presence.

You have given me many scandals, yet you made me understand holiness!

Nothing on earth have I seen more obscurantist, constricted, false, and nothing more pure, more generous, more beautiful.

How often I wanted to slam on you the door of my soul, how often I prayed to die folded in your safe arms.

No, I can’t get rid of you, because I am you, even if I am not completely you.

And then, where could I go? To build another one?

I could not but build it with the same faults, because they are my faults, which I carry within me. And if I build it, it will be my Church, not Christ's Church anymore.

I am old enough to know that I am not better than others.

The other day a friend wrote a letter to a newspaper: "I leave the Church, because her compromise with the rich makes her no more credible". I pity him!

Either he is a sentimentalist without experience, and he can be excused; or he is a proud thinking to be better than others. None of us is credible, as long as he is on earth...

Credibility does not belong to men, only to God and the Christ.

Was, perhaps the Church of yesterday better than the one of today? Was perhaps the Church of Jerusalem more credible than that of Rome?

When Paul arrived Jerusalem carrying in his heart a thirst for universality, and heard James talking of prepuces to be cut, and saw Peter's weakness in wasting time with the rich and giving the scandal of eating only with the pure; could all this make him doubt about the truth of the Church, freshly founded by Christ, and make him wish to found another one at Antioch or Tarsus?

Could St. Catherine of Siena, when she saw the Pope playing dirty politics against her city, imagine to go around the hills of Siena, clear as the sky, and build another Church, clearer than the one of Rome, so thick, so full of sin and given to politics?

...The Church has the power to give me holiness and it is made totally, from the first to the last, only of sinners, and what kind of sinners! She has the all-powerful and invincible faith to renew the eucharistic mystery, and is made of weak men groping in darkness and struggling each day against the temptation to lose faith.

She carries a message of pure clarity and is incarnated in a dirty pulp, dirty as the world. She speaks of the Master's sweetness, of his non-violence, and in her history she sent armies gutting infidels and torturing heretics.

She passes on a message of evangelical poverty, and keeps looking for money and powerful alliances. Those who dream something different from this reality are only wasting time and continue to start afresh. Moreover, they show that they have not understood humankind. Because that is humankind, just as it is shown in the Church, with all the wickedness and at the same time the invincible courage given by the faith in Christ and lived by the charity of Christ.

When I was young I did not understand why Jesus, in spite of Peter's denial, wanted him as the chief, his successor, the first Pope. Now I am not surprised anymore, and I understand that founding the Church on the grave of a traitor, of a man that was scared by the chatting of a maid, was a firm warning to keep all of us in humility and in the awareness of his frailty.

No, I will not go out of this Church founded on such a weak rock, because I would found another one, on an even weaker rock, as I am.

...And if so many are the threatening words and so great the violence of chastisement, more numerous are the words of love, and greater is his mercy. I would really say, thinking of the Church and of my poor soul, that God is greater than our weakness.

And what is the value of stones? What matters it Christ's promise, what matters is the cement uniting the stones, which is the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit is able to build the Church with such badly-cut stones as we are! Here is the mystery.

This mixture of good and bad, of greatness and misery, of holiness and sin which is the Church, after all, it is me...

Everyone of us can feel with awe and with infinite joy that what goes on in the relationship God-Church is something that belongs to us deeply.

In each one of us return the threaten and sweetness used by God with his people Israel, the Church. God tells each one, as the Church: "I will make you my bride for ever" (Hosea

2:21), but at the same time he reminds us of our truth: "Your impurity is like rust. I tried to remove it to no avail; not even with fire will its great rust be removed" (Ezek 24, 12).

But there is another thing, perhaps more beautiful. The Holy Spirit, who is Love, is able to see us as saints, immaculate, beautiful even if we are clothed as scoundrels and adulterous.

When God's pardon touches, it makes the publican Zacchaeus clear, the sinner Magdalene immaculate.

