



Working Groups



As Lay Canossians we are called to evangelize starting from a personal meeting with Christ, like “Disciples-Missionaries”, in the light of the Gospel and making a preferential choice of the poor, promoting the dignity of the human person, renewing the community and taking part in building a just and united society where everyone may live a life rich in Christian and human values. (Aparecida Document)

Our Canossian spirituality demands of us an intense life of contemplation and action: “contemplate e imitate Jesus” in all our actions and attitudes with love and fidelity as an efficacious response of love and service to the poor.

In our lives as Lay Canossians we take part in the Canossian charism, a gift of God, and live it in our actions and our mission of evangelization, which is different from place to place ... ; we are moved by the spirit of Jesus Christ Crucified and by the mystical experience of St. Magdalene who proposed to us “Inspice et Fac ...”. Thus, we feel the urgency and the strength to dedicate ourselves to evangelization in the various situations of today in the Church and the world.

We have freely chosen to share our faith and trust in Jesus whom we carry with in our hearts and we proclaim Him to our brothers and sisters in their real life situations ... This is our vocation and mission.

We confirm that the vital message of our life is for us Lay Canossians dictated by the heart and the words of St. Magdalene ... “I recommend to you my beloved poor.”

It is easy to say the word family ... but first we would like to make a few considerations.

Italy has the lowest birth rate in Europe and the world.

In 2001, there were 14 million old people over the age of 65 in comparison with 11 million young people. In 1993 the number of old people started to increase in respect to young people. The region of Campania is one in which the number of young people is still greater than that of old people; the average in 2005 was 137.8 old people against 100 young people over the age of 14.

1. At present, families have at least two or three children.
2. “Old people are not simple fragile people, to be looked after, but they have creative talents ... they are not a social failure to manage but a patrimony to be valued.” (Marco Trabucchi, geriatrician)
3. It is necessary to increase the number of workers to ensure a pension for everyone, even by increasing the pension age; old people are better off now than 50 years ago!
4. Provide greater stability for young people so that they may get married at a younger age and decide to have children at a younger age.
What is the family like today? Smaller families which are formed by people of a mature age, they have fewer children and they stay in the family for as long as possible.
5. Instability of jobs must be reduced while work for families must be increased. Even if not generalizing, parents must provide for what the State cannot do. This is like a plot against young people who are left at the margins of society, and even for parents who do not force their children to be autonomous. No longer slaves but carefree youngsters who live on their parent's back.
6. It is important to help children to face the difficulties of living together. In 2007 25% of all children were the only child. They have little experience of values which they should learn in the family such as: solidarity, sharing together and the difficulty of measuring oneself with others and relating to them which will become an unsustainable situation. Often they are over-protected, they are treated like little lords and their fragility makes it hard to face life.
Postponing maternity/paternity runs the risk of sterility.
7. The demands of work must be in accord with the demands of the family.
The family is defended if there is work for both parents. The percentage of working women is the lowest in Europe. New families are not helped to remain at work. There is no economic help for housewives.
8. Families should be taxed according to their size and wages must be adequate to support the family. Children are not a private benefit, born to satisfy the plans of their parents, to be used. They are the future of society. The best investment the State can make is to invest in the family.

*How do we, as Lay Canossians, face
this kind of poverty?*



Poverty in the Family and how to face it

- Waste
- + **educate to be sober, adults must be witnesses of sobriety even in times of economic crisis**
- auto-referential families
- + **creating positive relationships outside the family**
- loss of family values, difficulty of relationships within the family
- + **not leaving families to themselves, mutual solidarity, listening to real needs, reciprocal care, self help, good families helping other families in the parish**
- separations, marriage breakdowns, new couples after separation
- + **Distinguish between preparation for marriage and deepening of faith. Every one must be prepared for marriage but it is also necessary to continue a journey of faith in marriage and be continually cultivated**
- children not desired, marriage at a late age
- + **need of social strategies for the family, even the families of migrants, strategies for the occupation of young people, reduction of temporary jobs, possibility of flexible work**
- when the elderly are abandoned and no longer self sufficient they need a home help; conflict between the elderly person and the Italian or foreign home help
- + **real possibility of integration**
- often relationships are tense because families are oppressed by demands, they do not understand the complexity of problems and trust is lacking in State institutions
- + **create reception centres for children and families**
- difficulties in relationships and thus lack of witness of faith between parents and children
- + **a lifestyle that privileges time for listening to one another rather than importance given to material things.**

Prayer and, again, Prayer

Magdalene of Canossa

94



Reflection

Gospel of Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum sometime later, word went around that he was back; and so many people gathered together that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as the crowd made it impossible to get the man to him, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay.

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”

Now some scribes were sitting there and they thought to themselves, “How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?” Jesus, inwardly aware that this was what they were thinking, said to them, “Why do you have these thoughts in your heart? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven” or to say, “Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk”. But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, “I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher and go off home”.

And the man got up, picked up his stretcher at once and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astounded and praised God saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

The Gospel scene of the paralytic who was brought to Jesus shows us an important attitude to nurture in the family:

**Each person must take on the difficulties of family living
and place them at the centre, who is Christ.**

**The poor person in the family is Christ Himself who allows me to return
to Christ thanks to His poverty,
who does not leave me tranquil in the planning of my life, who questions
my certainties and opens me to spread the Kingdom of love
and not my selfishness.**

**The four men who brought the paralytic to Christ
experience themselves His compassion.**

**It is through the poor that we come closer to the Gospel
who is Christ Himself!**

God wants us to Serve
Him
with all Our Heart

Magdalene of Canossa

95





A DUTY AND AN ART

Education is a duty that is dear not only to Christians but to all those who feel responsible for the future of humanity and the world.

Education is the most challenging art of human existence and requires widening one's horizons and always be in search of a better life. **Education is a duty and an art** in which one moulds the person in all aspects of his/her humanity so that he/she becomes fully himself/herself.

96



EDUCATION TODAY

Educating is not easy. Today it requires a series of complex actions which cause this task to be a real challenge. The situation of today presents us with a young generation brought up in an atmosphere of innovation which does not provide enough time for internalization because of the thousands of stimuli which, paradoxically, makes them incapable of being interested in things which are lasting or to take on one's responsibility. Young people find nothing that is worthy of dedicating their human resources; they are sad, without valid motivations, without hope in a plan for their future. This fluid reality in which they live, privates them of a clear direction in life and as a result **society is fragmented and makes any shared choices impossible to realise.**

Let us think of the children of today, their infancy, their childhood, their parents who carry the burden of marital situations with affective complications.

What do they learn? What do they internalize about the values of life, family, living together in situations of insecurity, separations, problems?

Think about the presence of **parents** which is not always guaranteed because their work commitments make them spend much time outside home; about the role of grandparents, and/or **brothers and sisters**, their responsibilities, the frequency of their absence or presence.

Think of a secularized society, culture on-line: internet, television ... Let us ask ourselves:

How do children grow up today?

How do they face adolescence and youth?

Tomorrow, how will they make the fundamental choices for their lives?

THE CHURCH EXHORTS US

Today, **childhood** must be the object of priority action of the Church, the family and State institutions, both in the possibilities it offers and the vulnerability to which it is exposed. **Children are a gift of God and are a sign of God's presence in our world** because of their capability of accepting the Gospel message with simplicity. Jesus chose them with special tenderness, underlining their capacity to accept the Gospel and He proposed them as a model for entering the Kingdom of God. Jesus says, *"Let the children come to me and do not stop them ... "* (Mt 19:4)

Let us take into consideration **young people and their relationships**. During adolescence, needs and desires emerge to renew the knowledge of their freedom and their corporeality as a privileged expression of love. From childhood one learns the "basic rules of love" as the starting point of interpersonal relationships. The body, food and the way of dressing are a means so as not to be lost in the crowd. In life, young people want to be considered as 'someone'.

