STEP 1 – LISTEN



THE VOICES OF THE GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS IN THE WORLD



SUBMISSION GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

OF THE GLOBAL SUMMARY OF THE PREPARATORY FACTSHEET

AT THE II ASSEMBLY OF THE GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS

Dear Guanellian Cooperators,

the preparation of the Second World Assembly began with a very simple and at the same time very demanding choice: LISTENING.



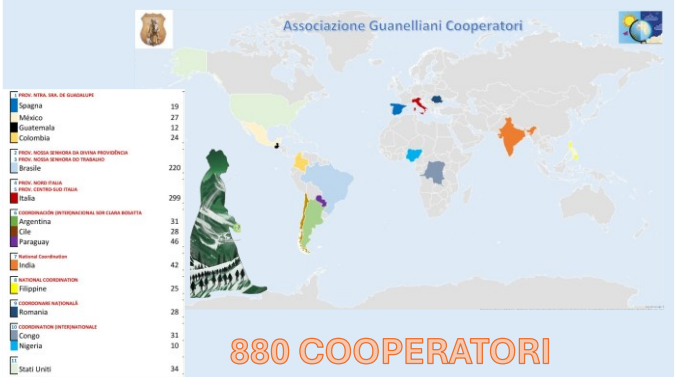
Before identifying priorities, programs and perspectives for the next six years, we asked the individual cooperators of each Local Group to tell their associative experience, to share their questions, the challenges they encounter and the hopes they carry in their hearts.

The pages that follow do not represent a series of pre-defined conclusions. They are rather the restitution of a listening.

The responses come from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Different contexts, different cultures, ecclesial situations that are not always the same. Yet, reading the contributions, one often has the impression that the language of the charism manages to overcome geographical and cultural distances.

Today we are about 880 Cooperators, grouped into 5 Provinces: Northern Italy-Switzerland, Central-Southern Italy, Our Lady of Divine Providence (Brazil), Our Lady of Work (Brazil) and Our Lady of Guadalupe (Spain, Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia), **and in 5 Inter-National or National Coordinations**: Sister Chiara Bosatta (Argentina, Chile and Paraguay), India, Romania, Democratic Republic of Congo-Nigeria and the Philippines.

We are present in Italy (299), Brazil (220), Argentina, Chile and Paraguay (105), Spain, Mexico, Guatemala



and Colombia (82), India (42), Congo and Nigeria (41), Romania (28), the Philippines (25) and the United States (34).
In different cultures and social realities, we live our vocation through prayer, formation and service to the most vulnerable.

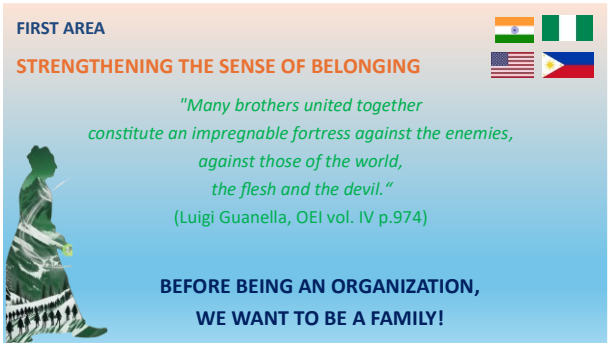


The world consultation was articulated around three major areas that correspond to the fundamental dimensions of the associative life of the Guanellian Cooperators:

1. the sense of belonging;
2. participation;
3. the mission.

The questions proposed to the Local Groups did not simply ask them to express opinions. Rather, they invited them to reread their own experience in the light of the Guanellian charism, identifying what today helps us to grow and what requires more attention.

1) BEFORE BEING AN ORGANIZATION, WE WANT TO BE A FAMILY!



<u>The first area</u> of the consultation concerned the meaning of **<u>membership in the Association.</u>**
The responses collected immediately highlight a very significant element: **the Cooperators do not speak first of all of structures, regulations or activities. They speak above all of relationships.**
The image that appears most frequently is that of the family.
Not an ideal or theoretical family, but a living reality in which mutual support, spiritual accompaniment and sharing of the mission are experienced, learning to walk together even through the fragilities, difficulties and challenges that each community encounters along its path.

1a) What does it mean for me personally to be part of the Association of Guanellian Cooperators?