It is as if the evil could not touch the deepest inner part of man. As if love prevented the soul from rotting far from love.

"I have cast all your sins behind my back ", God tells everyone of us in his pardon, and he continues: "With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you. Again I will restore you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin Israel;" (Jer. 31:3-4).

He calls us "virgin" even when we are back from yet another prostitution in our body, spirit, heart.

In this God is truly God, the only one able to make "new things".

Because I don't care whether He makes new heavens and new earth, what is more necessary is for him to make our hearts "new". And this is Christ's work. And this is the divine environment of the Church...

◆ **THE CHURCH OF MY TIME, THE CHURCH I BELONG TO, IS CALLED TO GO TOWARDS A DIS-ORIENTED WORLD**

The world appears more and more disoriented, and this effects also the Church. Exactly because of this **right now the Church needs to be more loved and helped to be re-oriented every day towards the goal.** As long as the world will last, evil will never be totally uprooted and mankind will have to deal with its weakness. But first of all and above all we need to discover again that the Church is not founded on the cleverness of her pastors. This we shall see in the following pages focusing on the person of Peter. The Church saves and announces the Gospel if those who are part of it look toward Another, acknowledge themselves to be frail sinners in need of infinite mercy. Today we need to accompany the Church in a deep spiritual renewal. The Church is the people of God, needs God, the true light that illumines every man (Jn1:9). Jesus is the light, sent by the Father in the dark night of humanity. He is the rising sun sent by God while we were still walking in darkness.

Today the world has lost the direction! In common speech, when we talk about "looking for direction" we use word "to orient". "Orient" is the East, the place of origin of the sun, and of wisdom, of nature and culture. The temple of Jerusalem faced the east, and Christians followed the Jews, directing their churches from west to east, rather than from north to south as it was for the great buildings of the Romans. The Church always needs the light of Christ and of his Gospel, because always, as a boat crossing the troubled waters of history, she runs the risk of not being the Church of Jesus, of not going towards the East, towards the Light. Let us look back again to the Orient, where Jesus comes!

◆ **PETER'S UNBELIEF AND OUR OWN** to evaluate our faith and find an authentic relation with Jesus: Matthew 8:23-27 Mark 4:35-41 Luke 8:22-25.

◆ **THE SCANDAL of every day is the believer's unbelief: Peter is an example** [2]

I always feel touched, once a year on the Epiphany, by the prayer of Collect that reads: "*grant in your mercy that we who know you already by faith may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory*".

This is perhaps the hardest task: those (we) who “know already” should “be brought” (pushed, drawn, carried) to faith! The real problem is to move those who are near.

It's difficult to evangelise those who only think they should evangelise others.

For a long time now, we keep saying in the Church that the great, painful problem are “those afar”. But, rather, the distressing problem to be solved is of those who are “nearby”.

They are near, and they search no more. They are near, and they are getting farther and farther from the heart of Christian life. They are near and ... with their scandalising behaviour they alienate others. The problem is not “those afar”, the problem is those “at the outskirts”!! I am there! We are there, those who know Jesus, who are acquainted with Jesus, who have grown up in the faith in Christ. The problem is Peter, James, John, Judas... (each person can add his/her name) who are close to Jesus, who are his friends and behave as if they did not know him.

So, we want to understand how Jesus solves the problem with Peter, who can become during this Lent our elder brother, accompanying us to make a good examination of conscience.

First of all, we always ask the Holy Spirit “**that we who know you already by faith may be brought**” may be led to understand Peter's experience in this particular moment of testing, to be able to face his fear, his weakness, especially his unbelief. **The believer's unbelief!**

The time of Lent is conducive to start the exercise of “dismantling” a little ourselves; to look at our selves with the proper light, without magnifying lenses to **increase** our worth, with the risk of suffering and make others suffer; or to **reduce** our worth, again suffering for hindrance to autonomy, cooperation, creativity.