The document of Aparecida (V General Bishop's Conference of Latin America and Caribbean, 2007) begins by placing the young people of Latin America and Caribbean in the socio-political context of that continent. It does not speak generically of "youth" but of "young people" with their potentialities, limits, conditioning forces and possibilities, who are collocated in the real world. The document focuses on the reality of young people with their strong and weak points because in the world today there are ambiguous situations: positive and negative.

97



POSITIVE SITUATIONS

"Young people constitute the vast majority of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean. They represent a huge potential for the present and future of the Church and our peoples, as disciples and missionaries of the Lord Jesus.

Young people are sensitive to discovering their calling to be friends and disciples of Christ. They are called to be **"sentinels of the dawn"**, committing themselves to the renewal of the world in the light of God's plan. What they fear is not sacrifice or giving up their own life but rather a meaningless life. Because of their generosity, they are called to serve their brothers and sisters, especially the most needy, with their time and life. They are capable of standing up to the false illusions of happiness and the deceptive paradises of drugs, pleasure, alcohol, and all forms of violence." (DA 443)

NEGATIVE SITUATIONS

“However, we note with concern that vast numbers of young people in our continent are living in situations that impact them significantly, consequences of poverty that restrain the harmonious growth of their lives and cause exclusion; socialization in which values are no longer passed on primarily through traditional institutions but in new environments with a strong dosage of alienation and their susceptibility to the new types of cultural expression resulting from globalization which affects their own personal and social identity. They are easy prey for religious and pseudo-religious proposals. Because of the crisis now affecting the family, they suffer from a deep lack of affection and emotional conflicts.” (DA 444)

CHALLENGES

Making a synthesis of the problems and difficulties that education today has to face in the **formation of children and young people**, the challenges that today’s society presents, are:

- Disintegration of the family and its numerous consequences: unclear roles, the absence of adults, violence in the family, manipulation of the parent-child relationship. Inconsistency of authority
- Vulnerability of childhood: abuse and child prostitution
- Crisis of values: individualism, secularisation, hedonism (distorted concept of sexuality, love, family), relativism ...
- Undervaluing education and the role of the educator, lack of recognition of the professional hierarchy by society and, sometimes, even by teachers themselves
- Lack of a plan for life, hope, security. Loss of national identity. Loss of the value of work
- Culture of mediocrity: conformism, irresponsibility, disinterest, indifference, apathy, laziness
- Culture of death: dependences, abortion, euthanasia, violence, discrimination
- Culture of one’s personal look: eating disorders, local gangs
- Accelerated progress of new technologies, globalization of information
- Manipulation of mass media, consumerism, sensationalism, distortion of reality. Wrong use and abuse of new technologies.



THE PATH TO FOLLOW

We are living in a time of educative urgency provoked by globalization, by cultural conditioning and the change of paradigms in formation. (cf. D.A. n. 328) For this reason we must insist on the **real aim of every school that is to form the person integrally and culturally**. The school is called to become, above all, a privileged place of formation and integral development through comparison and inclusion of perennial values in the context of today and the truths to be discovered (cf. D.A. n. 329), bringing to the fore the religious and ethical dimension, in comparison with absolute values from which the meaning and value of human life depend; thus, human beings humanize their world, elaborate culture, transform society and make history.

For each family, the education of children becomes a wonderful task but at the same time, very difficult because it means giving them life and the reasons for living, and also includes the passionate duty of promoting and accompanying their own children to the fullness of their humanity. The family cannot do without a school, because the educational process opens the person to relationships with others, society and the world.

We can listen, for example, to the explicit words which Pope Benedict XVI addressed to young people with great courage:

*“In community prayer, ask the Lord that He may guard and increase your love and purify it from selfishness. Do not hesitate to answer generously to the Lord’s call because **Christian marriage is a real and true vocation in the Church.** Likewise, **dear young people,** be ready to say ‘yes’ if God calls you to follow Him in the way of ministerial priesthood or consecrated life. Your example will be of encouragement to people of your age, who are searching for true happiness. My dear young friends, I want to invite you to “dare to love”. Do not desire anything less for your life than a love that is strong and beautiful and that is capable of making the whole of your existence a joyful undertaking of giving yourselves as a gift to God and your brothers and sisters, in imitation of the One who vanquished hatred and death forever through love (cf. Rev 5:13). **Love is the only force capable of changing the heart of the human person and of all humanity, by making fruitful the relations between men and women, between rich and poor, between cultures and civilisations.**”*

THE PROPOSAL OF MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA

It is imperative to make education an authentic experience of Love which springs from the formation of the heart, just as St. Magdalene invites us to do: “Aware of the differences in character, the Sisters should try to handle each one in the way she is made, valuing the benefit of education in the formation of the heart. In order to succeed well in educating these girls, it is fitting that the Sisters study their character and temperament because what serves for one is not necessarily good for another.” (cf. Unabridged Rule p. 143)

AN URGENT CALL

“I recommend to you my beloved poor”

Magdalene continues to solicit us to the care of her beloved poor, who are in our midst: our students, children and young people, the poor, not because they lack material things (even though sometimes it is a real need), but those who are poor because they are without what is necessary to grow as free people, able to make choices, personal and spiritual, that lead to a goal, while searching for the meaning of life. Without these opportunities, a person is poor, miserable, a slave of emotions and feelings, ideologies and ways of thinking dictated by fashion, and may be subject to injustice (suffered or committed) ... Without a positive family experience, without spiritual support, without a serious academic formation, all that could be attained will be worthless. Magdalene sees education as the possibility of *knowing and loving*. This synthesis between reason and faith, that so often we proclaim, is what she, from the beginning of her work, desired above all.



Knowing: It is a journey that promotes and forms the person to inner freedom. To educate means making the person responsible for making choices and discovering one's dignity, as well as rights and duties. Knowing is not only what reason can grasp and understand but also that which faith reveals of the transcendental dimension of the person.

Loving: For Magdalene this means making experience of love-charity which she discovered in the Crucified One; the experience of being saved, freed from evil and death that brings with itself sin, being redeemed from the oppression of the structures of personal and social sin. This is the intuition that Magdalene discovered that would open horizons for the new generations. Worried about the failure of young people in personal life and their insertion in society, she understands that it is not sufficient material help and a place to live so as to form an integral personality well integrated.

"To gather girls seems to me a small thing. It is done in many places. But to educate them well and to see positive results in those coming out of these Orphanages, in the sense that these girls become good Christian mothers of families, does not happen often. I think the fault lies in the lack of persons who devote themselves to education out of love for God, and by vocation." (Ep. I, p.87)

For this reason she was always perseverant and tried to find and use appropriate methods so that the education of children and young people might be excellent. She also looked for people who were fit and capable to pass on knowledge and attract people through the witness of their lives. Her frequent sleepless nights caused by her worries for the poorest, made her soul restless and rich in courage and creativity. She did not cut herself off from reality, but accepted God's plan which manifested itself in the experiences she made.

"I did not know how to solve the problem of leaving the people of San Zeno since it was the neediest part of the city, both because it was populated almost entirely by poor people and because of their lively character." (Ep. II/1 p. 104) *"The extreme need of the poor district of San Zeno compels me to attempt buying that place. My brother seems willing to help me in some way."* (Ep.I, p. 307) *"I confess that I cannot get accustomed to the idea of abandoning so many poor young people ... Pray for your Magdalene."* (Ep.1, pp.326)

We too, are concerned by the reality of today and preoccupied when we meet poverty continually along our path which requires from us an urgent response. Certainly, we too, cannot find an adequate answer to every problem, just like Magdalene, but we are questioned by the Crucified One who continually calls us, through the brothers and sisters nearest us, to alleviate, console and be at their service. This means focusing our attention so as **to discover the footprints of Christ** and hear his voice present in our poorest brothers and sisters (materially and spiritually poor). How do we listen? The answer is in discernment, working together, witnessing with our lives, and this involves others in planning strategies. Those who collaborate with us seek the common good, just as we do, they are good hearted and are waiting for words of love and fraternity. The grace of our charism is confirmed each day by the fruit it produces. We **must be available and committed**, letting ourselves be led by the Spirit in daring **to undertake new itineraries** that bring true light to the present generation so much in need of ideals, values and truth.

