

DAUGHTERS OF ST. MARY OF PROVIDENCE
SERVANTS OF CHARITY
GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS

THE BOND OF CHARITY 3D

A JOURNEY OF FORMATION
FOR THE GUANELLIAN FAMILY

2022-2023



Roma 2023

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"I Especially Ask Christians In Communities Throughout The World To Offer A Radiant And Attractive Witness Of Fraternal Communion. Let Everyone Admire How You Care For One Another, And How You Encourage And Accompany One Another: 'By This Everyone Will Know That You Are My Disciples, If You Have Love For One Another' (Jn 13:35)"
(Evangelii Gaudium n. 99).

Pope Francis

PRESENTATION

Elements of the logo on the cover, created to represent “the bond of charity in 3D”:

1. A portion of the Church on a synodal journey, represented by the three branches of the Guanellian Family: a Daughter of ST. Mary of Providence, a Servant of Charity, some Guanellian Cooperators and residents of our Houses.
2. A merry-go-round open to the world, highlighting the idea of holding one another hand in hand to sustain and be sustained.
3. A pair of three-dimensional spectacles (3D) over the wheel of a wheelchair, reminding the frailty and the help. Wearing them in a Guanellian manner, they will help us to look at ourselves and the world without forgetting the three dimensions – God, Charism, Mission – to live united in charity.

The bond of charity 3D

It is a beautiful idea coming from the first meeting of the General Councils of the DSMP and SdC and the World Council of the Guanellian Cooperators. The history-making date was October 2nd, 2021. The members of the three Councils of the Guanellian Family, meeting online, wanted to share and get better acquainted. They wanted to face the Family future starting from formation, to lay solid foundations of fraternity and collaboration. All of us were sensing the value of being members of the same Family and of having a common mediator among us and with the Father, don Guanella who surely was rejoicing with us on that beautiful day. Also, thanks to this moment of communication, the bond of charity among us was strengthened.

We felt the need of having a common theme to strengthen our unity starting from Baptism and form the charism: this was the conclusion. The bond of charity was the first theme chosen for this formation journey. Just as the Founder was dreaming: Sisters, priests, lay persons, united by an unbreakable bond, charity that never fails.

The Founder’s thought was immediate. We are united especially by the bond of charity, as the life of God poured forth into our hearts by the Spirit, and the love of individuals who enjoy living and working together.

Therefore, it is an important duty for all Guanellians to aim high in charity, since it is *the life of God poured forth by the Spirit*. The Founder also reminds us, in his 1910 Regulations that we are debtors to one another; the inner richness of each intensifies the unity of all, while each infidelity, even if secret, destroys it.

We set up a committee made of DSMP, SdC and GC to prepare these formation guidelines for our Guanellian Family for the coming

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years 2022/2023 and today we offer you this precious and nutritious fruit for our growth.

The handbook finds its foundation on the Word of God, on the Founder's writings, and the expressions of Pope Francis. With a down-on-earth style, capable to join faith and life, it marks out a precise itinerary. The content will help us to awaken in us the essential value and grow as Guanellians in that charity for which Christ made himself all to all.

Often, we sing that "love is what matters". What makes the difference is the way we establish and carry on our interrelations. It cannot be simply a feeling. According to St. Luigi Guanella we grow inasmuch as we live out the "bond of charity". He was so convinced of this that in 1899 he wrote: "*Religious congregations who sprouted along the centuries, grew inasmuch as they had the good grace to love one another in the Lord*" (SpC p. 974). It is a matter of survival, and of possible renewal of our mission. As those in charge of the Guanellian Family, we thank the committee who worked with wisdom to prepare the text, giving us a real example of family spirit.

We welcome this booklet as a means to continue our journey to holiness together, as children of St. Louis Guanella, in the synodal Church. Let us be deeply involved, personally, in groups and communities. We just finished celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Founder's canonization. Living up what this text offers, we will make don Guanella proud of us. May his way, in fidelity to charity, become our way, our holiness, our happiness.

This is our wish for the entire Guanellian Family
Have a blessed journey!

Sr. Neuza Giordani Fr. Umberto Brugnoli Mr. Paulo Sivieri

INTRODUCTION TO BEGIN OUR JOURNEY

St. Louis Guanella wants charity to be reigning as a Queen in his Homes. This is the "*bond that binds hearts, simple and noble bond*", through it, Jesus attracts hearts and keeps them united to build up "*one true family, believing... loving... working together*".

Thus, the Guanellian houses can become "*a worm domestic hearth*", "*a beacon of light*", and work in such a way that "*the spirit of charity may be manifested in all hearts*".

The bond of charity is a founding element of the charism that Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, Servants of Charity, and Guanellian Cooperators are called to live, share, implement, spread. For this reason – even if many studies have already been produced and published (see the Bibliography) – we chose it as the theme of the first handbook of unitary formation for the three Branches of the Guanellian Family.

An Ecclesial horizon

"The bond of charity 3D" is not meant to substitute the formation plans already established in Provinces, Communities, local Groups, and is offered for the two years 2022-2023.

We want to offer "home-made bread" to be shared and integrated in proper moments and ways, in the various programs.

It is made of three parts, different and linked one to the other, that will be sent by e-mail every 6/8 months, to gradually give the materials to be use at best in the different situations.

Providence made it so that this proposal comes in perfect accord with the synodal journey promoted by the Church for the coming two years, offering "the grace to move on together, to listen to one

another, to start a discernment of our time, becoming in solidarity with the labours and desires of humanity”, as Pope Francis underlined in his opening speech.

“Communion, participation, and mission” are the keywords of the Synod: they can become key-words also for our common journey, because a well accomplished formation journey will **strengthen communion, generate participation, animate to mission**: these are the three great aims of this initiatives.

A prophetic formation theme

The bond of charity, as charismatic principle is well known, discussed, often quoted together with the “family spirit”, but unfortunately often quoted more to lament its lacking rather than to offer a positive contribution.

Let us acknowledge in sincerity that our daily relations – in our family, at work, in community, among religious and lay men and women, among even the three branches of the Guanellian Family – do not always give a bright witness to the bond of charity.

Yet, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” apparently requires this from all the baptised: “I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’ (Jn 13:35)” (EG n. 99).

Once again, the Pope and don Guanella agree to point to the ideal that can renew our existence, to make us able to contribute to make the Church “house and school of communion” (NMI n. 43).

But, do we have the courage to believe it possible for us? Do we have the imagination to start new procedures? Do we have the humility to do it “looking upwards” to the One for whom nothing is impossible, and “looking around” to the brothers and sisters Providence has put by our side?

“The bond of charity 3D” offers not only hints to pray, meditate,

reflect, share, we would like to open paths of sharing for the Communities, the Groups, the three Branches of the Guanellian Family:

- to draw strength “from the Charity” which is God himself;
- to strengthen ways “in the charity” among us;
- to inspire plans “for the charity” in the Guanellian mission.

A journey with three dimensions

The formation path is developed in three parts that look at the same theme from different viewpoints, as in an ideal journey in three big dimensions of the bond of charity.

Don Guanella’s thought and words, always highlighted with *italics* along the text, are the texture that carries the whole fabric of our journey, because only when we draw from our holy Founder’s heart, we can keep an ever-clearer vision of our identity and mission.

The first chapter – **the FAQ about the bond of charity** – will help to gain awareness of the gift we received **in the past**, through the experience lived and passed on by our holy Founder. There are questions and answers meant to guide us to specify the origin, the content, the aim of this “bond” in don Guanella’s thought and life story.

With the second chapter – **the bond of charity in daily relations** – we give a deeper look at the opportunities offered to us by **the present**, to transfigure our daily relations. Following the trace of chapter 4 of the letter “*Amoris Laetitia*” written by Pope Francis, and specifically of his comment of St. Paul’s Hymn of Charity, three “Guanellian points of view” (a layman, a consecrated person, an educationist) try to analyse and describe the bond of love in daily life relations.

With the third chapter – **the bond of charity: work in progress** – we contemplate the **future** horizon, what we are asked to share in

mission and for mission. We offer paths of reflection and directions for action to start afresh with renewed passion our journey, aware that the bond of charity, when lived with constancy, is source of light and strength.

At the close of each part, we find a little hint on the bond of charity as it was lived by Blessed Clair Bosatta.

A path that must be shared

What we offer can be used personally and in community in many different ways.

You could read it all through during a program of meetings or choose some passages to build up a program with a specific theme for your Group or Community, or use it as an instrument for meditation and prayer.

A particular way, very much in tune with the aim of this formation proposal, could be to organise in different places some common moments (face-to-face or online) to share about this text among Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, Servants of Charity, and Guanellian Cooperators, to practically strengthen the bond of charity among us.

We are aware of the danger for this handbook to lay forgotten in the dust of the many suggestions we receive, that is why we would like to support ourselves mutually along the way, sharing thoughts, new ideas, doubts, suggestions, witnesses.

From being a written text, this “Bond of charity 3D” could become a virtual space, open to all members of the Guanellian Family, to freely send writeups, photos, songs, ideas, questions... and any other “fruit of the Spirit” should arise from our facing the bond of charity.

This is another way to strengthen together the **Guanellian charity network** that we are spreading together in the Church and in the world.

May our holy Founder and Blessed Clair help us to live the opportunities to meet and share offered by this path in the coming two

years, as moments of grace, so that, with the joy of the charism given us, we can start some processes of personal and community renewal.

Pope Francis invites us to be each day “artisans of fraternity and solidarity”. With the Guanellian style, we can become “artisans of the bond of charity”: best wishes for a good work!