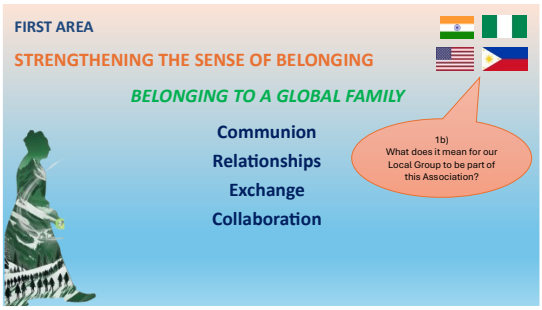
The answers to this question touch on very personal and often deeply spiritual aspects.
In many contributions, the Association is presented as a place where faith finds concrete expression in daily life, reinforcing the sense of belonging to a true spiritual family.
From Brazil they write: *"Being part of the Association means entering the great Guanellian Family and actively participating in the mission left to us through St. Luigi Guanella."* Here two fundamental elements of our identity clearly emerge: **Family** and **Mission**.
From India comes an equally significant definition: *"The Association is a spiritual home, a place of love and service".* A testimony that recalls the dimension of **Faith** lived in **Charity**.

Numerous contributions underline how belonging helps to live one's baptismal vocation in a more conscious way. It is not simply a matter of doing something for others, but of letting oneself be formed by a lifestyle that combines faith, charity and responsibility.

Particularly strong is the reference to the **Promise**, which emerged from the contributions from the Philippines and Italy. In these testimonies, it is perceived as a fundamental stage, capable of making the vocational choice visible and concrete.

A significant testimony also emerges from Romania. The Association is described as a place where we pray together, grow in faith, listen to each other and learn to serve others with greater availability. This dimension of spiritual friendship and mutual support returns in many contributions and helps to strengthen the sense of belonging.

1b) What does it mean for our Local Group to be part of this Association?



If the previous question looked at personal identity, this one broadens its gaze to the community dimension.

From the contributions coming from the different continents, a very clear conviction is highlighted: belonging to the Association means feeling part of a reality that goes beyond one's own Local Group.

The Association is perceived as a spiritual family spread throughout the world, united by the same charism, the same faith and participation in a common mission. It is the sense of belonging to a **global family**, in which each Group contributes to the growth of the entire Association.

The contributions from Spain, Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia speak of a large missionary family called to bring "Bread and Lord", while from India emerges the image of a single family that grows together in faith, charity and mission.

The first word that runs through many contributions is **communion**. In Romania, the Group is described as a place where people communicate, pray, form and serve together; in India, the sense of belonging grows through time spent together, frequent encounters and mutual support; in Brazil, the family spirit is repeatedly recalled as a concrete experience of community growth.

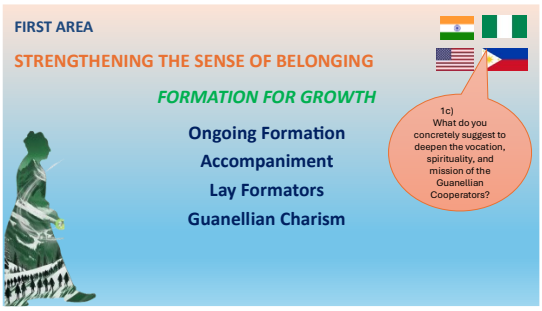
A second recurring element concerns **relationships**. In Argentina, Chile and Paraguay, the Group is described as a space of welcome, fraternity, listening and community life; in the contributions from Congo and Nigeria, solidarity, mutual help and respect and the joy of being together are highlighted. Belonging is therefore lived above all through meaningful relationships that help people grow in faith and mission.

Alongside relationships, the value of **exchange emerges**. Several Groups ask for more opportunities to get to know each other, share experiences, tell about the activities carried out and learn from the good practices of others. In particular, the Italian contributions show the desire to feel part of a wider network of relationships, experiences and shared responsibilities, going beyond the dimension of the single Local Group.

Finally, the theme of **collaboration** appears. In Argentina-Chile-Paraguay the importance of working together according to Guanellian values and of collaborating responsibly to incarnate the charism in one's own territory is recalled; in India, coordination and mutual aid are indicated as tools to pursue the common mission; in the contributions of Congo and Nigeria, the shared responsibility in supporting the

mission of the Association is emphasized. Collaboration thus appears as a concrete expression of belonging to the same spiritual family.