100





In gathering together our reflections, we realised that cultural, economic and political aspects have made an impact on the answers given by our Lay Canossians of Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, U.S.A. and Australia. We can also say at the beginning of this report that a sense of grief, loss and isolation are feelings that are experienced universally. We now find ourselves living in a “Global Village”, we are, therefore, sensitive to the needs and experiences of each country.

Sociological Approach

Because of diversity, we feel that we have to consider the sociological approach separately for each country.

101



+ **Hong Kong** Physical illness, of course, brings a lot of suffering; suffering of pain, sense of helplessness, of being weak, loss of capabilities, loss of self-dignity because of illness, economic pressure; loss of work, stress of not being able to support one's family, all come together to torment the sick and their family physically, psychologically and spiritually. Mental stability and unrest of the elderly and the sick is very common.

+ **Japan** The cost of medical care in Japan, when compared with other countries, is not very high. In spite of this Japan has a very low infant mortality rate and it has the world's longest life expectancy rate. In the year 2000 a care system for the aged and infirm was started, in order to help cope with the rapidly increasing elderly population. Local support centres have been set up with health workers, care mana-

gers, social workers and visiting nurses to look after their needs and provide home nursing care, day centre care or advice about residential care. In comparison with other Asian countries, the hospice movement in Japan is still in its infancy, mainly due to cultural attitudes, which lead to a tendency to avoid informing the patient of the fact that their illness is terminal. Grief counselling is not common in an organised form in Japan, but there are abundant chances for it, both within parishes and in one's neighbourhood and/or work place. In the latter case (non-Christians) it is often difficult to speak directly and immediately of our faith in God-Resurrection-Eternal life.

When death is by suicide (not uncommon in Japan) the family will have special needs and, in some cases, there may be a need of professional help and we can then encourage people to seek this help. As Lay Canossians in a non-Christian country like Japan, we cannot always approach the sick by immediately talking about God/Jesus. We try to begin by encouraging them using inspirational stories/words/songs.

We try to put the Gospel message into simple terms easily understood by people, particularly using words of comfort and hope. Christian optimism based on faith and trust in a loving God who is Father does not take away the reality of pain or suffering.

+ **Singapore** We have a well-developed social welfare system even for those who need financial assistance both for the sick and elderly.

- The Medifund for the poor, sick and elderly
- Efficient Government and private institutions like Day Care Centres
- Hospices run by Religious organisations, Rehabilitation Centres
- Family Service Centres with counselling services for needy families
- Specialized doctors trained in gerontology to treat the elderly in hospitals and homes for the aged-sick
- Community Centres run by the Government where a wide range of activities are organised, e.g. Exercises in "Taichi" and outings for the elderly

102



All medical and social services have a price. The cost of medical treatment is expensive. We, here in Singapore, administer 2 Homes for the elderly with special attention for hospice care. The challenge of an aging and more educated society calls for a radical change in the way of running the Homes.

+ **U.S.A.** Western culture, particularly that of the United States, does not want to look at death and dying. We look for a cure for everything. Death is often seen as a failure of medicine, not the natural progression of life. We do everything to sustain life in one area, but put restrictions on care when the person is deemed a burden or the "quality of life" has no value. The culture of death has tried to become God, deciding who lives and who dies. In the U.S.A. we are at a crossroads of how healthcare will be delivered and at what cost to all people. Healthcare costs have greatly increased putting the insured against the uninsured.

Becoming proactive in political affairs that influence a culture of life and help to elect representatives who will protect life with moral and just laws, should be the call for all Christians. It is sad to say that we have 3 States that have passed laws legalizing physician-assisted-suicide. We can and should promote Catholic teaching for a culture of life.

+ Australia At a local level in Australia, the care and needs of people are overall controlled by government legislation and laws, which are in place to ensure protection and that proper care is made available for this most vulnerable part of our society. Institutions working in the area of the needs of the elderly/sick and also the caregivers must adhere to strict guidelines and show the relevant governing bodies that policies and procedures are in place and practised. These policies and guidelines are monitored on a regular basis to ensure that government standards are being achieved. Many of the institutions, hospitals, hospices, are governed by numerous Church bodies and groups.

Whether private or government run, they offer some forms of pastoral care ministry to residents, patients and families. It is clearly recognised and identified as a need to achieve holistic care. Catholic organisations are committed to the support of those in need, the disadvantaged, the frail, the aged, the sick, the unemployed and the homeless. As Canossians in Australia we operate our services based on respect, justice, compassion and love.

Australian society recognises the needs of carers as well as the needs of the patient. The carers usually are family members. It is important that they have a break from their caring role. Within Australia there is a growing group of chaplains, consisting of religious and lay people specifically trained and qualified to minister pastoral care the health care sector, bound to respecting the religious beliefs of each individual. Pastoral care and the Presence of Christ are clearly recognised, respected and welcomed by all health care facilities.

103



Biblical Approach

We must be aware, when ministering to another person, that we must die to ourselves, “So that it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) This reminds us that it is not us who do the ministry, it is Christ within us. We need to become the hands, feet, eyes and voice of Jesus, to bring comfort, hope, peace and dignity to the person who is burdened and suffering. As lay people we are called to be sensitive and able to listen with the heart.

Jesus shows us the way in his approach to sickness and suffering, “He touched her hand and the fever left her.” (Mt 8:15) And again, “He cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for us.’” (Mt 8:16,17)

Pope Benedict XVI commenting on Luke 10:25-37 says, “the Good Samaritan teaches us on how to deal with the sick. He made the saving of life the first priority, took care of the injured man until he recovered and provided the means for others (the innkeeper) to take over in his place, when he could no longer be there. From this we can learn to discern what we ourselves can do and what we need to ask others to help us with, in order to be instruments of healing in the hand of God. At the end of the parable v. 33-37, Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” With these words he is also addressing us. Jesus exhorts us to bend over the physical and mental wounds of so many of our brothers and sisters whom we meet on the highways of the world. He helps us to understand that with God’s grace, accepted and lived out in our daily life, the experience of sickness and suffering can become a school of hope.” From Mt 25:36-40 we know that “whatever we do for the least of these” we do it for

Jesus. When we clothe the naked, visit the sick and prisoners, we do so because we see the suffering face of Jesus Himself in the people we care for.

Matthew 25:42-45 tells us also: “I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink, I was a stranger but you would not welcome me into your homes, naked but you would not clothe me, I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me.” Then they will answer him, “When Lord, did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we did not help you?” The king will reply, “I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.”

In the Book of Job we read that Job’s friends were obsessed with the “REASON” of illness and the tragedy of Job, a pious and upright man. But Job remained focused on his relationship with God, hence from this came Job’s healing in body and spirit. The lesson is that even the just may suffer, but their sufferings are a test of their fidelity. They shall be rewarded in the end. Man’s finite mind cannot probe the depths of the divine omniscience (total knowledge, one who knows everything) that governs the world. The problems we encounter can be solved by a broader and deeper awareness of God’s power, presence and wisdom.

We too need to trust in the Lord and not question: “WHY, Lord”.

Finally, drawing from the Holy Scriptures, we receive our mandate and mission from Christ given quite clearly and profoundly .

104



Ecclesial Approach

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church at n. 1509, we read. “Heal the sick!” The Church has received this charge from the Lord and strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick as well as by accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. She believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments and, in an altogether special way, through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health.

Number 1505 says, “On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the “sin of the world” of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross, Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.”