We give our holy Founder the last word, before starting this journey. He comforts and encourages us:

*I am consoled by the charity that reigns among you
And wish that you will be more and more united
In the charity of Jesus Christ
Avoiding all the flaws and dangers
that oppose the practice of the same charity.*

(SpC p. 1376)

Sr. M. Antonietta Ripamonti
Fr. Nico Rutigliano
Martino Sumerano
Antonio Valentini

At the beginning or at the end of each moment of meeting,
we suggest this prayer:

○ Lord, love is patient.

Help me learn how to wait for others' pace.

○ Lord, love is kind.

Help me desire others' good
before mine, even if it pains.

○ Lord, love is not jealous.

Teach me how to rejoice for others' success.

○ Lord, love is not boastful.

Give me humility so acknowledge your gifts.

○ Lord, love is not inflated.

Guide me, to put others at the centre.

○ Lord, love is not rude.

Make me see your face in others.

○ Lord, love does not seek his own interest.

Make me experience the joy of free-giving.

○ Lord, love is not quick-tempered.

Remove from my lips all words who can hurt.

○ Lord, love does not brood over injury.

Give me a loving gaze.

○ Lord, love does not rejoice over injustice.

Open my heart to my brethren's needs.

○ Lord, love rejoices with the truth.

Guide our steps to You.

○ Lord, give us the joy of feeling that You love us

With a love that bears all things, believes all things,

Hopes all things, endures all things.

Only then can we desire to give

Your love to our brethren. Amen

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MAGISTERIUM

- AL** Francis, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (19.03.2016).
- NMI** John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (06.01.2001).
- VC** John Paul II, Esortazione apostolica postsinodale *Vita consecrata* (25.03.1996).
- VFC** Congregation of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Instruction *Fraternal life in community* (02.02.1994).

WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER AND OF THE GUANELLIAN SPIRITUALITY

- DB** DSMP-SdC-GC, *Basic Document for Guanellian mission*, Roma, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1994.
- CWM** L. GUANELLA, *Come-with-me for the American Missionary Sisters* (tr. F. Lain), Abor, VR (Ghana), 2008.
- FAC** DSMP-SdC, *With Faith, Love, and Competence - Handbook for Guanellian Staff*, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2000.
- LDP** BOLLETTINO MENSILE DELLA CASA DIVINA PROVVIDENZA IN COMO (1892-1915) *La Divina Provvidenza*, Roma, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1982.
- MM** L. GUANELLA, *Maxims of Spirit and Method of Action* (tr. F. Lain), Abor, VR (Ghana), 2008.
- OFOM** L. GUANELLA, *Oh Father! Oh Mother!* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Pious Union of St. Joseph, Grass Lake MI, 2001.

- REG-10** L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of the Servants of Charity* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Havertown P.Co., Broomall, PA, 1993.
- SAL** L. GUANELLA, *Scritti per l'anno liturgico*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, I, Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1992.
- SMC** L. GUANELLA, *Scritti morali e catechistici*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, III, Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1999.
- SpC** L. GUANELLA, *Scritti per le Congregazioni*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, IV, Centro Studi - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1988.
- SIP** L. GUANELLA, *Scritti inediti e postumi*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, VI, Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2015.
- SGC** Associazione Guanelliani Cooperatori, *Statuto generale*, Roma 2016.
- WFG3** L. GUANELLA, *Writings, Vol. 3* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Bristol, RI, 1987.
- WFG5** L. GUANELLA, *Writings, Vol. 5* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Havertown P.Co., Broomall, PA, 1993.
- Sulla frontiera dell'emarginazione** M. Carrera - P. Pellegrini, *Luigi Guanella sulla frontiera dell'emarginazione*, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1986.
- Life** L. MAZZUCCHI, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, (tr. P. Di Tullio), Springfield, PA, 1985.

PART ONE

FAQ

ABOUT THE BOND OF CHARITY

Questions to go into the deep and the thick

Part 1 of the formation journey proposed to the Guanellian Family for the years 2022-2023, contains two sections:

- a group of questions and answers, as a way to enter deeply in the history and the meaning of the bond of charity in Guanellian spirituality;
- some questions to be pondered – personally at first, then in community – to look at my/our experience in the light of this founding value.

To ask ourselves some questions is the best way to avoid being superficial, to go into the depth and seize the true richness of what we have been given.

These are some Frequently Asked Questions, *FAQ*, about the issue BOND OF CHARITY.

✓ **Why did don Guanella think of the bond of charity?**

Don Luigi Guanella “thought that he should closely unite the members of his Institute with the sole bond of charity, in imitation of some other religious society”. “There was a moment, we do not know precisely when, he thought that he should closely unite the members of his Institute with the sole bond of charity, in imitation of some other religious society. This could have been either for the

purpose of fleeing the dangers of fiscal and political persecutions or for avoiding the danger that the papal approval, by stifling his initiative, might destroy the spirit and the direction of his Institute. But, above all, Father Guanella feared that his own spirit of trust and abandonment to Divine Providence, without depending upon human prudence excessively, might be destroyed, suffocating thus its development” (Life p. 148).

✓ **Where did don Guanella draw the bond of charity from? Where did he find it? Where did he take it from?**

He found it in the Bible:

Acts 4:32-35: The community of believers was of **one heart and mind**, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

Psalms 132 (often repeated by don Guanella): Oh, how good and how sweet it is When brethren live together!

Hosea 11:1-4: v. 4 I drew them with human cords, with bands of love.

Colossians 3: v. 14 And over all these, put-on love, that is, the bond of perfection.

➤ In the community or in the association a *lectio Divina* could be prepared and done on the Hymn of Charity (1st letter to the Corinthians) or on a Gospel text as the “priestly prayer” or the “parable of the vine and the branches”.

✓ **Where did don Guanella learn the bond of charity?**

He learned it at home, in his family where there was a strong bond of love among them and a strong bond of charity for people outside the family; with don Serafino Balestra, “a miracle of activity and ingenuity”, who opened the young student Guanella to the interest for culture, arts, science, techniques and industry, but also inspired him love and understanding for the poor, an inspiring figure, a model.

In the Salesian experience (1875-78) spent in Turin with don Bosco; in the parish experience, first at Prosto, then at Savogno; at Pianello and Como don Guanella accomplishes the bond of charity, first with the Sisters at Pianello and then fully at Como

Don Guanella took the bond of charity also from the saints, one among all, St. Therese of Avila.

✓ **How did don Guanella understand the bond of charity?**

Don Guanella links the idea of bond of charity also to other ideas. For example: fraternal love, service, fraternity. When he uses the wording “bond of charity”, he points to different concepts according to the context and the circumstances: charity - unity of direction - union - communion - fraternal love.

➤ One could go deeper (in Italian language) looking for the word “vincolo” on Intratext - Opere Edite e Inedite, there are 49 captions.

Quotations on the bond of charity by don Guanella:

“It is the strength to grow in virtue”.

“It is charity to help one another”.

“It is the strength to carry on the mission”.

“It is an aid for personal sanctification”.

“It is an inaccessible fortress for the enemies of the world and of the devil”.

The bond of charity is *ad intra* (fraternal love) and *ad extra* (service to others).

The true bond of charity:

- is the charity that respects other people’s times of growth, that allows others to be free, without pressing. It requires fraternal correction;
- forces us to fraternal correction, which is not criticize or reprimand others, but living with your brother/sister kindly, with

sweetness but also saying what is wrong, praying about it first, then approaching the person finding

- the right way,
 - the right place,
 - and the right time
- it is saying truth in charity;
 - it is a love that never lacks mercy
 - it is a love that respect the other without prevaricate.
 - it is a love that shows understanding and trust.

The bond of charity for St. Louis Guanella:

- is an essential element of his Charism;
- is a particular aspect also of our mission;
- it is a prophetic aspect, that St. Louis Guanella surprisingly required from his own in the 19th century, when times were not ready to understand. Don Guanella was a charismatic and therefore could look beyond.

Don Guanella also told us that:

“we are united principally by the bond of charity”...
“this dimension of the Charism is the strength of our mission”
“it is the impulse for our life of perfection and holiness”.

The bond of charity is the source, the strength of our vocation and our mission. Our relationship should be a reflex of the charity given us by God.

✓ **What should we do to keep this bond of charity among us?**

We need *“above all win it over the faults of likes and dislikes. We ought to beware of the spirit of criticism and never waste time and lose peace in gossip and frivolous conversations”* (SpC p. 1153)

Pope Francis defines gossip as a “sore”. “The disease of gossiping, grumbling and back-biting. I have already spoken many times about this disease, but never enough. It is a grave illness which be-

gins simply, perhaps even in small talk, and takes over a person, making him become a “sower of weeds” (like Satan) and in many cases, a cold-blooded killer of the good name of our colleagues and confrères. It is the disease of cowardly persons who lack the courage to speak out directly, but instead speak behind other people’s backs. Saint Paul admonishes us to *do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent*” (Phil 2:14-15). Brothers, let us be on our guard against the terrorism of gossip!” (Pope Francis - Speech to the Roman Curia, 12/22/2014).

✓ **What does bond of charity mean?**

First of all, it means to make my brother/sister part of the richness of what I have and especially of what I am.

In his Circular Letter of 1910 don Luigi tells us that the fraternity we are talking about is accomplished by making the brother/sister part of all the richness of one’s person *“as among friends, who share every good of body and mind “* (Reg-10 p. 158). But this cannot rely simply on personal effort; we need to ask the Lord for the gift of *“a tender charity for our neighbour in general and for our brethren, [those nearer to us] in particular”* (SpC p. 1031).