Let us soak ourselves in humility, which remains the best word, and truth on our selves! Let us look at the water, sink in it with Peter, to be caught by Jesus' hand.

◆ **WE THANK THE LORD for Peter's unbelief, because it helps us to become aware of the “unbeliever” who is present in each one of us.**

When a believer labels a person as unbeliever, he confines outside what is inside him: the unbelief. The best way to dialogue with an unbeliever – to recall a vision of Card. Martini – is to dialogue with the unbeliever that is within us. Faith is always little in a believer, is always lacking in all Christians: therefore, a believer is always facing the urgent need to open up to a greater faith. Yes! Our faith as believers is always little, and if we want to increase it, we have no other way than the invocation... We are inhabited by the incomprehensible, the enigma that constitutes our being, making us uneasy and unsatisfied, and sometimes far from the Truth. Within us, there are some zones on which we have no power, waters in which we sink unless we invoke the one who can catch us: **“Lord, save me” “I believe, help me in my unbelief” (Mc 9:24).**

4). **NOW LET US FACE OUR UNBELIEF**

Let us examine ourselves carefully on the lack of faith that lies under the coat of our daily life, to make a healthy discernment. The unbelief is not an opinion, but a fact, to be faced seriously. Just as there are unbelievers – and we are surrounded by them – so there is

an unbeliever in each one of us, and I have to confess that I have both faith and unbelief in my person. During this Lenten time I should really examine myself, because my spiritual life is at stake, as well as that of those entrusted to me by God. What type of shepherd are you, if you have no care of yourself, to be able to lead with truth and in truth those entrusted to you?

◆ **Little faith is the permanent feature of the believer**

Matthew's Gospel particularly underlines the lack of faith that is typical of Jesus' disciples. When there is danger, when Jesus is absent or is not perceived as present, when the disciples feel abandoned, Matthew shows a vulnerable faith, that appears inadequate, not up to the moment, the situation, the role of the person involved. Peter on the waters shows that his faith is insufficient, it is little, but also doubting ("why did you doubt?") that opens a crack in the greatness of his faith, it is also unbelief. But it is not by chance that Peter (and only Matthew narrates this episode) is chosen by Jesus as the rock for his Church. To make him "the rock" is not the solidity of his faith, but the Lord's election, and the Lord is always faithful to his promise. When Peter was moving firmly on the waters his "little faith" was hidden, but with the contradiction of the blowing wind, the doubt comes, and the "little faith" is exposed.

◆ **Trials expose our religious assumptions**

Trials are the test of our faith. They show the sincerity and solidity of our faith. Through trials, our faith is strengthened, becomes firm and bold, is not anymore faltering and doubting. Christian life is a journey: from frailty to firmness, from a faltering spirit to a solid spirit! Faith that remains a theoretical consent without becoming life, could remain just a hypothesis. The proof of faith is trial. Faith grows little by little, day by day, always towards patience.

◆ **Don Guanella, a wrestler: trials shaped his spirit.**

To live our time with wisdom and faith, let us look at the example of our Founder during the first twenty years of his priestly ministry: from Prosto to Pianello. He lived searching for the project prepared for him by God, and already foreseen in the apparition of Gualdera on the day of his first communion. All that he had "seen" at Gualdera, begins coming to light through the darkness of the journey and the trials. For twenty years, searching for the way: Prosto, Savogno, Torino, Traona, Olmo and Pianello. Names of towns, villages... names we know because we have visited them as religious, aspiring to be Guanellian, somehow tourists. Often, though, we ignore the importance they had in the life journey and the spiritual growth of our Founder. For us they may be only dots on the map of the Guanellian tradition. For don Luigi they were crucial passages, founding crossroads, climbing trails that can narrate... "a long, enduring, laborious and exhausting battle. It continued, day in day out, through the misunderstandings and the adverse commands of his Superiors, the opposition and scorn of his brother priests, the mistrust of even his friends and relatives, the difficulties of life itself and the terrible moments of doubt and inner aridity"^[3]. All the time, don Guanella was aware that behind every opposition, behind every contradiction, behind every failure, behind every silence, a word was hidden: the Word of God, His Promise that never fails.