The late Pope John Paul II gave clear teaching and directives on this in an address to the participants of the International Congress on “Life Sustaining Treatment and Vegetative State” on March 20th 2004. Those in a “vegetative state” retain their human dignity in all its fullness and have the right to basic health care (nutrition, hydration, cleanliness, warmth etc.) The Pope underlined the fact that the administration of water and food, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life. “Its use ... should be considered, in principal, ordinary and proportionate and as such morally obligatory.”

In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI affirmed: “With the annual World Day of the Sick, the Church intends to carry out a far-reaching operation, raising the ecclesial community’s awareness to the importance of pastoral service in the vast world of health care. This service is an integral part of the Church’s role since it is engraved in Christ’s saving mission itself.

He, the divine Doctor, 'went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil' (Acts 10:38). In the mystery of his Passion, Death and Resurrection, human suffering takes on meaning and the fullness of light."

Charismatic Approach

We Lay Canossians are called to imitate "the Greatest Love". St Magdalene saw also the greatest value of suffering – LOVE. When we love, we try to provide for people's needs; when we are a presence to the elderly, the sick and the dying, we are truly living out our vocation as Lay Canossians. As Lay Canossians, we are also called to evangelize the world with the Gospel message of Charity and Love and to proclaim the Good News as the Gospel of Life.

Magdalene writes: "God alone and Jesus Crucified". "Jesus is not known and so is not loved".

The sick and suffering, those affected by dementia, and their families are a particularly evident form of "new poverty" in a culture where few people have the comfort and assurance of the gift of eternal life and little understanding of the redemptive value of suffering. They are, therefore, for us the "beloved poor" of Magdalene.

In the spirit of the Greatest Love, we find our Model in Christ Crucified when dealing with the needs of the poor. The giving unto death, the absolute gift of love, which we experience and are filled with, that which is given freely to us by Christ is the amount or measure we must give of ourselves to others. This is most challenging, how do we achieve this? Simply by practise, practise, practise. It is a life's journey of attempting, a life's journey of achieving.

We are reminded by our Foundress, Saint Magdalene to have 'Big Hearts, Big Hearts'". Saint Magdalene was a woman of deep sensitivity and intuitiveness. The deepening of the sources and reflections on the experiences of the Canossian communities have made clear the permanence and relevance of this third ministry, without which 'much would be lacking in an Institute that bears the name of Charity' (UR 158).

Saint Magdalene, our Foundress, directs us, in the face of every human suffering, 'to His (Jesus') invincible patience, sweetness, suffering and gentleness' (UR 159). Thus He offers us a concrete model for our contemplation and imitation and a way of being present in our loving service of the sick and the dying. (cf. UR 159). 'To comfort, instruct and assist' and to treat them with gentleness, cordiality and at the same time a certain reverence. (UR 166) The pastoral care of the sick or dying requires the attitudes that reflect the love of the Crucified Lord, 'invincible patience, meekness, sufferance, sweetness, prudence and objectivity' according to the Lord's teachings, so as to be able to exercise true compassion (UR 163). When ministering to the sick and the elderly, we must keep in mind that the poor are our benefactors. Therefore it is essential to approach them with an attitude of humility and gratitude.

The whole essence of our love and service to the poor is to bring them the gift of love and faith that comes from Christ alone.



Evangelization

As Lay Canossians of Brazil, we would like to present in this report our involvement in the field of evangelization and how we would like to be present in the local Church, keeping in mind the reality of Brazil and our Canossian charism.

Our Canossian spirituality asks of us an intense life of contemplation and action, that is, living **“INSPICE ET FAC”** in our daily activities. The modality of **“INSPICE ET FAC”** demands from us greater attention towards daily events and searching for their causes as well as trying to find an adequate answer to every situation.

106



In Brazil, the path opened by the Conference of Aparecida and the elaboration of the National Project for evangelization, entitled **“Brazil in the Continental Mission”**, and the slogan **“The joy of being a missionary disciple”**, show us a Church that desires to be in harmony and communion with all the local Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean and how the Church is committed in the Continental Mission.

In an atmosphere of an **“era of change”**, it is a Church which feels itself called to show in a real way its purpose through evangelizing, proclaiming with enthusiasm, creativity and courage, the Gospel message. When we speak of the Church we mean the Mystical Body of Christ, the Lord’s people, in whom we are all participants. This implies, however, that the task of the Church is our task and the mission that must be carried out is not an optional but is an integral part of the identity of a Christian.

The Church is called to proclaim the Gospel message so that all peoples may have life and have it in abundance; this is a “culture that promotes life”. Today’s situations of destitution and poverty are a challenge to our greater involvement in favour of “culture that promotes life”. St. Magdalene of Canossa understood this when she understood clearly the structural causes and dimensions of sin which were a result of moral decadence.

Her writings clearly show how she understood that education has a strong impact on the behaviour of the person and how good religious formation brings about a more just and caring society. This vision brought about the Ministries of Charity as a means of showing the love of the Crucified One to the neediest. The Mission of Jesus Christ was to bring humanity the fullness of life, through words and actions, and St. Magdalene of Canossa nurtured a life of contemplation and action, by imitating Jesus Crucified and taking on “INSPICE ET FAC” as her lifestyle.

Using this vision of “INSPICE ET FAC” and “SEE-JUDGE-ACT” we would like to illustrate an itinerary of evangelization that guarantees our presence in the local Church.

SEE - The first aspect of “Inspice” consists in opening one’s eyes and looking at reality so as to single out its problems.

This process includes the search for the roots of these problems and the analysis of structures and systems that produce them.

JUDGE – The second aspect of “Inspice” refers to contemplation based on faith, the analysis of problems in the light of Christian and charismatic criteria.

ACT – Our way of acting, “Fac”, is a response to real situations, analysed in the light of intuitions and criteria of our Christian and charismatic tradition.

Some questions that arise: What can we do to transform the system and the structures that determine such situations? What plan can be established that is efficient both in the short term and the long term?



Guidelines for Evangelization

1. **SEE:** the present situation of society in Brazil from the cultural, social, economic, political, ethical and religious points of view.
2. **JUDGE:** In the light of theology we see the four intrinsic expectations of evangelization: service, dialogue, proclamation and witnessing communion through the threefold gift: the Word, the Liturgy and mutual Charity.
3. **ACTION:** The itinerary for pastoral action takes place on three levels: individual, community and society.

پیش **SEE: Reality questions us**

Looking at today’s situation we can see the positive and negative aspects characteristic of our time. Major changes provoke in us anguish and anxiety, but this does not cause bewilderment. The new aspect of transformation is characterised by globalization and presents our time as a change of epoch not an epoch of change. Reality is complex and we must learn to observe it with more humility.

St. Magdalene of Canossa, too, learned to decipher the mystery of God's will for her in the historical situation of the society of her time. Her consent to God was the result of her inner sufferings caused by the situation of the time and how to respond to God's call. Thus, she revealed the Greatest Love to those most needy of her time.

Social-cultural Situation

Today, we note the phenomenon of growing fragmentation regarding agencies that propose scales of values concerning life, religion, personal relationships, that cause disorientation and brings people to feel threatened by frustration, anxiety and distress. Even cultural and religious traditions do not guarantee unity since values have been greatly diluted. In fact, globalization, instead of bringing security and promised progress, has provoked a certain increase of risk which is the cause of an overall feeling of fear: fear of ecological catastrophes, chemical and nuclear disasters, violence and terrorism, unemployment.

Faced by so many uncertainties and risks, people seek immediate satisfaction, primarily aimed at pleasure and consumer culture, thus creating false needs. There is confusion between happiness and economic well-being together with hedonistic pleasure, confusion which causes a tendency to permissiveness, grounded on pragmatic and narcissistic individualism.

The past has lost its relevance and the future is still uncertain; the body and sensations are considered to be a point of reference for the reality of today. It is noted that there is need to re-discover the fundamental values of the human person, human liberty, individual conscience and experience, and most of all the meaning of life. The presence of the Spirit in social movements in favour of the great causes which greatly concern humanity, can be recognised: the struggle against all types of discrimination, the promotion of women's rights, ecology, the protection of cultures and ethnic groups, commitment to social justice and the building of "an alternative world", great ideals that are inspired by the Gospel. On the horizon one can perceive a planetary conscience and the perception of being part of a universal family.