How important it is, that all can give their contribution, and all can cooperate to the good management. For this aim there is need to avoid criticism and grumbling and passing judgment and being suspicious.

St. Louis writes: *“we ought to cure our faults with energy and sweetness”* being strong and delicate because faults spoil the bond of charity.

“It is good to suggest, in this, a sense of pity and a humble competition of charity and patience, and always encourage to the bond of charity” (SpC p. 979).

Thus, all this means building up good relations, rapports of affection among us and with God.

The health of a community/association is not measured by its works, or the nice initiatives put in place, it is measured by fraternal

relationship, how much love is circulating, how the members love one another.

✓ **What is the use of the bond of charity?**

The bond of charity is useful both for a better work, as a strong impulse for mission, and also for each person to grow in holiness.

It is most useful for the service we accomplish, the work we do. All of us, the religious and the laity, are called, united by this bond of love, to serve in a co-responsible manner.

Don Guanella wrote *“They should help one another willingly, in material things as well as by instructing one another in their individual duties”* (Reg-10 p. 140).

This fraternal help does not involve only things to be done, but especially the spiritual aspect.

“The confreres may help each other by praying for one another, giving mutual edification, tolerating one another patiently in the defects always present in any society of men” (Reg-10 p. 158).

“Each one should carry his brother’s load, as each enjoys his brother’s support” (SpC p. 1031).

✓ **How can the bond of charity be accomplished today?**

How can we work and try to enlarge the tent of charity?

How can we make choices focusing on the bond of charity?

Don Guanella would answer that we can do it in any possible way...

“You have no homeland anymore, because the whole world is your homeland. Your homeland is where God is, and God is everywhere” (CWM p. 70).

Then, our charity should live out of love for God, for the brethren, should send us forth, should reach the world’s boundaries, should reach the periphery of humanity.

“The Lord draws souls to himself and keeps them united especially with the bond of Christian charity... Charity is a bond that joins hearts... Charity is a bond that makes hearts noble and great;

it is as strong as martyrdom, as death, it is perseverant because it is a fire which, as it catches, consumes” (MM p. 11).

✓ **What is required to make the bond of charity grow?**

1) Create unity with God

If we are united with God, then we shall be more united among us, but this can be taken for granted to the point that it becomes not true: our daily experience tells us that we pray together, but not always are united among us.

St. Luigi wrote for his Sisters: *“the first bond of union is that charity for which Jesus Christ said that those who love God should also love their neighbours who are also children of God; and that charity for which Jesus Christ prayed that all his disciples should be of one thought and one will, as Jesus Christ was one with the Eternal Father”* (SpC p. 213).

2) Create the right environment

This bond, that is part of the original prophecy, must germinate. We have to create a welcoming environment, that fosters interpersonal relations. *“It is right for all those who dwell in the house to have the same trust and the same love they would have in their own house”* (SpC p. 710).

✓ **How can we build up a climate to create unity of purpose, fraternity?**

A group or a community environment can foster the growth of each person if Christ is at the centre.

To make the bond of charity grow there is need of preparing a vital environment.

Here are four steps to build the right climate.

1) Have broad views and open mind – don Guanella wrote: *“your character and the distinctive mark must be a spirit which is most tolerant, open-minded and inclined to mercy rather than justice”* (Reg-10 p. 74).

- 2) Live with joy - happiness - joyous charity. Don Leonardo Mazzucchi wrote “may every house become a house full of the genuine spirit of don Guanella, made happy by the joyous charity”. Don Guanella often encouraged his disciples to foster a spirit of cheerfulness and to have a personality marked by happiness.
- 3) Attention for prevention. Practice the preventive method that, before being a pedagogic method, is a lifestyle, a spirit to be established in an environment. “*We call preventive system of education and convenience the method of charity, of habit, of being together, by which superiors surround with fatherly affection their brethren and encircle them with prompt care, so that in the daily works no one will encounter any evil (no one should get hurt, sin, make errors – prevent) and along life journey all may reach a happy goal*” (nobody should be left back in life journey) (SpC p. 1029).
- 4) Abound in mercy. Don Guanella said: “*it is much better to abound in understanding and mercy rather than in rigor and justice*” (Reg-10 p. 20)... “*You catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with one hundred barrels of vinegar*” (SMC p. 1941). John Paul II in ‘Dives in misericordia’ wrote: “if you are called to help the poor, all the more you must be equipped with mercy”. Pope Francis at an ‘Angelus’ in September 2013, commented Luke’s parables and said: “if we don’t have mercy in our heart, we are not in communion with God, even if we observe all precepts, because it is love that saves, love, not the practice of precepts”.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

Questions for personal reflection

Some questions for us.

- What does bond of charity mean for us today?
- How can we focus our life on the principle of the bond of charity?
- Can this prophetic intuition/inspiration of St. Luigi Guanella guide today my journey to holiness? My mission? My action? My charitable service? Or is it just the source of the beginnings? Did we lose this dimension of our charism today?

On the topic of charity don Guanella had some Bible passages very dear (“How good and happy living together”, “They were of one heart and one mind”).

- What are the Bible passages I cherish?
- Which Gospel passage do I take as an inspiration to live merciful charity?

Don Luigi Guanella links the “bond of charity” with the idea of fraternal love, service, solidarity, charity, unity of purpose.

- How do I live the bond of charity within my association/community?
- What effort do I put to live service and mutual help, respect and charity, welcoming and listening attitude, in my relations with others?
- Do I try to grow in virtue by avoiding gossip and criticism, overcoming sentiments of like/dislike, staying away from useless and frivolous conversations?

“Bond of charity” means first of all fraternal love. Fraternal charity grows in a “vital environment” with wide horizons, joy, attention to prevention, rich in mercy.

- Am I able to establish relationships of friendship and fraternity with other members of the Association or with my confreres/Sisters?
- How much do I share of my personal richness?
- How do I pray for unity and fraternal communion?
- Do I avoid grumbling and suspicion? Am I a sower of peace? Am I merciful? Do I foster fraternal love also by talking about God, about don Guanella, about my experience of faith?
- Do I put effort in respecting the time of growth of others?
- Do I welcome the other as she/he is?
- Can I accept fraternal correction? Am I able to show others their mistakes with charity?
- Do I show mercy in my words and joy in my behaviour?

Work on yourself

How can I direct my life on the bond of charity?

- I will examine my attitudes and behaviours in my community or Association life.
- I will analyse and spot out the persons I don't love enough. I will think to a particular person I want to show more mercy to, in the future.
- I will think on my personal project of life and try to establish my future as cooperator or consecrated person allowing this primary insight of the Founder inspire me. In this way the “bond of charity” can give impulse and direction to my path to holiness.

FROM THE WRITINGS AND THE EXAMPLES OF BLESSED CHIARA BOSATTA

“I will have much charity with my sisters, always offering myself willingly in whatever they will ask me, help them in their needs, pity them for their faults. I will watch out not to be rude, not to displease others, not to prefer one to the other, in short, to love them with holy charity and as a true religious”.

(Suor Chiara Bosatta,
Proponimenti fatti nel giorno della mia vestizione)

* * *

“Suor Chiara was the good angel of the house, always softening any sign of discontent, an angel of acceptance that cushioned the inevitable pains of this poor life. She was the angel of charity uniting souls, joining hearts and making the house happy. Even her presence was enough to give good example. The good she was doing in the house is incredible” (p. 193).

“She made correction without showing herself angry or upset. Once, sr. Chiara made a reproach, with her usual good manner, to Gervasia Crosta who had trespassed the order of the sister, and Gervasia, maybe upset because some other sister had denounced her, answered harshly. Sr. Chiara lowered her eyes in silence. That silence remained imprinted in the young lady's mind more than and long speech or reproach” (p. 205).

(Piero Pellegrini - Maria Luisa Oliva,
La storia di Chiara, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1991)

PART TWO

THE BOND OF CHARITY IN OUR DAILY RELATIONS

*A “Guanellian” gaze
on Pope Francis’ comment to the Hymn of Charity*

(AL ns. 90-119)

INTRODUCTION

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on family love “Amoris Laetitia”, Pope Francis offers at the 4th chapter a wonderful comment to St. Paul’s Hymn of Charity, to describe “our love in daily life”, in the practical relations and dynamics among persons.

Daily life is also the testing ground of the “bond” don Guanella put as foundation of his Family, because we can give life to authentic and fruitful human and apostolic relations only when charity purifies and renews deeply our ways of thinking and acting.

Scholars tell us that our Founder apparently never quotes the Hymn of Charity (1 Cor 13) in his writings for the Congregations, yet Fr. Martino Cugnasca testifies at the beatification process: “the foundation of the Servant of God’s charity toward his neighbour was chapter 13 of St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, and he wanted us to read it frequently and he used to comment it drawing out inspired and wonderful characteristics in his meditations, especially in the month of June” (Don Guanella, uomo straordinario, p. 135).

So, let us go deeply in the Founder’s thought, hearing him strongly repeat “*charity is a bond that binds hearts*”: how can we

make this faith reality living, evident, and acting, with the limits and frailties of our human nature?

To try and give an answer we read Pope Francis' comment with "Guanellian" eyes, of persons who are called to incarnate in their daily life the values and ideals of the charism that was given us:

- A lay person, weaving the bond of charity in his family, the Cooperators association, his working place, society at large, the Church, drawing light and strength from don Guanella's spirit and witness.
- A consecrated person, aware of the shadows in fraternal life in a community, sharing the effort and the beauty to make community real, as a grace and a responsibility.
- A pedagogue, expert in education and in forming human beings globally in a Guanellian style, revealing that the strength of charity can change our ways of relating.