◆ **Providence: Faith in action.**

When the Lord sees that we trust him totally and entrust to Him our weakness and frailty,

he encourages: "Give me your hand, relax, you are not going to drown, don't be afraid, I am with you". There, his Providence is in full action.

In our Founder's life Providence was always in action! Providing 24 hours a day! Providence is essentially the Father's love, caring for everything and everybody, and of each one particularly, as if having no other care. "Thus – says don Guanella – he resembles the sun, which from the center of the universe sends his light and warmth to the mountains as well as to the plains, to the rocks as to the sea, looks at everyone and at the same time it sends its rays to you as if it had no one else to care for other than you. Consequently, as the sun illuminates every corner of the earth, likewise you should remember that the Lord finds you wherever you may be on earth, in order to assist you". (L. Guanella: Let us go to the Father, (Tr. P. Di Tullio) Bristol – RI, 1987, pg. 28)

◆ **What can Christians offer to this disoriented world?**

Our Christian language should find again a word that is no more in use even in the clergy expressions. We have killed and forgotten many words that apparently could not stand the impact of the theological debate, of a pastoral challenge, because they seemed too weak and old-fashioned! But we have to go back to those words! Many have been forgotten, but this is not the place and time to recall them, other opportunities will come. Today I wish to invite you to get back to one: **PROVIDENCE**. If we can't do it on our own, the Lord is helping us with the latest events in our Congregation!

Don Guanella, not far from his death, in 1913 – 1914, was asked with insistence by his confreres to leave some memories, especially about his early years, unclear and troubled. He left a text, dictated in the winter evenings to some secretary who had much good will and more limited skill. He put the title, "The ways of Providence" and it was a search of a guiding principle in human life and in his life, a thesis also experimental in which, through sorrowful and happy events, adventures and risks, failures and good results, he discovers the presence of God the Father who leads all with benevolence. Don Guanella is sure: God has a plan for each person, founded on his love as creator and father. Each person, each one of us, has to understand this project (and Don Guanella used all efforts, with sacrifice) and to cooperate with God who designed it in the heart, in the mind, in the grace given to the person.

5). FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MARY, MOTHER OF DIVIN PROVIDENCE

In past years, reading and re-reading the Founder's life with a Marian eye,^[4] I realised that Mary accompanied him throughout his life, taking always new and different aspects, as if they were "different Virgins". So, I imagined to be the director of an art gallery and I organised a series of images of the Virgin, marking don Guanella's life and contributing to his holiness:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A woman to ... BE INITIATED TO LIFE | <i>Our Lady of Sorrows</i> |
| 2. A woman to ... HAVE DREAMS | <i>Our Lady of Gualdera</i> |
| 3. A woman to ... LIVE...AND LIVE WELL | <i>The Immaculate</i> |
| 4. A woman to ... LEARN HOW TO WORK | <i>Our Lady of Work</i> |
| 5. A woman to ... HOPE | <i>The Mather of Divine Providence</i> |

Don Wladimiro Bogoni

Notes

[1] Born in 1910, Carlo Carretto was the president of the Youth Section of Italian Catholic Action from 1946 to 1952. He later joined the Little Brothers of the Gospel, lived for ten years in the Sahara Desert in Algeria and, back to Italy, founded the fraternity of Spello in the Convento di San Girolamo.

His books have been printed in hundreds of thousands of copies, as true “classics” of contemporary Christian spirituality.

Carretto died in 1988 at Spello, his body lays at Casa San Girolamo.

[2] The paragraphs about the believer’s unbelief are taken from the issue No53 of the series “temi di vita religiosa” of the comunità di Bose.

[3] L. Mazzucchi, *The Life, Spirit ...* pg.369/370.