1c) What do you suggest concretely to deepen the vocation, spirituality and mission of the Guanellian Cooperators?



This is probably the question that has generated the most concrete proposals.

Permanent formation is seen everywhere as a priority. The Groups ask for paths that help to better understand the **Guanellian charism**, to read reality with an evangelical gaze and to live the mission with greater awareness.

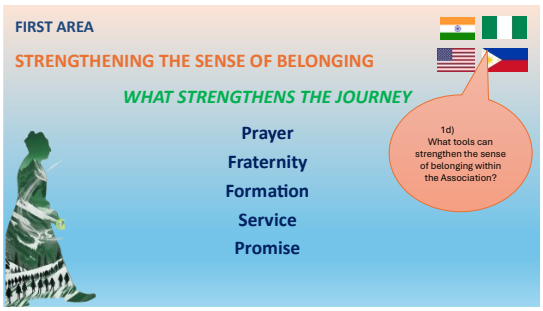
Congo's contribution proposes a truly articulated path of human, Christian and Guanellian formation, accompanied by personal discernment and continuous growth in the spiritual life.

The Province of Guadalupe proposes: *"To create a school to form lay people capable of guiding and accompanying other groups".* This proposal recalls two particularly significant aspects: the **accompaniment** of people and the preparation of **lay formators** capable of supporting the growth of the Local Groups and the Association.

Italy also insists on the formation of lay people who can accompany other lay people and develop inclusive paths aimed at the most fragile people.

One conviction runs through almost all the contributions: there can be no strong mission without continuous formation. For this reason, ongoing formation, accompaniment and enhancement of lay formators appear as indispensable tools for preserving and transmitting the Guanellian charism in today's world.

1d) What tools can strengthen the sense of belonging in the Association?



The answers show that the sense of belonging arises above all from the encounter.

Moments of **shared prayer**, retreats, formation meetings, experiences of **fraternity** and opportunities for **common service** are considered the most effective tools for building authentic relationships and consolidating the bond between Cooperators.

In particular, **formation** emerges not only as an opportunity for personal growth, but also as an experience capable of strengthening communion between Local Groups and participation in the life of the Association.

Some Groups also propose visible signs of belonging. The Philippines suggests the creation of:

"a common logo and a universal pin for all Cooperators in the world".

The Province of Guadalupe proposes a world day dedicated to the renewal of the **Promise.**

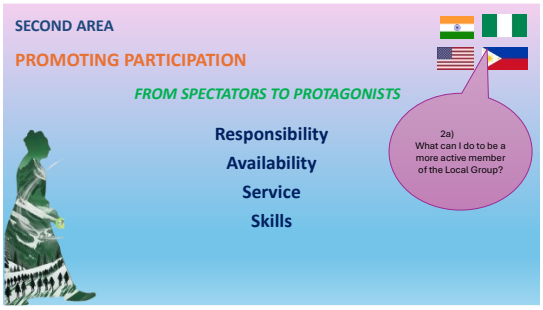
Behind these proposals there is the desire to strengthen the awareness of belonging to the same spiritual family. Prayer, fraternity, formation, service and promise appear in fact as the main tools through which the sense of belonging can be preserved, nourished and made visible in the life of the Association.

2) WE DON'T WANT TO BE SPECTATORS. WE WANT TO BE CO-RESPONSIBLE.



The second area concerns the theme of **participation**.
The responses show a significant associative maturation.
It does not appear to be the expectation of simply receiving indications or services, but rather the desire to actively contribute to the construction of associative life.
Participation is interpreted as co-responsibility.

2a) What can I do to be a more active member of the Local Group?



The answers insist on personal responsibility.
Many underline the value of constant presence, **availability** to service and the ability to make skills and experience available for the good of the Local Group.
The Philippines summarizes this perspective with a significant phrase: *"We are all co-responsible, in different ways, for a single mission".* This statement strongly recalls the idea that each Cooperator is called to participate actively, according to his or her possibilities, offering time, energy, **skills** and a spirit of **service**.
Being active therefore means feeling personally involved in the growth of the Group and its mission. It means moving from simple spectators to protagonists, living one's role responsibly, with availability to others and making use of the gifts received for the common good.

2b) What can we do as a Group to participate more actively in the life of the Association?