Your own eyes may further develop this chapter and share new directions to incarnate the Hymn of Charity in your daily life.

1. AN OPEN EYE ON FAMILY RELATIONS

Premise

"The grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony is destined first of all to perfect the love of the spouses" and of the family. With the words of don Guanella, the spouses with the Sacrament of Matrimony "*are united with indissoluble bond to grow to the dignity of father and mother. When this happens, great is the joy in the family, it is universal in the town and very lively in the Lord's Church*" (SMV p. 573).

To be kept joyful, the love between spouses, the bond of charity in the family and in the Guanellian family need to grow, to be strengthened, to be continuously encouraged and deepened.

As a Guanellian lay man, reading chapter 4 of "Amoris Laetitia" with Pope Francis' comment to St. Paul's Hymn, at the light of don Guanella's teaching and example, I have tried to look for some characters of true love, a love that cannot be contained only in the family relations, but spreads in all the relations we live with our neighbour.

CHARITY IS PATIENT AND AT THE SERVICE

One of the characters of true love is patience, shown in "one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense". In the moments of hardships, to avoid, in some daily reactions, to turn the family in a battlefield, Pope Francis invites us to patience, that is being able to wait for the other person's time, allowing the other the possibility to think over about what happened, rather than assailing the person with force. To stop and face one another is more difficult, but more fruitful. Shouting and yelling is easier, but in the end fruitless: the child, the spouse, the member of the Guanellian family will not understand.

We are told that what was called “kindness” is “doing what is good” for the other, making practical choices for the good of the other – and this must not be separated from patience. It derives that if in our family we are **patiently benevolent**, serving one another, we will discover how beautiful and joyful is living in serenity the family Gospel.

Don Luigi Guanella “was determined, wilful, practical, but also patient. He was interested in many things: art, nature, science, technology, but what most counted for him was the human person: interpersonal relations, friendship, dedication, service. He was austere and rigid for his person, he was ardent, made to break the ties and dissolve difficulties. But he was able to be patient and kind, understanding for those who had a slower pace than his. He was not a loner: his childhood in the mountains had taught him the value of solidarity. He was a cordial and joyful friend, even happy, open to every person and convinced that even the roughest or hardest man hides precious treasures and beautiful values” (Sulla frontiera dell’emarginazione pp. 13-14).

- ✓ In which occasions do I normally become impatient? How do I foster and train my patience and kindness toward my neighbour, in my family, in the Guanellian Family?

CHARITY IS NOT JEALOUS

“Envy is a form of sadness provoked by another’s prosperity; it shows that we are not concerned for the happiness of others but only with our own well-being”. On the contrary “True love values the other person’s achievements. It recognizes that everyone has of his or her own right to happiness”.

If other people’s happiness is everybody’s goal, there will be not more unhappy people, because everyone would work for the others’ happiness.

Envy is a terrible sentiment, as the Pope says, it is “opposed to love”. It even leads to hatred to the point of desiring the person to

be physically eliminated. A person can be eliminated even simply by erasing his or her from our life, ignoring her/him. Envy between spouses is not so rare, for the success in the fields of work, or even worse, for the affection the children show to one more than the other. It is also not so rare among siblings, to stop greeting one another for some possible injustice suffered from the parents. We could reach the point of not talking for years, ignoring one another, hurting one another for an accusation that was moved by jealousy and was not pardoned.

“When the spirit of jealousy threatens to invade the house of your soul, as a wild beast, and to upset all the good that is in you, beg anxiously: O Father, guard us from every danger” (SMC p. 165).

- ✓ Am I able to rejoice for the success and the happens of others? Or do I develop a senseless competition?

CHARITY IS NOT BOASTFUL

Don Guanella reminds us that *“pride is the root of all sins...”* (SMC p. 99) and that, together with vain glory and competition, is often the cause of severe family crisis, and also of many hard times in our various life environments.

Charity coming from God heals us from vain glory and pride with the gift of humility. When we are humble, we are not eager to appear superior to others, mainly because we don’t feel as being such, but we have the attitude of serving those we love. This quality leads us to “understand, forgive and serve others from the heart”.

Therefore, humility will not allow to reign “the logic of dominion” but mutual help, with a particular attention for those who need more support: the smallest child, the aged, the disabled, or the one who is less sure, the timid.

- ✓ How do I evaluate my pride and my humility?

CHARITY IS GENTLE, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN INTEREST

Don Guanella “appeared as a good, sweet, gentle priest” (Life p. 397). Pope Francis calls “loving kindness” what St. Paul means by writing “Charity is not rude” and invites to have a kind look between spouses, between children and parents, among Guanellians... to be ready for a true encounter with the other; and to use a kind language made of words that encourage, comfort, strengthen, urge, on the example of Jesus.

Such a kind look will allow us to go beyond the other people’s loopholes, seeing all the beauty that is in them. Cardinal Ferrari was able to see beyond, when he met in 1891 the kind look of don Guanella. He started a friendship that lasted for life, with a brotherly exchange of giving and receiving. At don Guanella’s funeral “the illustrious Cardinal based the eulogy on charity as written by St. Paul and practiced by Father Guanella together with all other Christian virtues (Life p. 461).

Love for others, that does not seek reward and keeps no account, that has no measure and no boundaries in giving, is greater than love for ourselves.

- ✓ Do I have a kind look? Am I grateful when I find kindness? How do I react when I don’t find kindness?

CHARITY IS NOT RUDE AND FORGIVES

Anger belongs to human condition, is part of our weakness, but should not be fostered in any way, on the contrary, it must be mastered. “To nurture such interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation.” A fit of anger may happen at any moment because of external factors, but Pope Francis underlines that we should always make peace with our brethren.

Do you have any doubt that “... *to pardon a fault is a gain and a highest happiness?*”. Don Guanella will answer you: “*Forgive,*

forgive, and you will see a true happiness that will be prepared for you... To this aim, drive back always the wave of anger. And then, give kind signs of affection to your opponents. Forgive, brother, as God forgives” (SAL p. 8).

Pope Francis openly invites us to an attitude that should be proper of all good Christians, but we often forget. When we face harassment by someone, instead of cursing in an open or hidden way, let us bless the person in the secret of our heart.

- ✓ How easy is it, for me, to forgive within the family? And in other life settings? Do I sometimes pray for my enemies, and bless those who may harass me?

CHARITY REJOICES WITH OTHERS

“Our families are the first environment in which we must show our commitment. In them we seek to put into practice the same virtues and the same sentiments that belonged to the family of Nazareth by... nurturing sincere affection which becomes tangible in acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and attentive sensitivity to the needs of the frailest” (SGC 16). This is a commitment that has to be renewed daily in our friendship with the Lord, in prayer done in common, in patience that is renewed as forgiveness and acceptance, in our joy of sharing everything, in our rejoicing for every achievement and success of the other, in a trust that never thinks it is too late.

Our family, and our Guanellian family, “must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it with them”.

- ✓ Do I fully rejoice for the good of those who surround me and for my support to their journey of growth?

CHARITY BEARS, BELIEVES, HOPES, ENDURES ALL THINGS

“Paul’s list ends with four phrases containing the words ‘all things’. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Here we see clearly the countercultural power of a love that is able to face whatever might threaten it”, such as judging, that becomes a sad trap for us. On the contrary, with Love we always show the best side of our spouse, but also of our neighbour, accepting the fact that the other will love me the way he or she can. With Love we can give our trust to our spouse, our children, to others, so that they can be themselves, be valued without deceit, as creatures of God.

Love will keep us firm in a hostile environment, strong to break the chains of hatred. A weak love, that is not based on marital charity will easily give way to the culture of what is temporary, because it cannot struggle and be renewed. This is why the Pope wanted to encourage the couples to think of the indissolubility of matrimony not as a burden heavy on their shoulders, but as a grace derived from the Sacrament and destined to make the spouses’ love perfect.

Don Guanella reminds for the three branches of the Guanellian Family that “*with charity one can endure all things and with charity one can win over all things*” because “*holiness, and therefore man’s happiness, is all in observing the precepts of charity, even when the trials are heavy and difficult to bear*” (SpC p. 1352).

If we are daily trained in true love “*then we will build up one true family, bound with the holiest and most sacred bonds, those of Christian charity truly felt*” (LDP I, lug. 1896 p. 57).

- ✓ What is really for me the bond of charity? How does it impact my deep attitudes and my daily choices?

2. AN OPEN EYE ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Premise

In the 4th chapter of “Amoris Laetitia”, the comment to St. Paul’s Hymn of Charity highlights “some characters of true love”, in which we can see the sheds of the mystery of Love that also consecrated persons are called to reflect in their fraternal life.

Religious communities are qualified to be configured as “human spaces inhabited by the Trinity” and to reveal that *sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships* through “the reconciling power of grace, which overcomes the divisive tendencies present in the human heart and in society” (VC n. 41).

“From the gift of communion arises the duty to build fraternity, in other words, to become brothers and sisters in a given community where all are called to live together. From accepting with wonder and gratitude the reality of divine communion shared with mere creatures, there also arises conviction of the need to make it always more visible by building communities ‘filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 13:52)” (VFC n. 11).

Don Guanella places the “bond of charity”, coming from God, as the foundation of unity and progress for his congregations: “*The Lord, who is Charity in essence, draws hearts to himself. We should let us be drawn by the charity of Jesus the saviour... Communities, especially of religious women and then also of religious men, nowadays stand if they are bound together above all with the bond of charity and with this simple and noble bond of love they sanctify themselves and edify others*” (MM pp. 11-12).

At the light of Pope Francis’ and don Guanella’s words, we read again the Hymn of Charity.

