



ALC  
SCHEDA N° 1- 2024  
*"Woman of Charity, beside the sick"*

*"The synodality of a charism that seeks to embrace everything and ignite life"*

In the year 2024, in which we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of St. Magdalene of Canossa, it seems appropriate to us that the first scheda helps us to deepen our understanding of her life, her holiness and her charism.

Deepening one's charism means discovering one's vocation-mission and rediscovering the synodality of a charism that seeks to embrace everything and ignite life.

***"It is not fitting that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18)***

His Holiness Pope Francis' message for the XXXII WORLD DAY OF THE SICK (14 February 2024): "We are created to be together, not alone. And it is precisely because this project of communion is inscribed in the depths of the human heart that the experience of abandonment and loneliness is frightening, painful and even inhuman. And it is even more so in times of fragility, uncertainty and insecurity, often caused by the appearance of a serious illness.

Brothers and sisters, the first cure we need in sickness is that of a closeness full of compassion and tenderness. Therefore, **caring for the sick means**, first of all, taking care **of their relationships, of all their relationships: with God, with others – family, friends, health care workers – with creation** and with oneself. **Possibly?** Of course it is possible, and we are all called to commit ourselves to making it so. Let us look at the image of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37), at his ability to slow down and draw near, at the attitude of tenderness with which he soothes the wounds of his suffering brothers and sisters.

In this change of epoch in which we live, we Christians are called in a special way to make our own the compassionate gaze of Jesus. Let us take care of those who suffer and are alone, and also marginalized and discarded. With the mutual love that Christ the Lord gives us in prayer, especially in the Eucharist, we heal the wounds of loneliness and isolation. Let us therefore cooperate to counter the culture of individualism, indifference and rejection and let the culture of tenderness and compassion grow.

***"Woman of Charity, beside the sick" (book: Maria Nicolai)***

***" It cannot be denied that too much would be lacking in an Institute that enjoys bearing the name of Charity and that tries to practise this in many ways, if it lacked this special exercise of visiting and assisting the sick in hospital, as these people are in such a pitiable situation and great need of comfort. "***

(Preface to the Rules of the Hospital, St. Magdalene)



In Maddalena's soul, in search of her true vocation, there was always a fixed point: the desire to dedicate herself to the poorest and among them to the sick, an inclination that she herself defines as "a particular and natural genius for the sick".

After the two experiences of cloistered life, Magdalene clearly understood that in Carmel "she would be sanctified, but she could not prevent sins, nor be useful for the salvation of souls". From that moment on, certain that God did not want her cloistered, she returned to her family and, under the direction of Don Luigi Líbera (1791-1800), her heart matured with an inclination for works of mercy. It will be a period of effective "learning" for the work for which God was preparing her. For the young Marchesina, the family became the field of action in which she learned to put her human and spiritual qualities at the service of others.

Her director, Don Luigi Libera, wrote to her to reassure her and, knowing her inclination for the sick, took the opportunity to remind her of the motivations of faith that must be present in this work of mercy, motivations that she would put at the basis of her Rules for the Hospital: "Courage, my daughter... If at the moment you are not able to devote yourself to prayer as your heart desires, remember to do everything in a spirit of charity. God is charity, says the beloved disciple, and he who lives and works in charity and with charity, lives in God and lives with God. Assisting the sick by comforting them and alleviating their discomforts is a work of charity. Let us therefore seek that in this exercise the love of God prevails more than the affection of blood: let us understand that we are helping Jesus Christ, since he does not refuse to recognize as self-made what we do, for his love, for the poor sick."

### **CARING FOR THE SICK**

Magdalene wisely recognizes the concrete difficulty of this Ministry, which comes to meet people in their moment of greatest need and fragility, for which a "more ardent charity" is required of the Sisters. For this reason, in the introduction, she pauses to deepen the motive of the Ministry, in a broader way than the other Rules, proposing for the meditation of the Sisters not only the words of Jesus, but the Crucified One himself, who, "for them and for all the sick, suffered on the Cross". "May the Sisters remember the words of our Divine Saviour... who affirmed that he will receive as made to Him what we do for His least of them, the poor.

In the Rules, Magdalene outlines the style of Canossian care for the sick:

It begins with an invitation from Magdalene to relate the METHOD ("gentleness and patience in approaching the sick"), with the MOTIVATION ("treat them as you would treat the person of Jesus Christ whom they respect") and with the PURPOSE ("their true good"), enriched by the recommendation of special attention ("prudence and perspicacity... do not be too easily preoccupied by false compassion") according to the difficult situation given by the disease. He emphasizes that the METHOD has a COMMUNICATIVE MODALITY, described as gentleness and patience, attitudes that make explicit the Charity of God expressed in the highest degree in the Crucified One... for the salvation of men.

*"... He must be a person of great inner spirit, prudence, kindness and zeal for souls."*



*... May she be pervaded by a great spirit of charity in her visits, and may she approach the sick gently to discover their spiritual needs.*

### **CARING FOR OTHERS**

In relations with other people working in the hospital, it is recommended that: "... She must also be very gentle and prudent with the nurses, and receive with respect, in the places where the Company of the Ladies of Charity exists, their reports on the needs they discover in the sick women they visit.

### **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF**

"I was ill and they visited me": these words of Jesus certainly resonate in Magdalene's heart when, in the Rules of the Hospital, she specifies the interior feelings, gestures, prayers that must "accompany" the Sisters from the moment they leave home until their return.

Before leaving, he invites them to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, if he is at home, or to go before the Crucifix to: \* remember the presence of God \* rectify and purify their intentions again \* stimulate their faith more and more \* recognize, in this light, that they are going to visit the person of Jesus Christ in the sick poor.

## **Our reality today**

None of us can escape the existence of illness in our lives, in the lives of those we love and interact with. It can occur in ourselves, in our children, siblings or parents, in the family. In our brother in faith.

It is good that in these moments the words, actions and model that the Lord presents to us in the Word, the Holy Father in his letters and Saint Magdalene in his Memoirs or Rules, resound in our hearts: Solitude, charity, compassion, tenderness, consolation, closeness.

Taking care of a sick person means giving space and time to welcome, it is respecting their process, it is listening patiently. Take care of those who care, be aware that they have time to rest, to let off steam, to recharge their batteries. To take care of oneself, both as a sick person and as a companion of a sick person, is to recognize that we need God, his closeness and his tenderness. It is time to strengthen faith.



**Working Instructions:** Read and reflect on the text of the worksheet individually and in groups.

1. What word or action would you choose to better reflect your experience of illness in your reality. Example: Solitude-Company; indifference-compassion... And so on
2. Think of a specific activity to help the sick for this month.