Many answers call for strengthening relations between different groups.
Periodic meetings**, twinnings, opportunities** for the exchange **of experiences and shared paths of formation and prayer are proposed, so that the Local Groups can feel part of a single associative journey. Collaboration between different realities is seen as a precious resource for sharing initiatives, supporting each other and growing together in the Guanellian mission.**
A recurring theme concerns young people.
A very concrete request comes from Brazil: *"We have to think of something concrete for the training and involvement of young people."*
The presence of the new generations appears to be one of the most important challenges for the future of the Association. Meetings, collaboration, attention to young people and exchange of experiences are therefore indicated as privileged tools to grow together and participate more actively in the life of the Association.

2c) What can be done to make communication and participation more alive?



Communication is considered a fundamental tool for strengthening communion.

The Groups ask for spaces in which to tell initiatives, **spread news**, share testimonies, discuss good practices and keep the connection between the different realities alive.

One of the most effective expressions comes from Congo: *"To communicate means to create communion."*

This conviction returns, with different accents, in many other realities. The Groups want to know what is happening in other parts of the world, share experiences, feel involved in a common journey and strengthen the bonds between the different communities.

In the Italian contributions, the importance of communication that encourages participation, enhances the testimonies and experiences of Local Groups and makes training materials, initiatives and good practices more accessible emerges with particular clarity. Communication is seen as a tool capable of promoting relationships and strengthening the sense of belonging to a single spiritual family.

From Argentina, Chile and Paraguay comes the invitation to use the means of communication in an increasingly effective way to share projects, charitable activities, testimonies and moments of formation, fostering greater mutual knowledge between the different associations.

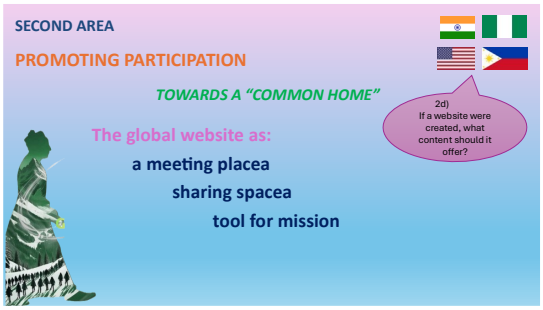
Brazil also insists on the need to develop digital tools and permanent spaces for sharing, which allow local groups to tell their experiences, exchange ideas and feel part of a mission that goes beyond the boundaries of individual communities.

The Philippines emphasizes the usefulness of an international newsletter and tools capable of keeping alive the connection between Cooperators in the world, while India recalls the importance of making greater use of digital media to disseminate news, initiatives and testimonies.

Taken together, the contributions highlight the need for communication capable of **disseminating news**, **sharing ideas and practices** and **enhancing testimonies and experiences**, so that each Cooperator can really feel part of the same family and the same mission.

2d) If you were to create a website, what content should it offer?

The idea of a worldwide site arouses a very wide interest. It is defined as a real **digital common home**.



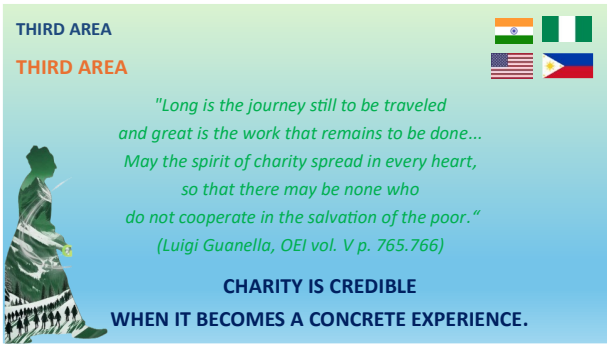
Many Groups hope for a space capable of preserving and making accessible the spiritual and charismatic heritage of the Guanellian Family. Among the most requested contents are the writings of St. Luigi Guanella, associative documents, formation materials, prayer aids, testimonies and useful tools for the life of the Local Groups.

The contributions from Brazil also suggest the presence of a digital library, a vocational space and innovative tools that facilitate access to formative content and Guanellian spirituality.

Italy proposes that the site also become a shared memory of the Association, capable of collecting documents, archives, experiences, good practices and testimonies from the different realities of the world. The importance of participatory management is also emphasized, with the involvement of local, national and global representatives.