CHARITY IS PATIENT AND KIND

Patience “is a quality of the God of the Covenant”, slow to anger and great in love, who called us to share his life. He does not require for us to be perfect, he accepts us for what we are, has pity on our weakness. How can we expect “that relationships or people ought to be perfect”? Unless we nurture patience, we will always find an excuse to answer with anger or in a harsh way and also our communities will become “battlefields”.

Don Guanella is convinced of this: “*Meekness or patience, you need every moment of your life*” (SAL p. 1190). It is “*the most beautiful virtue you can exercise in community life*” (SpC p. 823) and “*if you want to be strong for yourself, useful to others, train yourself in patience until you obtain it*” (SAL p. 964).

Patience strengthens the heart, generates “a dynamic and creative interaction”, that “benefits and helps others”. It draws from the Lord’s benevolence, by which He surrounds all his children and guides them along the right path. Looking at the Father, don Guanella invites us to “*be like Him, loving, like Him, benevolent*” (SMC p. 123) toward others, because “*our heart needs benevolence as our stomach food*” (MM p. 34).

In such a setting, interactions in the community can be purified through sincere benevolence: a good way of looking at persons and facts, so that we can “o experience the happiness of giving, the nobility and grandeur of spending ourselves unstintingly, without asking to be repaid”.

- ✓ What are the shadows I should clear out within my heart, to grow with others in patience, in mutual acceptance, and to learn how to look at others with benevolence?

CHARITY IS NOT JEALOUS

The absolute opposite to benevolence in envy. Sometimes open, sometimes hidden, it causes “sadness provoked by another’s prosperity” and makes us “concerned... only with our own well-being”. “True love values the other person’s achievements”, and invites to look at each brother or sister “with the eyes of God, who gives us everything” and as a Father celebrates every one of our little steps. We can hear Jesus’ words to the unhappy workers of the first hour: “My friend, I do you no wrong... can’t I do what I want with my belongings? Are you jealous because I am good?” (Mt 20,13.15).

Envy is a real plague for communities. Don Guanella, with his down-to-earth faith suggests some ways to oppose these feelings that destroy the bond of charity: “*have recourse to God and... use for them the most proper cares: think well and heartily of persons toward which we are tempted to be jealous, speak well of them whenever there is the opportunity, finally, show them all the good attitudes of affection and good service*” (SpC p. 250).

- ✓ Have I the courage to accept the sentiment of jealousy I sometimes feel? Toward whom is it directed especially? What do I do to oppose it?

CHARITY IS NOT BOASTFUL, NOT PROUD

God, the Almighty, became a child, because “what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak”. Jesus, the Master, kneels down to wash the feet to his disciples. He came to serve and not to be served. Every attitude of vain glory, pride, arrogance is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and precludes the visibility of His presence in the community. “The logic of domination and competition... destroys love”; humility, which is truth and makes us authentic, is the sure way “to understand, forgive and serve others from the heart”.

For don Guanella, all the members of the Little House should have: “a spirit of simple humility, through which the individual sees in everything and always the Lord disposing of people and things, so that she never comes out with useless complaints, with superfluous”. And he is sure that “such humble and simple spirit will lead to the other beautiful gift, that is to love God with lively affection and the neighbour as oneself” (SpC p. 27).

- ✓ What is humility for me? Am I convinced that only a humble spirit allows me to be an authentic person, a builder of communion?

CHARITY IS GENTLE, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN INTEREST

Love enriches our daily interactions with gentleness, courtesy, warmth. “Entering into the life of another, even when that person already has a part to play in our life, demands the sensitivity and restraint which can renew trust and respect”. This is the style of God who respects our freedom and waits for us to open the door of our hearts. It is the style of Jesus who has for all “words of comfort, strength, consolation, and encouragement”.

Don Guanella invites us to learn from Him: “*Staying at the presence of your Saviour and sitting at his blessed table, you acquire the kindness that makes you loving. You acquire the goodness that makes you lenient with your neighbour*” (SAL pp. 1219s).

Thus, we enter the logic of gratuity, choosing “to be not only consumers of community, but above all its builders; to be responsible for each other’s growth; to be open and available to receive the gift of the other; to be able to help and to be helped; to replace and to be replaced” (VFC n. 24).

In this way “love can transcend and overflow the demands of justice, expecting nothing in return, and... can lead to laying down one’s life for another”, for those who “*can climb to the greatness of*

the divine mind, the just and ample criterion of the charity of Jesus Christ” (SpC p. 512), in the words of don Guanella.

- ✓ How can I nurture this generosity that allows one to give freely till the end?

CHARITY DOES NO ASSAULT AND FORGIVES

In our daily life are present misunderstandings, contrasts, moment of disagreement that nurture sentiments of aggressivity in us and lead to attitudes of self-defence and rejection of others. It is an “interior hostility” that tries to “permeate our attitude toward others” and wears off the bonds of belonging. We all need the help of the Holy Spirit to reconcile our differences, to build up unity and to live the new commandment of the Lord Jesus, “love one another, as I have loved you!”.

“A sweet and tender love for our neighbour is the best gift we can have from God on earth” (SpC p. 946) don Guanella tells us, because “*when you break the holy bond of charity among brethren, you spoil the best work done by the Lord to sanctify yourself and others*” (SAL p. 13).

Grace opens our hearts to first of all see us as “sinners who are forgiven”, called to be transformed, renewed, sanctified by God. “If we accept that... the Father’s love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love” and forgive others.

In this way we will enjoy an ever-renewed fraternal life, because don Guanella assures us that “*whoever forgives, is at peace with God, with the others and with himself*” (SAL p. 69).

- ✓ Am I able to read and understand my reactions? How do I try to purify them?

CHARITY REJOICES WITH OTHERS

A true love finds its full expression in a deep sharing of others' joys and sorrows. "This is impossible for those who must always be comparing and competing".

"Spirituality of communion means being able to understand by brethren in faith within the deep unity of the mystical body, and therefore as people who belong to me... this means also being able to see first of all the positive part of others, to be welcomed and valued as God's gift. It means making space for my brethren and carrying one another's burden. Unless there is such a spiritual journey, external means of communion will be of little use" (RdC n. 29).

Don Guanella writes that, to enjoy "*the intimate joy of brethren living of faith and charity*" (SpC p. 1184), "*every member of the family has to correct as much as possible his/her temperament and to adjust in everything to a simple and easy-mannered and happy approach, so that all can admire, be happy, and have good example*" (MM p. 18).

- ✓ Am I able to be sincerely happy about other people's good? How do I show it?

CHARITY BEARS, BELIEVES, HOPES, ENDURES ALL THINGS

"Love coexists with imperfection. It "bears all things" and can hold its peace before the limitations of the loved one... Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything... Love knows that others can change, mature... It shows a certain dogged heroism, a power to resist every negative current, an irrepressible commitment to goodness".

God calls also consecrated persons to a journey along these steps, because "it is the love of God, poured into our hearts by the Holy

Spirit, from which religious community takes its origin and is built as a true family gathered together in the Lord's name" (VFC n. 8).

Don Guanella states that "*with charity we can bear everything and with charity we can overcome everything*" (SpC p. 946) because "*holiness, and therefore happiness for man, is all in observing the precepts of charity, even when trials are heavy and difficult to bear*" (SpC p. 1352).

If we train ourselves daily in true love "*then we shall make one and true family, bound with the most sacred and holiest bonds, those of a truly felt Christian charity*" (LDP I, luglio 1896 p. 57).

- ✓ What is really for me the bond of charity? How does it impact my deep attitudes and my daily choices?

3. AN OPEN EYE ON EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS

Premise

I tried to read according to Guanellian pedagogy some of the ideas proposed in the fourth chapter of the Apostolic Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia”.

This is the method I used:

- I specify the numbers of the Exhortation and quote some sentences;
- I underline the educational dimension making connections with the Basic Document for Guanellian Mission (PEG) and “With Faith Love and Competence (FLC);
- I specify the numbers of these texts where I find more evident connections;
- at the end of each part there are some questions.

89. LOVE IN MATRIMONY

“All that has been said so far would be insufficient to express the Gospel of marriage and the family, were we not also to speak of love... The word ‘love’, however, is commonly used and often mis-used.”

To love, to cherish, to seek the other person’s good, also in the educational field is an essential theme. Even more so in a Guanellian pedagogy. The founder understood education above all as a work of the heart, symbolically expressed as “surround with affection” (PEG 22, 23, 29, 31, 32, 33, 43, 86 - FLC 25, 74). Every interaction has its source from the ways of the heart and moves along the ways of the heart. It is based, it grows it is fostered by the affective dimension, that goes on to produce attitudes and behaviours.

To follow the ways of the heart means to involve, respect, and sometimes also “jump into” apparently impossible or useless undertakings. It means also to reach the deepest point of the other person’s soul and allow the other to do the same. It leads to defend, when the way becomes harder, the “primacy of the heart over techniques”. Of course, it is a love enlightened by intelligence. A love that is felt and also thought, that allows us to “enter in an educational syntony” with the other, no matter the condition. It means being ready to take on the delicate task of being part of the other person’s life, entering the person’s deepest dimensions, with the risk that the other will reach our own deepest dimensions. Each human being loves and needs love. And this is the human being’s greatest richness.

- ✓ What helps me to love, what hinders my loving? Am I afraid to love? Or to let others love me?

91. LOVE IS PATIENCE

“Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily. We will end up incapable of living together, antisocial, unable to control our impulses”.