The Economic Situation

Within a globalized economy that follows the form of neo-liberal capitalism, the dynamics of the market carry to the extremes efficiency and productivity as absolute values which regulate every human relationship. In this way, a new form of poverty arises which can be seen on the disfigured faces of those who have been compelled to live on the streets, on the faces of migrants, the sick, drug addicts and prisoners who are not only exploited, but they become a population of "useless people to be thrown away."

Financial institutions and powerful national and international companies condition local economies to remain subject to their own interests, making States incapable of carrying out projects aimed at promoting the population.

Big mining industries and the agricultural industry do not respect the rights of local populations and do not respect ecology nor the preservation of natural resources.



The lack of agricultural reform leaves the land in the hands of a minority and increases violence in rural areas. The mobility of people is a worrying phenomenon; it is the consequence, above all, of those searching for work and better living conditions and this deprives the country of a specialised work force which also retards its socio-economic independence. Over the last few years there have been signs of significant improvement, such as a fall in the unemployment rate, growth of power which favours growth of the economy.

Socio-political Situation

A weakening of interest and a certain disenchantment can be noted regarding POLITICS. It is worrying to see a decline in peaceful social living together and, at the same time, one can note an increase in cases of violence where the value of life itself is worthless. Some causes are: exclusion, the worship of money, individualism and utilitarianism.

A negative factor is the inadequate penal system and health care. Despite everything, one sees that the population is capable of demanding improvement from the State in the fields of health, education, safe food, social insurance, the right to the land and housing, creating jobs and support for organisations of solidarity.

Ecological Situation

The devastation caused by biodiversity has increased as well as attacks on human dignity and the culture of indigenous populations, caused by selfish interests and powerful economic groups. The traditional knowledge on the use of natural resources is now subject to an illicit use by pharmaceutical industries and by biogenetic experimentation which eliminates the rights of local people to sell their own local products which are taken over by their patents.

The situation has become worse, on a large scale, because of the thermal increase of the planet, the running out of natural resources caused by the savage exploitation of nature by those interested only in their own profit.

109



Religious Situation

A weakening in the experience of faith towards God and neighbour can be noted. People live for their own advantage and think that this will bring interior well-being, a way of curing malaise, success in life and one's business affairs, This is the "theology of prosperity". In this context, mass media contribute to making religion insignificant, not just reducing it to the private sphere, but using it as a means of entertaining the public. Consequently, no one feels the responsibility to correct errors which are the base of social life in which, strangely enough, many forms of religiosity and criminality co-exist alongside the search for God and the practise of injustice.

Besides this denial of values, one can see how the majority of Catholics are still very dependant on the parish priest and closed within the parish. This situation needs a real pastoral conversion in order to avoid remaining within strategies of conservation; courage is needed to open oneself to missionary activity. Auto-evaluation and courage are needed to change pastoral structures at all levels, organisations, movements and associations.

پیش JUDGE

The second aspect of “INSPICE” consists in JUDGE: valuing reality comparing it with that which we, according to Scripture and Theology, the Teachings of the Church and the Canossian Charism, consider to be true in relation to the world. In other words, it is true dialogue between the person of Christ and myself, it is an invitation to ask myself, “What does the Lord say to us in this situation?”

• **Missionary disciples in a Church that is in a permanent state of mission**

A missionary community: in accepting the person of Jesus Christ, through faith, the Christian is united with Him and enters into communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Communion with the Holy Trinity is the foundation of communion in the Church and its mission in the world. The Church evangelises like a community of love and attracts its members by living fraternal love and calling them to take part in this “adventure of faith”. The Church is a “place and school of communion.” It constitutes an organic unity offering various services and is animated by a spirituality of missionary communion.

+ **The demands and areas of evangelisation**

The guidelines of evangelisation identify intrinsic needs: service, dialogue, proclamation and witness to communion.

Evangelisation favours the humanisation of relationships, reconciliation and insertion in society, with all the potential it has. This **service** presupposes a knowledge of the various ways of understanding life, its existential problems, anxieties and frustrations, its joys and sorrows. It demands the capacity of listening and **dialogue** regarding the meaning of life, faith in God and prayer. Through this dialogue it will be possible to explain the reasons for our hope and be able to **announce** the Gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ brings to life the community which it is called to bear **witness** to communion.

110

+ **Vocation and mission of missionary disciples**



A disciple is called by Jesus Christ to live with him, partake of his Life, unite self to his person and take up his mission. He assumes the “lifestyle of Jesus himself”: a love which is unconditional, unselfish and welcoming to the point of giving up one’s life and taking part in the Master’s destiny. Every disciple is a missionary. The encounter with Jesus Christ drives one to proclaim the Kingdom of Life which incorporates the whole of existence: personal, family, social and cultural dimensions. Christ’s act of salvation must involve social relationships, stimulate human promotion and authentic liberation. Meeting Christ in the poor is an essential dimension of our faith in Him.

+ **Mission expressed in three ambits**

The Church offers the possibility of approaching the Word of God, the Eucharist and cultivating fraternal charity through the ministries of the Word, the Liturgy and Charity. The Church’s proclamation of the **Word of God** is imperative. The power of the Spirit and the Word influence people and compel them to listen and believe in Jesus Christ.

The proclamation and the acceptance of the Word are essential for the life and mission of the Church. Its pastors must be committed so that the Word is proclaimed through well prepared sermons.

Biblical study is important for inculturated evangelisation. The ministry of the Word demands the ministry of catechesis. One can note that families are not prepared to take the responsibility of educating in faith and that catechesis is not only necessary for children and youngsters. Catholic Universities must promote dialogue between faith and reason, faith and culture and the knowledge of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

+ Liturgical Ministry

Liturgy: the celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery and of the history of salvation is the ritual action expressed through signs and words.

In Baptism the individual adheres to Christ is inserted into the Christian community. In Confirmation the Holy Spirit fills the Christian with His gifts so that the person may live the duties of faith. In Holy Communion the Church celebrates the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. In Penance-Reconciliation the Church celebrates the merciful love of the Father who always forgives. The Anointing of the Sick gives strength to the suffering members of Christ.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Spirit constitutes ministers who are set aside for the common priesthood. In the Sacrament of Matrimony the Church celebrates God's love for humanity and the gift of Christ for His spouse, the Church.

111



+ Ministry of Charity

The centre of Christian life is love and self-giving. The one who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. In Christian life it is essential to live Jesus' commandment: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. In this they will recognise you as my disciples."

The choice of the poor is one of our pastoral priorities. Globalization has brought about new categories of poor people: migrants, victims of violence, refugees, HIV victims, drug addicts, young people victims of prostitution, violence, trafficking, abortion, child labour, people with special needs, the unemployed, the illiterate and homeless ...

Christians are moved by the Spirit to take part in public life. Lay people should be present in public life as intermediaries between the Church and society.

St. Magdalene of Canossa knew how to carry out this task as a lay intermediary between the Church and society and be present in the public life of her city. She lived in a period of transition marked by radical changes in the social, political, economic, cultural and ecclesial spheres. She perceived the situation of great poverty to be "extremely" damaging: her city was full of people who were hungry, sick, illiterate and abandoned. The situation clearly needed a change of customs.

Magdalene understood the cause of the evil of her time: sin in its different forms. Thus, she discovered her true vocation: "Make Jesus known and loved." After a long period of discernment, with the approval of the local Church, she began to give an answer to the grave situations of her time.

Magdalene's project was to be at the service of the poor, but her charity was directed to everyone since she aimed at the integral education of the person with special attention to the spiritual aspect and to the formation of the heart and conscience.