From India emerges the desire to find news, events, formation courses, spiritual content and testimonies in a single place, while Argentina-Chile-Paraguay highlight the usefulness of a space dedicated to the activities of the Groups, projects and charitable works carried out in the different communities.
Taken together, these contributions outline a worldwide site that is not only an archive of information, but an authentic **meeting place** for Cooperators, a **space for sharing** experiences, resources and testimonies, and a true **instrument of mission** at the service of the spread of the Guanellian charism in the world.

3) CHARITY IS CREDIBLE WHEN IT BECOMES CONCRETE EXPERIENCE.



The third area concerns **mission**.
Here too there is a very strong convergence.
Charity is not presented first of all as a set of activities, but as a way of life.
The first form of mission is considered personal witness.

3a) What can I do to ensure that the spirit of charity spreads in the hearts of those around me?



Many contributions respond by talking about everyday life.
Charity spreads through example, **closeness, listening** and the ability to build authentic relationships.
From Congo comes one of the strongest phrases of the entire consultation and which directly recalls the example of Fr. Guanella: *"Charity is not preached first of all. It is lived, and then it spreads."* This affirmation recalls a fundamental truth: testimony precedes words and makes every proclamation credible.
A contribution from the Province of Guadalupe also observes how many people say to the Cooperators: *"You have something special".* That "something" is precisely the concrete testimony of the charism, which is expressed in **the acceptance** of people, in the willingness to listen and in the ability to be close to those in need.
Some Brazilian contributions explicitly recall the "Pedagogy of Love" of St. Luigi Guanella as a concrete way to make charity visible in daily life. The spread of the Guanellian spirit passes through acceptance, listening, closeness and the ability to make each person feel loved and valued. In this perspective, **service** is not only an activity to be carried out, but a lifestyle that makes God's charity present in daily relationships and in the concrete situations of life.

3b) What can we do as a Group to increase attention to people in need?



The forms of fragility identified are numerous.
Not only material poverty emerges, but also loneliness, family difficulties, youth hardship and new forms of exclusion. In the face of these realities, the contributions collected invite us to

develop **a charity that is ever closer to people** and their concrete situations.
The reflection from the Argentina-Chile-Paraguay area is interesting. Some groups recall that one of the most important missions of local communities consists in reaching people who live in situations of isolation and loneliness. One contribution states that its mission is to "fill the loneliness of those who suffer through listening, love and community life". Particular attention thus emerges to relational poverty, which calls for a charity made up of **presence, listening and fraternal closeness.**
For this reason, many Groups underline the importance of getting to know the reality in which they live more closely. The Italian contributions speak of listening and **accompaniment activities** capable of intercepting even the least visible fragilities, while from Romania there is an invitation to take a concrete interest in people and their needs, offering help on a material, human and spiritual level.
Significant is the proposal coming from Congo to set up real "**cells of charity**", small groups in charge of identifying the needs present in the territory, coordinating initiatives and encouraging a concrete, stable and organized response to situations of fragility.
Numerous contributions also invite **collaboration** with parishes, Caritas, associations, Guanellian works and other realities in the area. This perspective is highlighted in a particular way by Italy, which proposes a stable collaboration with the realities already operating in the territory, and by Brazil, where participation in social and pastoral activities aimed at the most vulnerable people is encouraged.
Finally, the importance of promoting moments of awareness, training and discussion on the new forms of poverty is highlighted, so that local communities can develop an increasingly attentive gaze and a greater ability to respond to the challenges of our time.

3c) What ways can be suggested to self-finance the Association and support charitable works?



The contributions show a lot of **creativity.**
Markets, lotteries, solidarity dinners, fundraising campaigns through digital platforms, partnerships and community initiatives are proposed in numerous contexts. Even more than the tools used, the need to ensure **transparency** and accountability emerges, so that trust supports the involvement of people and communities.
In some realities, fundraising is already accompanied by permanent initiatives. In the Philippines, for example, the Cooperators have promoted programs such as *Gifted to Give* and health care initiatives aimed at the poorest and most vulnerable people, showing how economic co-responsibility can be transformed into a concrete form of participation in the mission and support for charitable works.

3d) What do you think of forms of distance support?



Forms of long-distance support are generally considered a valid expression of the missionary dimension of the Guanellian charism. In many contributions, the conviction is clear that they can create concrete bonds of solidarity with people and communities who live in situations of particular fragility, fostering a communion that transcends geographical boundaries.