Patience is a great pedagogical virtue. It is not by chance that it has an important place in the Guanellian educational documents, being listed among the basic pedagogical qualities (FLC 80 - PEG 27, 34, 35, 36). It is rightly underlined that patience is not resignation, but “the virtue of actively waiting for the person’s growth, doing all that is possible to favour this growth”. It rules out imposition, rather it “goes by the ways of conviction and persuasion”. Patience means being able to wait, to respect times and limitations, our own and the other’s. It often means to accept frustration and being able to manage it. To be patient does not mean to give up, to surrender, undervalue, reduce; it means never to lose hope in the “treasure of good”

that each person holds. It means to have always confidence on the person I face, as we are invited by don Guanella that wrote: “*it is good to encourage always, never to humiliate*” (SpC p. 1043).

- ✓ Do I easily lose patience? What upsets me usually? What is easier to accept for me?

92. LOVE ALWAYS IMPLIES A DEEP SENS OF COMPASSION

“Love always has an aspect of deep compassion that leads to accepting the other person as part of this world, even when he or she acts differently than I would like”.

The word compassion may appear obsolete, but it identifies well an important interior attitude which, as it is said in our PEG (33), provides authenticity to the educational interaction and implies “to let our heart be touched when we see other people’s needs”. It is the will to try and understand the other person’s needs, hopes, desires, to allow them deep within us and let them echo. It gives way to practical actions showing closeness. Compassion is similar to another word, much used in education, that is empathy as the ability to get in tune with the other. Being in tune in an attentive and “soft” way, keeping the balance between closeness and distance, shunning impulsivity and sentimentality (FLC 74).

- ✓ When am I able to put aside “my self”, to make space for the other within me? What helps me to do this? What hinders this? Am I lazy in my service?

93. LOVE IS KIND: THE ATTITUDE OF BENEVOLENCE

“Patience, as said in the first place, is not a completely passive attitude, but one accompanied by activity, by a dynamic and creative interaction with others. The word indicates that love benefits and

helps others. For this reason it is translated as “kind”; love is ever ready to be of assistance”.

Benevolence is a word that is very cherished in Guanellian pedagogy (PEG 32). It stands first among the interior attitudes that are essential for the educational interaction and it is defined as a “deep and strong current of affection, that opens to a free and convinced encounter with the other, it grows in one’s heart and leads it to desire with all strength the good of the other”. How beautiful! Benevolence makes us look at the other first of all as somebody to love and to receive love from, before seeing him/her as a person to be sustained and helped.

- ✓ What, who moves me to emotion? Do I feel, within me, the urgent need to respond to the necessities of those I meet?

97-98. LOVE IS ALSO HUMILITY

“Those who love not only refrain from speaking too much about themselves, but are focused on others; they do not need to be the centre of attention. ... Love, on the other hand, is marked by humility; if we are to understand, forgive and serve others from the heart, our pride has to be healed and our humility must increase.”

Being educators implies being humble. The full awareness of our loopholes is the starting point for ways of true growth. This awareness of our need of others helps us to build together and gives us the joy of being close to one another. It also helps to accept in serenity the frustration of some failures or the sense of being powerless. Moreover, it gives us the conscience that all have something to communicate, to give, to teach (FAC 96-100).

- ✓ What is the idea I have of myself? Do I acknowledge and accept my limitations? Do I feel the need of others?

103-104. WITHOUT INTERIOR HOSTILITY

“To nurture such interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation. Indignation is only healthy when it makes us react to a grave injustice; when it permeates our attitude towards others it is harmful”.

Surely, one of the essential requirements for a good educator is self-control and balance. This means being able to see within ourselves what triggers annoyance and anger, and learning how to master them. Living with them not only will prevent us from being of help in our educational relations, but will make us ugly and isolated. These are defined as basic Guanellian pedagogical qualities in FLC (87-90).

- ✓ What and who triggers my anger? What helps me to get rid of it? How do I make the transformation?

105-106-108. FORGIVING

“Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment... forgiveness is rooted in a positive attitude... forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy... Today we recognize that being able to forgive others implies the liberating experience of understanding and forgiving ourselves.”

Forgiveness also sounds old fashioned today... yet we need it so much. Learning how to forgive others and ourselves is a human and pedagogical virtue. Without the two “movements” we cannot go anywhere. But, as the Apostolic Exhortation says, it is not easy... surely, we can be helped by the personal spiritual experience, by family, by friends... The entire Guanellian pedagogical (and not only) literature we find echoes of its importance.

- ✓ How hard is it for me, to forgive? Who do I forgive more

easily, and who less? Do I have a nice remembrance of a personal experience of forgiveness?

111-112-113. IT BEARS ALL THINGS

“It implies limiting judgment, checking the impulse to issue a firm and ruthless condemnation... We often forget that slander can be quite sinful; it is a grave offense against God... In any event, they keep silent rather than speak ill of them... Love coexists with imperfection. It “bears all things” and can hold its peace before the limitations of the loved one”.

How beautiful is this invitation to “keep up our guard” against gossip and slander. What a big temptation of everybody! Speaking good of others demands good will and effort, but it can become a virtuous pedagogical habit, because it fosters our growth and that of others, and makes the world better. To be clear and sincere leads us in this direction... moreover, learning how to keep silent (how difficult it is, in this world flooded with words) helps us to keep the other intact as much as possible (PEG 17, 37, 26, 27, 28, 35, 106 - FAC 48-53, 167-171).

- ✓ How able am I to check my impulse to judge? And to keep silent?

114-115-116-117. IT BELIEVES, IT HOPES

“This trust enables a relationship to be free... Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything... Following upon what has just been said, this phrase speaks of the hope of one who knows that others can change, mature and radiate unexpected beauty and untold potential...”.

Our PEG states: “trust is a very important pedagogical rule: it fosters trust in others and liberates their best energies” (36). Trust

generates freedom and lays the foundation of optimism and therefore hope. In education, the effects of this attitude are well known. Many studies have proved the outcome of the “Pygmalion or Rosenthal effect” as a prophecy that is self-accomplished: when a teacher thinks that a child is less gifted (and thus has less confidence in the child’s abilities), the teacher unconsciously behaves with this child in a different way, and the child will behave consequently.

- ✓ What is trust, for me? Do I fear to let the other free? How do I foster an optimistic view? What helps me to have hope?

126-127-128. JOY AND BEAUTY

“Joy (...) increases our pleasure and helps us find fulfilment in any number of things, even at those times of life when physical pleasure has ebbed... Tenderness, on the other hand, is a sign of a love free of selfish possessiveness. It makes us approach a person with immense respect and a certain dread of causing them harm or taking away their freedom”.

An optimistic view opens to joy, the joy of meeting someone, sharing life, building together, making a journey on the same way, being close in space and time. Our PEG describes this with the word cheerfulness “which reflects exteriorly the pleasure of meeting with others” (38). Joy enlightens the beauty which is proper of each person, the beauty that should colour true and important interactions. Beauty is attractive and charming, and make extra-ordinary what is ordinary. Joy and beauty are “interior movements” that become practical in actions of courtesy and attention, in kindness and tenderness (not in sentimentalism!) (FAC 54-63, 91-95).

- ✓ Am I able to show joy? What gives me joy? Do I see the beauty that surrounds me? Am I attentive and gentle?

133-134-135. LOVE IS EXPRESSED AND GROWS

“... This love must be freely and generously expressed in words and acts. ... Three words: ‘Please’, ‘Thank you’, ‘Sorry’. Three essential words! ... The right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love All this occurs through a process of constant growth. ... A love that fails to grow is at risk. ... A celestial notion of earthly love forgets that the best is yet to come...”.

These are three essential words also in education! How great is the power of words, and how important to use them well! Today more than ever, too many words are used, and often out of place. The possession of good communication abilities is essential in life and particularly for a good educator. I like the fact that here is often underlined how love (and I add education) is a journey of constant and continuous growth. This is well expressed in our pedagogical Guanelian literature (PEG 21, 29, 51, 76, 106, 107). Don Guanella also uses a happy expression: “*the work of education in general and in particular is a work of every day for all the days of our life*” (SIP 761).

- ✓ How do I use words? In my interaction, am I aware that the best is yet to come?

136-137-138-139-140-141. DIALOGUE

“Dialogue is essential for experiencing, expressing and fostering love...This means cultivating an interior silence that makes it possible to listen to the other person without mental or emotional distractions. ... an open mind. Don’t get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions, but be prepared to change or expand them. ... for a worthwhile dialogue we have to have something to say. This can only be the fruit of an interior richness...”.

Once again, we find the value of the communication abilities, how “heavy” words can be, and how important it is to use them well. Going deeper, here the topic is dialogue and mutual exchange. With a simplification, we can say that it is characterised by alternating production and listening, words and silence. Here, listening is specially underlined. A good educator is also a wonderful listener! As it is well expressed here; to allow the other person’s words echo within me (which is true listening) I must silence my own words. It is also nice to find the invitation to have an open mind and, almost jokingly, to have something to say! In our PEG we also find (37) a strong invitation to “establish a frank and spontaneous dialogue... avoid any erosion of the person’s esteem and reputation... inform and exchange ideas and experiences...”. The same is found in FLC (79) where it is written that “the quality and effectiveness of any action in education, rehabilitation, assistance, pastoral, are determined by the quality of communication”.

- ✓ What kind of communicator am I? What is helping, and what hinders me? Am I a good listener?

143-145-146-147. THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS, GOD LOVES THE JOY OF HIS CHILDREN

“Desires, feelings, emotions, what the ancients called “the passions”, all have an important place in married life... They ground the most elementary psychological activity... This calls for a pedagogical process that involves renunciation... Training in the areas of emotion and instinct is necessary, and at times this requires setting limits”.