+ The Formation of Missionary Disciples

The formation of missionary disciples is very important. The Church grows through 'attraction', just as Christ attracts everything to Himself through the strength of His love.

The formation of His disciples starts with a question: "Who are you looking for?" (Jn 1:38) Jesus extends the invitation: "Come and see." (Jn 1:39)

A disciple must be sustained by a missionary spirituality, keeping in mind one's gifts, charisms and ministries. The action of the Holy Spirit makes the heart of a disciple burn and places him/her along the journey of God's people.

Fidelity to the Gospel and the authenticity of witness are part of an evangelizing mission. The experience of the living God, listening to His Word in the Scriptures and in the Book of Life, participation in the Eucharist, prayer and being actively present in human situations, are indispensable for a disciple, while the Holy Spirit precedes his/her action and sustains him/her in difficulties and failures.

پیش ACT

Guidelines for Evangelizing Action:

+ Promotion of the person's dignity

Challenge: to build up personal identity and authentic freedom in today's society. Christian faith assures us that we are children of God. (1 Jn 3:2)

Missionary awareness must see the person as a sign of God's Kingdom. In Brazil our action is concretised in: visitation of families, work places, prisons and reception Centres for the destitute. These places become Centres of aggregation. Renewal of the local Church is important.

Challenge: the re-composition of more human relationships. Christian faith teaches us: "Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them!" (Mt 18:20)

Fraternal life in the Christian community promotes attitudes of mutual help, reconciliation, solidarity, commitment, sharing of talents and goods for the service of the mission. Communion of love can be seen in the diversity of charisms, services and ministries. Every person is a bearer of gifts which create union and complementarity with the gifts of others expressed in different ministries.

+ A Community that dialogues

Christian communities that are narrow-minded contradict the coming of God's Kingdom which must be salt, light and yeast.

Ecumenical Dialogue: communion in the faith professed in the Creed and in Baptismal grace unites Catholics with other baptised people.

Inter-religious Dialogue: an authentic attitude to dialogue is fraternal openness to non-Christian religions.



+ **A specific missionary community**

The first people to reach are Catholics who do not frequent the Church and are indifferent; it must reach out to other areas and environments. It is necessary to promote a fraternal society which eliminates the scandal of exclusion and violence. Christian faith affirms: “No one of their members was ever in want.” (Acts 4:34)

The life conditions of millions of abandoned and excluded people are in contradiction with God’s plan and challenge Christians to be evermore committed to the defence of life. The Church is called to be a “Samaritan”, a sacrament of life, solidarity and justice.

+ **Guidelines for Action**

The Church can:

- Collaborate in creating a new culture of sobriety
- Work to obtain minimum living conditions
- Strengthen commitment in promoting strategies for the common good
- Fight and avoid corruption and the disappearance of public money
- Work towards obtaining the minimum necessary in food and nutrition
- Promote the equal distribution of goods
- Work for public security against all types of crime
- Increase pastoral presence in prisons
- Promote a society that respects differences and educates for the preservation of creation.

The participation of Christians in society and politics is greatly encouraged so as to favour government decisions for the good of citizens. It is an important task to form groups who can influence decision making and valuing their serious commitment to fighting against hedonism, corruption and lack of values. Social and Christian ethics are indispensable for everyone and a positive contribution to a more just society. Education must also be accompanied by formation in taking concrete action.

113



+ **The World of Education**

School is the privileged place of formation and promotion of the whole person, thus it must carry out this responsibility as part of the ecclesial community and a centre of evangelization. It is called to be a significant place with a precise objective which has the person at the centre. Christians must learn to use the various means of communication so as to stimulate the capacity to evaluate reality, being careful not to fall into the trap of manipulation by public opinion through these instruments.

The Church asks Christians to sustain civil society by promoting ethics in politics, creating sources of work for different sectors of the population, otherwise people feel marginalised. More attention must be given to those in need of international protection.

“I SHOULD BE PUNISHED IF I DO NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL!”

“I do not boast of preaching the Gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16)

Let us remember the mystical experience of Magdalene of Canossa who, frequently, while at Mass listening to the Gospel “Euntes in universum mundum”, “Go to the whole world”, felt moved by this great command of Christ. From this experience she received her missionary zeal, her specific vocation of “serving others so that Jesus may be known and loved”, thus spreading His boundless charity and preventing sin and evil.

St. Magdalene of Canossa, illumined by the Word of God through a life of prayer and her awareness of the situation around her, was able to perceive that through the Ministries of Charity she could respond to the emergent poverties of her time. In the same way, we must find new ways to respond to the necessities of the poor, promoting them in their dignity so that they can experience God’s love and become instruments of transformation in their families and society.

Our response to these challenges is our personal transformation which, to become operative, must start from the depths of our being and force us to leave our comfortable lives. This transformation will be the answer to that personal malaise, which allows us to become aware of the distance between the ideals which we profess and the reality in which we live. Our charismatic heritage will continue to grow according to the effort we make to respond to the needs of the poor and through the efficacious witness we offer the world.

Let us remember that our Foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa, invites us to overcome our fear and live in fullness our charismatic vocation: no one is asked to carry every burden and practise every virtue at the same time, but to do the good which is asked of us at the appropriate moment.

Jesus Crucified emanated nothing but Charity.

Magdalene of Canossa

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Immigration and Integration

1. Statistical-sociological approach

Phenomena, connected to the mobility of human beings, have always characterised social life. It can be affirmed that social life is produced by the migration that individuals, social groups and entire populations have carried out in the course of history causing great demographical consequences (that is, contributing effectively to the rejuvenation of societies like ours which are becoming old and have a low birth rate), political consequences (because they become one of the main causes of confrontation and political conflict) and so on. The intensity and complexity of the process of migration thus justifies the presence of a “total social fact”: a phenomenon in which all the many dimensions of social life intersect (political, ethical, economic, cultural etc.) and as such must be faced.

Using this approach, migratory processes are described giving special attention to economic and social effects, historical periods (mercantilism, liberalism, neo-liberalism and post-industrialisation and the phases of the last decades) and the consequent interpretative models (transitory, assimilative and pluralist). Nevertheless, the complex nature of the phenomenon which is being treated (a total social fact) warns against the superficial use of the models cited above for the analysis of this phenomenon that today is much more articulated and different with characteristics which distinguish it from what took place in the past. We may consider the main tendencies of the migratory phenomenon by indicating at least the following characteristics:



- **Structural characteristic:** the phenomenon of migration will characterize contemporary societies regardless of different policies adopted, projects of individual migrants etc ...
- **Globalization of migration:** this means the involvement of almost all Nations of the world in this phenomenon, the acceleration of migratory movements and, as a consequence, numerical growth in the flux of migration, and their internal differentiation (migration because of work/family reunification, refugees, asylum seekers, permanent/temporary, regular/ clandestine etc ...)
- **Migration of women,** not only because of family reunification but also because of the growing role of women in migration, either for reasons of emancipation and/or as the head of a family or as victims of sexual exploitation
- **Growing political tension of migration:** the phenomenon is becoming ever more at the centre of conflict and national/international political competition and in the various effects which it brings about.

2. Family, Immigration and an Inter-cultural Society

Study of the new phenomena of migration shows changes: from individual and mainly male migration to the phenomenon of family groups due to family reunification, mixed marriages with a consequent increase of foreign minors and students. This phenomenon causes problems at a social, welfare and educational level.

How can it be dealt with? It is absolutely necessary to solve **the problem of gathering data**, given the dynamics of the phenomenon, and requires periodical monitoring of this reality.

In order to eliminate problems arising from the fragmentation of migrant families, the simplification of administrative and bureaucratic procedures for **family reunification** is desired. It is important to achieve the real integration of migrants by including them in a process in which the public administration, central and local, civil society, ethnic communities and interested families are all protagonists.