[4] Don Wladimiro Bogoni *La Vergine Maria nella vita del Fondatore*, 12 Settembre-08 Ottobre 2005 “Dietro i passi di Lui, per una testimonianza profetica - Corso di Formazione Permanente Internazionale, Opera Don Guanella

News di Congregazione



Notizie e Avvenimenti di Consacrazione

Il giorno 06 gennaio 2024, il Superiore Generale ha accolto la Dichiarazione di Intenti di **Tran Thanh Tung, Lasar Ajis Aravinth, Bebaria Dipak Kumar, Mbokoso Baningime José**; ha conferito il ministero del Lettorato a **Lunda Tshikoko Tshiko Victor e Ojobo Philemon Ebi** e il ministero dell'Accolitato a **Sleziak Artur, Nayak Runa (Carlos), Wletou Mensan (Didier), Arockiaraj Antonysamy e Bassani Alessandro**.

I chierici appartenenti alla Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, **Cristian Pérez ed Eduardo Reyes**, hanno emesso la loro Prima Professione Religiosa nella Parrocchia La Piedad, Asuncion (Paraguay) il 25 gennaio 2024, nelle mani del superiore provinciale, don **Ciro Attanasio** e sono entrati in noviziato i giovani **Jefferson William de Sousa ed Eric Soares Ferreira**, entrambi dal Brasile



Nella Casa del Padre



Famiglia guanelliana e parenti defunti dei Confratelli

Il **Sig. Vincent de Paul** (54 anni), fratello maggiore del nostro confratello don **Jaya Soosai Arockiasamy** (Agrigento), è deceduto il 25 dicembre 2023 nella sua città natale, **Thennur, Tamil Nadu (India)**.

Il 26 dicembre 2023, all'età di 92 anni, è deceduta nella sua casa di **Formia (Latina)**, la **Sig.ra Lidia Recco**, sorella del nostro confratello don **Aldo Recco** appartenente alla comunità **Alberobello-Fasano (Italia)**.

Il 1° gennaio 2024, all'età di 73 anni, è deceduta all'ospedale di **Pondicherry, Tamil (India)**, la **Sig.ra Mary Arputha**, mamma del nostro confratello don **Praveen Louis Raj**, che attualmente fa parte della comunità di **Napoli**.

La **Signora Elizabeth**, madre di don **Kulandai Samy**, vice provinciale della **Divine Providence Province**, è morta il 4 gennaio 2024, all'età di 73 anni, a **Salakarai, distretto di Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu (India)**.

Suor Emma Napoli, FSMP, è deceduta nella Casa "Don Luigi Guanella" di **Milano** il 10 gennaio. Era nata a **Casole di Bruzio (Cosenza)** nel 1932. I funerali si sono tenuti nella Chiesa di **S. Ambrogio ad Nemus di Milano**. È stata sepolta nel Cimitero di **Albese con Cassano, Como**.

Il 10 gennaio è deceduta la **Sig.ra Ezinne Marcelina Onyema** mamma di don **Benedict Onyema** a **Ibeku Okwuato, Imo State (Nigeria)**.

Il 15 gennaio, all'età di 87 anni, è morto **Don Efrem Siro Gamba**, SSP, sacerdote appartenente alla Società **San Paolo** e fratello di don **Nemesio Gamba** della comunità religiosa di **Cassago-Lecco**.

La nostra consorella **Suor Franca Brongo**, nata a Gaeta (LT) nel 1941 è deceduta il 13 gennaio nella Casa "S. Chiara" di Albese con Cassano (CO). È stata sepolta nel cimitero di Gaeta (Italia).

Il **Sig. Vincent** (71 anni), padre di don Johnson Vincent, SdC è morto il 17 gennaio a Palani, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu (India).

Il 4 febbraio, all'età di 81 anni in Thailandia, è venuto a mancare il **Sig. Ferruccio Gottardi**, fratello di don Angelo Gottardi della comunità religiosa di Riva San Vitale (Ticino - Svizzera).