Guarding the necessary attention, I think also in education we should talk of desires, feelings, emotions and passions. They are the fire that warms up our interactions, the strength moving our activities, the supply of energy allowing us to face with courage also the hardest challenges. They are essential dimensions of the human be-

ing and of interrelations, particularly in education, to the point that for some years now, in pedagogy and psychology, we talk of emotional intelligence, of how to detect it and educate it. Not less important, in this journey of growth, is the call to renunciation and setting limits. (FAC 48-53 - PEG 4, 14, 18, 59, 77, 86, 87, 89, 90).

- ✓ Do I feel emotionally intelligent? In what should I grow more? Am I able to live in serenity renunciations and limits?

FROM THE WRITINGS AND THE EXAMPLES OF BLESSED CHIARA BOSATTA

"I will have much love for the girls: I will teach them all the little I know. I will try to talk to them always kindly, love them all the same, correct them in their defects, but always with good manner (...) I will try my best to be always patient and sweet, no matter what occasion will come. I will never let words of impatience out of my mouth, nor impoliteness or do acts that may fail in this virtue. Divine Heart of my Jesus, make me similar to you, that is meek and humble of heart".

(Suor Chiara Bosatta,
Proponimenti fatti nel giorno della mia vestizione)

* * *

Sr. Chiara was a "sack of humility" that was reflected on all those living in the Institute, all making effort to follow her example (...). When she made a good deed, she tried not to let it be known and complained if she received praise for it. For her, the orphaned girls and all others were good, even if they did not comply with their duties. She said: I am the one who is not able to give them the right direction (...). She had a frank temperament. She loved all in the Lord, without distinctions; she was dear to all for her gentleness, sweetness, and good manners (...). She spoke in soft moods. Always had a smile and her heart on her lips. (...) Attentive and easy-mannered, she was easily cooling down every misunderstanding or discontent, to comfort every sorrow and to put balm on all sores, and to bind with bonds of holy charity every heart, to give joy to the house and good example to all.

(Piero Pellegrini - Maria Luisa Oliva,
La storia di Chiara, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1991, pp. 214.215.216)

PART THREE

THE BOND OF CHARITY: WORK IN PROGRESS

Food for thought and lines of action

Bond of charity

Don Guanella was firmly convinced that charity was the main bond for the members of the women congregation and also for the male congregation that was beginning. For him, the bond of charity before anything else, even before the vows, was the foundation of the unity, the original strength, the permanent binding force of each community and of the entire Institute. This conviction is part of the charism, and today also the Guanellian Cooperators cherish and foster it.

The founder wrote: "*When you want to construct a solid building, you have to use good stones and better cement. Have no doubts, then, that the house will remain firm to all the impacts of tempest. Such is a spiritual building. Choose as members of an Institute persons rich of good virtues, consolidate them with the bond of charity and you will have an Institution that can defy the torrents of human passions and will appear winner even over the passing of time*" (SIP p. 16).

- ✓ We have here a first outline for discussion: let us put in this frame of reference the three branches of the Guanellian family, and more specifically our human relations and the life of our communities? His intuition, is it outdated or still valid

for us? Is it useful also to repair the fabric of a torn society? In other words, are our community relations a model for human relations in society? Our family life, is it a model for a society where family is often scattered?

On the family model

Don Guanella was ready to forfeit almost everything: the possibility of pronouncing vows, the advantage of being approved as a religious congregation, the approval of the Institute as a charity corporate body..., let all these be lost, what could keep the members of the Little House of Como together was the bond of charity. And this accounts for the model he chose for community life: the Holy Family of Nazareth, united by nothing else but Charity, God himself.

The commitment to be a family, for us as Guanellians, is the first way of apostolate: we are together to help one another and to help us grow in charity. The Lord gathered us in community “*to do a little good to one another*” (SpC p. 1381).

- ✓ As consecrated persons and Cooperators, we can look at this outline for reflection: are the members of my group the persons the Lord has put by my side, brothers and sisters with whom I have to grow in charity to reach together the Father’s House? Do I hold confreres and sisters of my community, especially the aged and sick, the most precious treasure given by God? Am I convinced that the bond of charity is stronger than the bond of blood?

For the mission

For us children of don Guanella, the first form of dedication (which means of mission, of apostolate) is dedication to the confrere, the sister, the other cooperator, the community, the group.

In this line of thought, a mission enacted as a single-handed initiative has no meaning. It may be a heroic action, but it is not the project we are called to.

If we want to use stronger expressions, there are two fundamental truths affirmed by don Guanella with the bond of charity: first, the union among us is not existing in itself, but for the mission; second, not less important, the mission cannot be accomplished unless there is union among us.

- ✓ A hint for an evaluation: how can we accomplish this vision of the Founder when we are alone, or maybe two, in the apostolate fields?

Concern for our formation

We need to be concerned about our formation, so that both lay and consecrated persons may be educated to cooperate in apostolate, to work together in mission, both while planning and when accomplishing and evaluating.

Today, it is possible to form people to become builders of fraternal communion, on the model of the family along the paths shown by don Guanella only with two conditions:

1. if we acquire, as our conviction, spiritual attitude, true values, what we could call a “catechism on community life”, a mental habit that, being part of our charism, should be carefully kept and handed on from one generation to the other;
2. if we respect the model of the family in its source (the Holy Family of Nazareth), not following the model of family that different cultures or different times can give us.

We risk that the way of life typical of the environment we are living may creep in among us. The models of the current fashion can become our ways of relating, our style of living together. Unfortunately, it seems that in our communion life many worldly ways of thinking have entered.

- ✓ Separation and divorce: we deplore it, but at the same time we are ready to ask to be transferred from a community when we are not in good terms with a confrere or a sister, or we build up parties when we have different views.

How do we live the spiritual effort and the dialogue we often suggest to married couples?

- ✓ Sometimes, without going on to divorce, we just live “de facto” separation, living separated in the same house. We foster feelings of anger, resentment, suspicions, caution...; we avoid meeting one another and sharing activities.

How can we keep the “bond” alive?

- ✓ Even among us it can happen: we “drop-off the old man”, when we exclude elderly confreres, sisters, cooperators from our decision-making or from apostolic actions saying “he/she can’t do it anymore”.

How can we treasure the gifts of the aged?

- ✓ It also happens that we “run away from home”, when we avoid taking part to initiatives that were not promoted by us, or when we escape from our duties leaving heavy tasks or difficult situations for others.

How can we avoid running away from responsibilities?

THE MAIN WAYS TO ACCOMPLISH THE BOND OF CHARITY

Don Guanella is always very practical, so he doesn’t simply show the high ideal, but he also outlines some strategies, some main roads to attain communion in his Houses. These are firm and daily directions to be taken with perseverance, to create unity among us according to our charism.

✧ *The way of dialogue*

In don Guanella’s writings a frequent and central theme is that of “Conference” [in the Latin meaning of “coming together to share”]. He writes of “conference” at all levels, among members, among different superiors, superiors and members of the community, religious members, collaborators and recipients, residents and persons from outside the house...

“Humans are by nature social, and they need to pour their hearts in the hearts of those who are their brethren by blood and by choice, to hear their voices, to share with them ideas and affections, to give and receive advice and help in the various events of life. Now, this pouring of hearts one into the other, when it is not a fruitless waste of forces, is what is rightly called a conference. To confer with someone means to expose one’s thought and evaluation, to listen to the others’ evaluation and thought and, from the comparison made with righteousness and sincerity, deduce consequences or practical decisions” (SpC p. 704).

This appears as the golden rule for don Guanella: *communication*. This is fundamental, as the openness and dialogue that necessarily follow: “People understand one another by speaking” (SpC p. 1159).

Our Founder determines this “conferring” also in quality: it should be wide, frequent, confidential, common, not a matter of etiquette, not only linked to hierarchy or to a “speech for the occasion”, but simple, seizing opportunities.

It is, then, a communication on the style of the family spirit that should be present in our communities and groups.

Dialogue is needed to understand one another, and even more to build up and keep fraternal relations.

- ✓ As an evaluation, we shall focus on how is communication in our group, among persons. How do we help personalities that have excessive tendency to silence and restraint, and those too outgoing and talkative in our group or community? Which one do we use more frequently: informal and simple communication, or formal and official?

Remembering the “good-night thought” takes us to the image of don Guanella who liked to stay after lunch or dinner in a simple, anecdotic conversation. This type of communication comes only among those who have passion for their staying together, and enjoy sharing their free times of rest with confreres and sisters.

✧ *Simplicity*

Don Guanella wrote that “*simplicity is the virtue that contains every other virtue*” (SMC p. 115), and points out it this a typical character of the relations in his Houses.

In the perspective of Christian life, simplicity – which is like saying truth, abandonment, humility, childlike spirit – expresses the fundamental attitude of whoever wants to be faithful to the Gospel.

Simple people are wonderful because they learned how to accept themselves and others for what they are, without strains.

“*Always cherish much the dear virtue of simplicity*” (SdC p. 636). “*God desires of us more our being faithful in the little opportunities he hands over to us, rather than our burning of desire for great things that do not depend on us... there is no better and more desirable precaution than simplicity itself*” (SMC p. 1140).

- ✓ As an evaluation, the model of relationship is once more, for us the family: are our relations marked sincere, immediate,

natural? Or do we allow formalities, separation of roles and chosen distance prevent simplicity in our fraternal life?

✧ *Unity of purpose*

Don Guanella writes of unity of purpose using different words: unity of direction, unity of will, unity of thought. He develops these meanings in several of his Writings for the Congregations and explains with different reasoning the value and need to live and work united.