There is need to go beyond rules for **the construction of an enriched identity**: it is a serious and interesting challenge in which everyone, Italians and foreigners, are involved. The **school** is a privileged place of integration for the formation of “new Italians”, for proposing referential values of Italian history and identity and for educating towards the awareness of diversities which have taken root in our country through migration.

Not-only-school: it values places other than the school which foster education and relationships (places of worship, sports clubs, youth centres).

Situation of women: offering initiatives that promote itineraries of integration and professional formation.



3. Biblical Approach

It is important to understand certain provocations or motives coming from the Scriptures which help to elaborate firm beliefs about life. In Scripture God is a **pilgrim God** looking for a hospitable country. He is a **God who is a stranger, a foreigner** in a world who is in search of a dwelling place and stops wherever someone offers Him a space. **God identifies Himself with the poor and foreigners**, because He knows what it means “to look for a house” and not to find one and, therefore, denying hospitality to a stranger means excluding an encounter with God.

In the Bible and in every culture, hospitality is seen to be very important. In the Scriptures the stranger is at the centre of the story of the foundation of the people of Israel, he is not a hero, he does not remember his glorious achievements, but he remembers a past of oppression, of those who are in constant exodus. The Biblical text of Exodus analyses the three essential meanings of a stranger:

- The stranger is the symbol of the human condition.
- The stranger is considered a part of humanity that is represented by the totality of women and men
- Through the stranger the Bible asks and responds to three essential questions:
 - Who is God?
 - Who is man?
 - What is the world where the adventure between God and man takes place?

God dreams of a fraternal humanity and fraternity is the challenge before us: to transform globalization into an encounter of sisters and brothers who accept and give hospitality to each other with responsibility and solidarity.

Man in the Bible is a creature welcomed into a space that is a gift where, to exist is not a right but is, above all, a debt towards God and to many others with whom we are bound together by a covenant. From the New Testament it emerges that the Word of God was born and died as a stranger outside the city.

When He came into the world He was not welcomed and did not find a dwelling place. He was recognised only by simple and marginalised people. The Wise Men or kings in search of God recognise the luminous friendship between heaven and earth which focuses on the stable, while power (Herod) and science (Scribes) do not recognise the God-foreigner who is at hand.

**During the Last Supper Jesus makes Himself food that indicates His death,
the climax of His self-giving.**

Cradle and Cross: human poverty and divine poverty meet.

117



4. Pastoral and Ecclesial Approach

This approach studies the phenomenon focusing on the person. The migrant is seen as a **PERSON**: at the centre of every migratory phenomenon we must be able to see the person with his rights and duties. This way of seeing the migrant as a person demands of society and the Church **radical changes** because the social impact is so great that it involves everyone.

A **plan** for both individuals and structures is needed. A plan that in Italy does not exist either at a political level or at Church level, national or Diocesan. Migrants seem to come from no where.

Christians are asked to base this plan on the vision that comes from the **Word of God, from the Biblical context**. It is true that in the Bible we do not find practical indications on how the approach to the question of migration in Italy must be carried out but we find the values that guide us.

In the Bible we find that:

- The migrant is a poor and needy person who, in his poverty, is an image of Christ.
- The migrant is the image of every woman and man created by God to enjoy His gifts and search for Him until he reaches his true homeland.

There are many Documents of the Church concerning migration in which emerge clearly two guidelines that must orientate a balanced pastoral service:

- Respect for **cultural identity** (history, traditions, customs, religion) of each nation and ethnic group.
- Openness to **accepting** willingly those different from ourselves and, at the same time, this demands collaboration and thus integration which tends to the common good of society.

118



5. Charismatic Approach

The acceptance of “those different to us” is the centre of the Canossian charism which flows from the contemplation of Jesus Crucified who, on the Cross, teaches us how to accept and love every person, by remembering the words of Jesus who considers done to Himself what is done to a brother/sister. This divine/human “event” becomes prophecy, an indication of something “beyond” which gives meaning and an answer to the absolute longing innate in every human heart.

Coming to know Magdalene, in the way she deals with others, we are astonished to discover her almost transgressive attitudes for the time in which she lived. Her intuitions are so deep and transparent that they are easily related to the needs that emerge from the society of her day. From her fidelity to following Christ Crucified, from the profound communion with Him and the participation in His Mystery, she understood the essential coordinates of our faith and the extraordinary energies that she knew how to express in freedom, autonomy, courage and determination, in an intense life lived as service.

The Church, as a community of faith, exhorts every Christian to commit himself to work for justice and peace, so that everyone may enjoy the fullness of life, through a balanced attitude of compassion, solidarity and prophecy, commitment and service, so as to collaborate in the building of a better world, as was desired in the original plan of God, a God who loved us first and will always love us.

As the Canossian Family, present throughout the world, we are aware that this call questions us, better still it is an integral part of our vocation of **“Making the Lord Jesus known and loved”**. After 200 years from the foundation of our Institute, we see in Magdalene a person with a high level of social awareness through the way she was concerned with every situation of poverty of her time.

A quality of Magdalene's personality was always her attention to situations of fragility. The gift of her life, through charity, involves Magdalene in the same dynamism of love which leads her to offer herself to the Lord just as He gave Himself to her and consume all her energies for others.

She grows in the gift of self to others, to the poorest, to the point of experiencing that she could not live for herself but for others, giving herself in a radical way and with constancy. This attitude is a constant factor which brings about unity in the Memoirs. She said: *"I am willing to do as much as I can, firstly for the Lord, and then for my beloved poor of San Zeno."*

Attention, care for others, for foreigners who, as an immigrant, could be the person who lives next door, is part of the spirit of the Canossian charism. Magdalene already saw in this a concrete realisation of the command of the Lord: *"Inspice et fac secundum exemplar"* - look and do what you have contemplated on the mountain.

Oblative love contemplated in Jesus on the cross, in the moment of giving up his life so as to realise God's plan for humanity, pushes Magdalene to offer herself, in every way, and reduce herself to dust so that everyone may come to know and love the Lord. Thus she writes in her Memoirs:

*"I wish I could be reduced to dust, if,
in that way, I could be scattered to all parts
of the world,
so that Jesus would be known and loved. "*

Memoirs III,50

Just like Magdalene, "a prophet of her time", an expert interpreter of the signs of the times and a promoter of new and adequate answers, we too, face the new challenges of history and, faithful to our charism, let us continue to hand on Magdalene's passion to the future generations.

Long only for God Alone
since our Good
is to be found only in
Jesus Crucified.

Magdalene of Canossa





We would like to treat this topic from a sociological point of view so as to discern possible action on the part of the Church and the Canossian Family in order to support these brothers and sisters in difficulty; they are “Magdalene’s favourites”.

The phenomena of war, violence and abuse began or intensified during rebellions, plundering and wars that the **Democratic Republic of Congo** lived through from 1990 until today. This painful situation has been caused by selfish interests on the part of a handful of people who seek power, to the detriment of the population.

The D.R. Congo is a developing country and has much potential thanks to the richness of its natural resources. This could have constituted the well-being of the population but it has become the cause of its poverty and suffering because of the greed of multi-national industries and bad economic and political management at a national level.

Everyone knows that in time of war, children and women are often the innocent victims of barbaric action. Let us look at these situations of poverty.



CHILD SOLDIERS in the D. R. CONGO: THE KADOGOS

“Kadogos” is a term used in D.R. Congo referring to child soldiers. According to the International Charter of Children’s Rights, a child soldier is a fighter less than 18, but in D.R. Congo this phenomenon is widespread; in fact, children are not only used by armed groups to carry arms and fight at the front but they are also used as messengers, spies and for sexual exploitation.

Tens of thousands of children, both boys and girls, often as young as 7-8 years, have fought and still fight in rebel groups and the armed forces of the Congo. These groups greatly used children as fighters especially in the last two wars in Congo (1996-2006), but unfortunately in certain areas in the north-east of the country this phenomenon still continues.

Some armed groups had in their squadrons from 40-80% of children. It has been estimated that between **300,000-350,000 Congolese children** have directly taken part in armed conflicts.