Several Groups underline that these initiatives acquire their deepest meaning when they are not limited to economic support alone, but become an opportunity for relationships, mutual knowledge and **sharing**. Distance support is also perceived as a concrete form of closeness capable of strengthening the bonds between the different realities of the Guanellian Family.

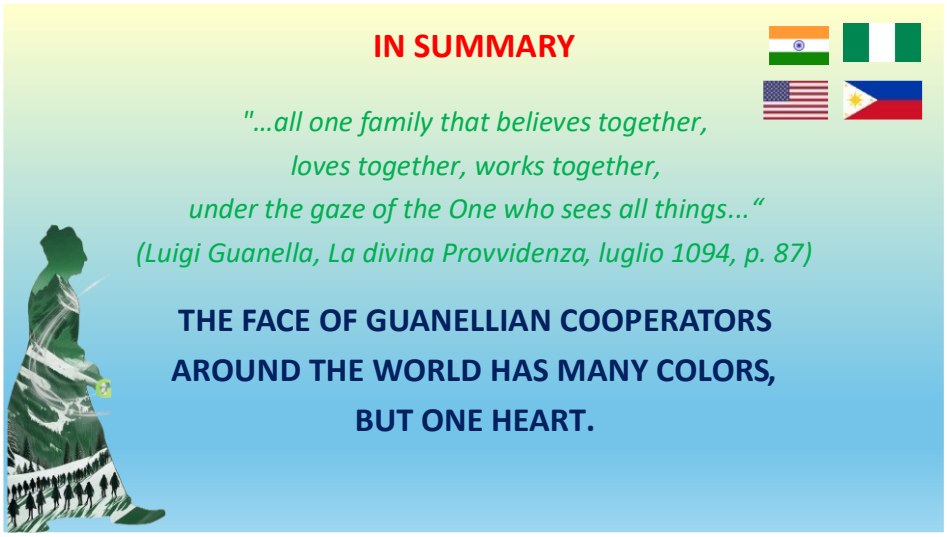
From the contributions of Brazil and Italy emerges the proposal to accompany the economic support with constant information on the projects carried out and the results achieved, so that solidarity does not remain an occasional gesture but translates into a stable and conscious commitment. The Cooperators could contribute **by promoting** awareness campaigns, collecting resources and supporting specific initiatives of Guanelli's works and missions.

India also looks favorably on these forms of collaboration, suggesting support for the missions and the most fragile realities through fundraising, regular contributions and a responsible use of social media to spread information and involve new people in the mission of charity.

The Philippines also recalls that one of the most precious forms of support is shared prayer. Being spiritually united to the missions, works and people accompanied represents a concrete way of participation in the mission and communion between the different realities of the Association.

The reflection coming from Congo is interesting, where the need to move from a logic of simple assistance to a culture of **accompaniment is highlighted**. Support initiatives should foster autonomy, **responsibility** and opportunities for growth, supporting educational, training and work paths capable of generating lasting development.

The Groups of Spain, Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia, in addition to emphasizing the positivity of supporting the Guanellian Family's own projects as a priority, suggest that the Guanellian Cooperators Association can also give life to projects to be supported with the help of all.



After listening to the contributions from the different continents, it is possible to identify some convictions that run through the entire consultation with continuity.

THE GREAT CONVERGENCES THAT EMERGED FROM LISTENING TO THE BALLOTS



- The first convergence concerns the way in which the Cooperators perceive the Association: not primarily as an organizational structure, but as a spiritual **family** in which faith, friendship, mutual support and mission are shared. This image returns with extraordinary frequency in contributions from very different countries and cultures.
- A second convergence concerns the **vocational** awareness of being a Cooperator. In many contributions emerges the conviction that belonging to the Association does not represent only a voluntary commitment, but a call to live the Guanellian charism in daily life, in the family, at work and in the ecclesial community.
- Formation is almost unanimously indicated as a priority. The Groups ask for paths that help to grow in spirituality, in knowledge of the charism and in the ability to take on ever greater responsibilities within the mission.
- The theme of **co-responsibility** also crosses numerous responses. The Cooperators express the desire to be protagonists of the associative journey, making available time, skills and experience for the growth of the Groups and the mission.
- There is also a very strong request to strengthen **communion** between the different realities of the world. Communication, exchange of experiences, meetings and collaboration are considered essential tools for feeling part of the same international family.
- In the third area, the value of witness stands out with particular clarity. In almost all the responses, the spread of the **spirit of charity** is linked first of all to the quality of relationships, to acceptance, listening and closeness to the most fragile people.
- Finally, the **mission** is perceived as a shared responsibility. Despite cultural and territorial differences, the contributions manifest the common desire to make the charism of St. Luigi

Guanella increasingly visible through works, relationships and initiatives capable of generating hope and promotion of the person.