- “*Many brethren in agreement, says the Lord, make up an un-seizable fortress, strong enemies can do nothing against it*” (SpC pp. 1157.1158).
- “*It is of the greatest importance that all should aim to obtain ever greater fervour of charity and ever closer affection in unity of direction*” (SpC p. 260).
- “*In the unity of direction there is a kingdom of peace and charity. But such a kingdom is attained after the struggle with our enemies, our pride, our impatience, our fever of human passions*” (SpC p. 1158).

With these expressions, he wants to inculcate in us the fundamental awareness that God calls to cooperate with Him for one identical project. Even if we are marked by different stories, personalities, vocations, we have all received the grace of Baptism and the gift of the Guanellian charism, to share this wonderful adventure.

Don Guanella calls to march together to the goal religious men and women and lay persons, “*all children and brethren who spend with him their intelligence or their work or their money or their prayer, to have the Works of Providence move on the tracks of Providence, from whom they not only the name but, what is more, their life*” (LDP III, nov. 1907, p. 165).

- ✓ As an evaluation we could assess the environment of our places: do we allow people to remain stiff in their views, thus creating important conflicts? Are we able to reduce the

small attempts to accomplish personal projects, helping everyone to be more open to the other's views, reducing self-indulging tendencies?

✧ *Asceticism and dedication*

Another main road to accomplish the bond of charity in our relationship with others is personal asceticism, which means the effort to purify and enrich our spiritual life. This becomes practice with a sincere and generous dedication.

It is part of the dimension of "suffering" in don Guanella's programme. He actually insists in reminding us that communion entails labour, working on yourself, sacrifice. We have to allow others to enter our life, and this can be done only by "creating room", adjusting and correcting our personality.

"Every member of the family has to correct as much as possible his/her temperament and to adjust in everything to a simple and easy-mannered and happy approach, so that all can admire, be happy, and have good example" (SpC p. 29).

We must be aware that when we face others we acquire a more real knowledge of our selves. The best way for others to help us in knowing and improve our weaknesses is "fraternal correction", on which don Guanella returns often, convinced that *"the only friendship is the true one, that makes you correct your defects and urges you more lively to virtue"* (SMC p. 900).

- ✓ As evaluation, let us look at our self-discipline and spirit of sacrifice: are we struggling against our attitudes of laziness, of being closed to others, of middle-class conformism. Am I struggling against the excessive attention and care for my person and my things, against a very comfortable style of life?

✧ *Broad views and good heart*

"It is a charity rewarded by God, when one shows some broadness of mind and generosity of heart" (SpC p. 272).

In don Guanella's life and thought there is a growth about this theme: maybe at the beginning, in his young age and little experience, he was somehow rigorous for some things, as we can infer especially in his letters and in his writings for the congregations. As years go by, the other idea comes, cherished and inviting. We can think of:

- all the instances when don Guanella invites to give way to *"mercy over justice"* (SpC pp. 1263.1353; SIP pp. 316.993);
- his frequent invitations to *"respect other people's pace"*, even when this is quite slow;
- his many expressions exhorting to *"patience"*, with long waiting periods
- his exhortations to inculcate a *"accommodating spirit"*.

This his growing tendency toward *"broadness of mind and heart"* is a permanent element of our charism, because in essence it is like that of God the Father, who waits, adjusts, gives pardon and makes no fuss.

Possessing this attitude is essential for us Guanellians, because we work with the good children, we relate with the youth, we care for the aged. This different criterion becomes necessary, seeing things from another point of view to look at events, attitudes, words said by others.

- ✓ As an evaluation: do we still have some forms of rigor lurking with us? Some fixed habits for perfectionism, requiring everybody to give everything at the same time? How do we try to free ourselves from our hard hearts and minds, our being closed, clinging to our own views?

✧ *Attention for the smallest*

"With your brethren, try to double your attention for the most miserable" (SMC p. 967), the least, the most in need. This is a norm that is the typical style of our life and begins among us, before spreading to others.

Cooperators, confreres, sisters may face different situations:

- they are young, therefore in need of advice, tolerance, of being strengthened and encouraged;
 - they are old, no more able to give any important contribution for the mission, therefore in need to be listened to, sometimes to find something to do;
 - some persons are feeling deceived, frustrated, sense of inferiority;
 - some are in conflict with other members or with the superiors;
 - some are developing difficult and delicate choices;
 - some persons are proud, truly able but isolated and looked at as “different people”.
- ✓ As evaluation, we should become aware that only if we are really attentive to others we can spot out those in need: how do we grow in this attitude? How do we fight against its enemies (such as being superficial, lazy, careless, lacking prayer)?
 - ✓ Our communities and groups are becoming more and more diverse for origin, culture, ethnic group: how able are we to welcome pluralism? Do we foster tolerance? Are we ready to accept those different from us? Are we growing and learning multiculturalism?

✧ *Practicing some virtues*

“*To do a little good to one’s self and to others, we should use the human persona s it is, human, little, frail, mortal*” (SpC p. 1261). Being aware of this will help us to face the practice of virtues with calm and courage. Considering our interrelations, we should foster the human virtues given us as a legacy of values by don Guanella:

- *sweetness*: don Guanella points out that is it not being sentimental, sloppy, or feminine, but the constant memory that in virtue of our vocation we are brothers and sisters, not army comrades;
- *kindness*: we are facing cooperators, confreres, sisters, often more tired than we are for their work, or tensed, worried;

- *discretion*: our fraternity does not give us right to control others, to foster useless curiosity, to expose intimate problems;
 - *simplicity*: this is the ability to avoid complications and to look at the essential; often, complicated souls are also untrue;
 - *cheerfulness*: this aspect is present already in don Guanella’s early writings, therefore it is part of his original view of things.
- ✓ As evaluation: do we have this patrimony of virtues left us by the Founder? Sweetness, kindness, simplicity, discretion, cheerfulness, are they part of the human aspect and behaviour for us as Guanellians?

AS A SUMMARY

About the bond of charity, the following are don Guanella's fixed points, the permanent and recurring ideas:

- the Holy Family as model of inspiration;
- the cordial and delicate trait in interrelations;
- the fraternal/community structure united, but not strictly hierarchic;
- the shared fundamental guidelines, called by don Guanella unity of purpose or of direction;
- the preventive method as the rule of common life.

Surely, the Founder's vision did change along the years and was improved by experience, also following some failures, by comparison with other institutions, and especially with the growth of his knowledge of human souls.

Just as for the charism, one aspect is true also for the bond of charity: we have to safeguard the gift from God and his special way of enacting it; while the forms, the style can be accorded with our own choice.

We think we could conclude that to actualize our mission (the service to the poor) in fidelity to our charism (God the Father, rich in mercy), with the attitudes of our spirit (trust in Providence), we need to practice the bond of charity, in the ways proper to the Country and culture where we live and work.

We will be faithful not only if we are able to live in this way, but also if we are able to hand on this spiritual heritage to those coming after us.

May the Lord and the Founder help us in this fidelity.

FROM THE WRITINGS AND THE EXAMPLES OF BLESSED CHIARA BOSATTA

"I will love all, do to all the good I can, but only for love of God... Greatest pondering before acting or speaking, correcting and punishing... never will I open my mouth in a moment of passion, of animosity and anger. When those moments are passe, I will do my duty, but with the greatest charity, the greatest meekness and the greatest calm of my soul".

(Suor Chiara Bosatta,
Propositi fatti nei santi Esercizi del mese di settembre del 1884)

* * *

Don Guanella states that Sr. Chiara was all for all... because she was guided and sustained by a perfect love... Her availability for all needs and demands, even when burdensome and sudden, the effort in every action, and especially her smile, usual, calm, and reassuring, made her welcome and cherished by all, her mates and her disciples, the children and the old people at the Hospice... Sr. Chiara had prudence, the art of governing one's self and others... She also was frank and sincere with all, so that she hated any pretence. She was careful in always telling the true in every occasion, with respect, but also frankly... She spoke of others with respect and tried to cover their faults... She paid attention to the little things that can influence a community... She was also just toward everybody, without personal aims or partialities.

(Piero Pellegrini - Maria Luisa Oliva,
La storia di Chiara, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1991, pp. 365-366.374ss)

CONCLUSION AND BEGINNING

The text “The bond of charity 3D” is finished, now its implementation begins.

Now, as “food from our home” it can be shared among the members of the Guanellian Family and assimilated by each person.

Among the starting principles, on which we should persevere to make the bond of charity true and effective in our lives:

- *“Turn often your eyes to God, because without his help you can do no good” (SAL p.845). “It is God who does!” (VdP p. 78).*

Communion is first of all a gift from God and we have to ask Him for it, without getting tired of invoking the Holy Spirit and adoring Jesus in the Eucharist, the “bond of charity” by essence.

- *“Many little forces united make a great force; the union of several brethren is able to build a tower that cannot be overcome by any attack from the enemy!” (SpC 1249).*

Communion grows with the help of each and everyone, we cannot wait for others to become perfect, rather we should give our contribution so that the bond of charity may be, day after day, woven and mended, when necessary, with patience and courage.

- *“To accomplish glorious deeds, you must be united to God and your brethren by the means of charity” (SAL 13).*

Communion, acknowledging and respecting our different vocations, are the foundations to carry on together the Guanellian mission in the Church and in the world.

May our Holy Founder and all the members of the Guanellian Family who are already enjoying the fullness of Life, help us to re-discover the beauty of the gift we received from God, to be committed wherever we live and work in building up unity and communion, to discern and try to answer God's call to give response to the Church and the world's needs today.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

(for those who can read italian)

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