L'8 febbraio, all'età di 86 anni in Polonia, si è spenta la **Sig.ra Zofia Baniak**, mamma di p. Wieslaw Baniak.



Confratelli defunti

Don Pier Giorgio Simion di 89 anni è morto il 14 dicembre 2023 nella Casa San Calogero di Naro (Agrigento). Il funerale è stato presieduto da S. E. Mons. Alessandro Damiano, Arcivescovo di Agrigento, nel Santuario San Calogero a Naro il 16 dicembre 2023. Un secondo rito funebre si è tenuto presso la Parrocchia Gesù Salvatore a Marghera-Venezia il 18 dicembre 2023. La salma è stata poi tumulata nel Cimitero di Marghera-Venezia (Italia).

Don Giuseppe Morelli è morto a 86 anni il 16 dicembre 2023, nella Casa Divina Provvidenza in Como. Il funerale si è tenuto presso la Parrocchia Ss. Pietro e Paolo Apostoli a Verdello, il 18 dicembre. La salma è stata poi tumulata nel cimitero di Verdello, Bergamo (Italia).



Altre News di Congregazione

- ✦ L'ordinazione sacerdotale del **Diac. Álvaro Luis Barrios** sarà il 17 febbraio a Floridablanca in Colombia per l'imposizione delle mani di mons. Ismael Rueda.



Date e temi dei Capitoli Provinciali in vista del XXI Capitolo Generale

- ✦ La **Provincia San Luigi Guanella** farà il Capitolo Provinciale a Barza d'Ispra (VA) nei giorni **3-9 marzo 2024**; (parteciperà Don Umberto Brugnoli). Tema: "Nella storia, come un dono che si rinnova".
- ✦ La **Vice Provincia Nostra Signora della Speranza** ad Ibadan (Nigeria) nei giorni **4-11 aprile** (parteciperà Fr. Franco Lain). Tema: "faithful and creative in the charism, co – responsible in the mission, with Christ, we take up the challenge of our time".
- ✦ La **Divine Providence Province** a Yercaud (India) nei giorni **20-25 aprile** (parteciperà Don Soosai Rathinam Antonysamy). Tema: "Rejuvenating the Charism in the Synodal world and working towards financial sustainability"

- ✦ La **Delegazione Stella Maris** svolgerà a Manila (Filippine) la Assemblea di Delegazione nei giorni **7-9 maggio** (parteciperà online Don Soosai Rathinam Antonysam). Tema: "Faithful and creative in the Charism, co-responsible in the Mission. With Christ we take up the challenges of our time"
- ✦ La **Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe** nei giorni 20-25 maggio nel Solaz de María, a Florencio Varela (Prov di Buenos Aires- Argentina); (parteciperà Don Gustavo De Bonis). Tema: "Fieles y creativos en el carisma: corresponsables en la misión. Con Cristo afrontamos los desafíos de nuestro tiempo"
- ✦ La **Delegazione Europea**, avendo fatto l'ultima assemblea dal 6 al 10 novembre 2023 a Como in Casa madre, farà due mattinate di **lavoro online il 23-24 aprile** da per trattare i temi del XXI Capitolo Generale.

Date dei prossimi Consigli Generali per il 2024
(date orientative, passibili di cambiamenti)

- 12-13 marzo Consiglio generale
- 9-10 aprile Consiglio generale
- 14-15 maggio Consiglio generale
- 11-12 giugno Consiglio generale
- 16-17 luglio Consiglio generale
- 6-7 agosto Consiglio generale
- 3-4 settembre Consiglio generale

*Christ is truly risen, as he said.
Hallelujah!*

*May the Lord grant
to all of you
the joy
of the Paschal Hallelujah.
May the Lord grant
the treasure of true peace,
that derives from
the inexhaustible source
of the Most Sacred
Heart of Jesus Christ!*



San Luigi Guanella

**The Superior General and his Council
wish you all a Happy Easter!**