These convergences do not erase the richness of differences, but clearly show the common face that today characterizes the Guanellian Cooperators in the world

ISSUES THAT REQUIRE PARTICULAR ATTENTION



Alongside the great convergences that run through the world consultation, some themes emerge which, although not present with the same intensity in all the contributions, return with significant frequency and deserve particular attention.

- ➔ A first theme concerns the value of the **Promise**, perceived in various realities as a qualifying element of the identity of the Guanellian Cooperator and as a concrete expression of one's lay vocation. In some contributions, the importance of enhancing its meaning more is emphasized, both in the formation course and in the life of the association.
- ➔ The involvement of the new generations **also assumes particular importance.** Many Groups highlight the need to identify new ways to approach young people, make them participate in the life of the association and accompany them in the discovery of the Guanellian charism. It is not only a matter of ensuring a generational turnover, but of recognizing the contribution that young people can already offer today to the mission of the Association.
- ➔ Numerous responses also insist on the need to invest in the **preparation of lay people** capable of accompanying other lay people, taking on tasks of coordination, animation and formation in Local Groups. The request for specific paths for formators represents one of the most concrete suggestions that emerged from the consultation.
- ➔ Another shared focus concerns the construction of a more stable **worldwide network**, capable of fostering communication, mutual knowledge and the exchange of experiences between the different realities of the Association. Many Groups express the desire to feel more connected and involved in a truly international journey.
- ➔ Some contributions also recall the importance of ensuring **continuity in the accompaniment of Local Groups**, especially in smaller or geographically isolated realities. The vitality of the Association also depends on the ability to support the Groups over time through relationships, training, discussion and closeness.
- ➔ Another significant attention concerns **the relationship between the Guanellian Cooperators and the other members of the Guanellian Family**. The value of collaboration with the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence in formation, associative life and mission is highlighted. Formation courses carried out together with men and women religious are proposed and common programming is strengthened. There is a need for discussion on the themes of co-responsibility, participation and cooperation within the Guanellian Family.
- ➔ Finally, in some realities there appears to be a desire to further deepen the **figure of the Cooperator-Operator, dependent on Guanelli's works**, in the conviction that this reality

represents a richness for the mission but also requires adequate forms of recognition, accompaniment and protection.

These themes do not necessarily constitute the priorities of all the realities present in the world, but represent significant indications that emerged from listening and entrusted to the discernment and future planning of the Association.

WHAT DOES THIS FIRST LISTENING GIVE US?



If we had to summarize in a single image what emerged from the entire consultation, we would probably not be talking about a structure or an organization. We would be talking about **a family.**

A family **present in many countries of the world**, marked by different histories, cultures and experiences, but **united by the same charism** and the desire to live the Gospel of charity according to the teaching of St. Luigi Guanella.

The responses collected show **a lively Association, which recognizes the value of formation, communion and co-responsibility. An Association that wishes to strengthen the ties between the Groups, involve new generations and increasingly share the mission at the service of the most fragile people.**

There is also a desire to **strengthen the bonds between the different vocations of the Guanellian Family**, recognizing in the collaboration between lay people, men and women religious an important resource for transmitting the charism to the new generations, accompanying local groups and making the shared mission more incisive

Despite the differences in local contexts, there is a clear desire to walk together, to support each other and to build a common future.

From the various contributions received, a common conviction is clearly evident: **the charism of St. Luigi Guanella continues to be a living source of communion, service and hope.**

The convergences that have emerged, the questions entrusted to discernment and the expectations expressed by the Local Groups constitute the common heritage on which we are called to build the future of the Association.

Now the task of the Assembly is to preserve this richness, to read it in the light of the Gospel and the Guanellian charism and to transform it into guidelines capable of accompanying the journey of the Guanellian Cooperators in the world.