+ Causes and Reasons for Recruitment

Recruitment by army officials: Children do not cost much to maintain, they are docile, easily influenced and recruited; they are placed in the front line since they have no means of escaping.

Children: forced recruitment, imitation of one of their friends, attraction to military life, uniform and prestige; the desire to get revenge for the death of a family members; need for protection; poverty of their parents and illiteracy.

The majority of these children have been forced into military life, taken from their families under the threat of a gun while playing in their neighbourhood or even in school. Others enrolled voluntarily in search of uncertain protection and to obtain something to live on in the midst of the ruins of their war-torn country destroyed by years of continual war. Many of them say they enrolled voluntarily after their families had been killed or expelled from the country.

121



+ Military Formation

Once enrolled, children are sent to training camps where they learn to fight and are indoctrinated. In these camps they have to put up with awful living conditions, they are often victims of terrible acts of violence, such as murder, rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Hundreds of children have died during training sessions.

At the end of this training period many children are sent to fight on the front line. Often they are treated like animals by their officers who force them to the front so that they are the first to face the enemy. Usually, girls are sexually abused by their officers and other adult soldiers.

Children are forced to commit actions that are against human rights, such as violence and murder of soldiers of the enemy and even civilians. Some have to kill even the members of their own families. Those who survive this sort of life in the armed forces are constantly obsessed by the memory of violence they were forced to witness or which they had committed themselves under constriction. These memories remain with them forever.

+ Positive Interventions

The Congolese Government: In June 2006, a Government Commission responsible for the programme DDR, announced that it had released more than 19,000 children of which 12% were girls. Great efforts have been made but the problem still exists because many children who were freed do not want to return to their own communities because they will not receive adequate social support and the girls are ashamed of what they have seen and they are afraid of not being accepted by the people of their villages. To facilitate re-insertion, a system has been organised in which the restitution of a fire arm will be exchanged for 100 US dollars.

International Associations: The International Day for the Fight against the use of child soldiers was held on 2nd February 2010. UNICEF has requested the continuation of efforts in removing children from the armed forces in D.R. Congo. There are NGOs which are working in this area. These initiatives defend the cause for freeing children connected with armed groups and providing them with assistance in Centres for children where they have no contact with ex-soldiers. In these Centres, children receive food, shelter and psychological and medical help. They can return to play, study and start to re-adapt themselves to ordinary life. Where possible, every effort is made to find the families of the children so that they may be reunited, while they continue their formation and education.

The Catholic Church: It denounces the use of child soldiers in the ranks of the armed forces. It puts pressure on the Government so that child soldiers can be freed. It animates and helps those who accept taking part in a programme of rehabilitation organised by Caritas.

The Canossian Family: We try to contact these young people and persuade them to accept the chance to start a new life. We take them into our homes and we offer them small jobs so that they can earn their living.

122

STREET CHILDREN in D. R. of CONGO



Today, the D.R. Congo must face another problem, just as worrying as that of child soldiers: street children. This phenomenon is contrary to Congolese culture because in their “extended family” there is always a place and protection. Unfortunately, in the 1990s, especially in the big cities, many families were in desperate conditions because of poverty and they began to send their children away or abandon them to the streets.

Today, in Congo there are **more than 200,000 street children**. The most common causes are: death of parents, irresponsibility of parents, presence of a step-mother in the home, poverty in the family, lack of education and witchcraft.

There are certain types of street children:

- **Shengues:** this is an expression of the lingala language which means street children. They have a reputation of being thieves or youngsters of a doubtful character. Nonetheless, many of them just ask to have a small job and want to live an orderly life: shoe shiners, street vendors ...

- **Ndoki:** this is a word in lingala which means child witch doctors.

Belief in witchcraft is very common in Africa, but the existence of child witch doctors is not part of Congolese culture. In Kinshasa, only recently has it appeared.

This phenomenon developed around 1995 when certain religious sects appeared due to the exodus from the countryside because of great economic difficulties and the devastation of war. These new “churches of revival” multiplied and spread throughout the country. The pastors of these sects claimed that many children were possessed by devils and their parents listened to these preachers and sent these children away from home. These children were accused of witchcraft and therefore maltreated, stigmatised, marginalised, rejected and exiled from society, taking refuge on the streets.

- **Kuluna:** this is an unresolved problem concerning street children which is getting out of hand and becoming dangerous; many of them join youngsters who are illiterate or unemployed and become bandits. They form gangs able to fight, steal and create disorder in society. These children and youngsters who choose a life of violence are called « **Kuluna** ».

Unfortunately, their power increases because, when the police arrest them and put them in prison, after a short time they are freed because they can pay their bail. Besides this, some politicians exploit these young people to obtain power.

123



+ Positive Interventions

The Congolese Government : Young people arrested and brought to various prisons; transport of these people to labour camps in villages.

The Catholic Church : Many parishes and Dioceses help these children through Caritas or Religious Institutes; in Kisangani, 25 years ago, the Sacred Heart Fathers, Dehoniani, opened the houses of San Lorenzo and St. Bakhita where about 120 boys are taken in and formed in the first house and 60 girls in the second.

International Associations: There are some NGOs that try to rehabilitate these children so as to offer them a better future.

The Canossian Family: In **Kisangani** we, Lay Canossians, have organised summer camps for the girls of Bakhita House in collaboration with the Anuarite High School, run by the Canossian Sisters. We try to keep in contact with them by visiting them and bringing them gifts.

Bunia: The work of the Canossian Sisters consists of the human and spiritual formation of about 40 street children. This work started about 6 years ago through help given in a residential centre. Now assistance is given to their natural families or adoptive families. Some street children are taken in by local families. Prevention takes different forms: material help until the families become stable because of the honest work of parents; organisation of a centre for the formation of mothers;

a school for instruction of parents with no education; payment of school fees for some students in danger of finishing up on the streets; organisation of meetings and debates to stimulate involvement and responsibility.

ABUSED WOMEN in the D.R. of CONGO

In some areas of the north-east of Congo where armed troops are still present and fighting still takes place, every day women are victims of rape. Sexual violence is used as a strategy of war and adopted to bring about fear in the population. Women are kidnapped, abused, humiliated and forced to undergo sexual slavery and, very often, pregnancies. Sexual violence affects women of every age: from young girls to old women.

In a Province of the east of Congo, one third of those who were raped were children and one third of these were under 10. Parents refused to send their daughters to school because of continual insecurity. Victims of this violence abandoned school because of their psychological traumas caused by terrible maltreatment, premature pregnancies and sexually transmitted illnesses. In these areas women run great risks when they go to the fields or to the market; at any moment they may become victims of violence. Those who are abused in front of their families or their village communities are treated with mistrust and contempt and, as a consequence, rejection.

Often, these acts of violence are accompanied by looting and murder. Many of the women who are abused are, consequently, carriers of the HIV/AIDS virus. They suffer stressful effects following such traumas: crisis of anguish, sleeplessness, depression, unwanted pregnancies. Abused women, psychologically shocked, physically weakened, socially rejected, find it very hard to get back to normal life, to the point that they can no longer carry out their daily work. Many claim that their milk is contaminated because of rape and they avoid breast feeding their children, thus putting the lives of their children in danger.

Causes: sowing terror in villages, forcing the population to leave them; banditry, satisfaction of sexual pleasures on the part of men; imposing male superiority over women; response to the order of a sorcerer; access to power.



+ Positive Interventions

The Congolese Government: It has promulgated a law which heavily punishes the crime of rape; it is working to confirm equality between men and women.

International Associations: There are some NGOs which try to help women but, unfortunately, often their methods do not respect Christian values.

The Catholic Church: It organises campaigns against sexual violence, denounces abuse and demands that justice be done; it offers medicines to abused women through medical centres; it sustains them spiritually, morally, financially and materially; it forms people to take care of them; it creates formation centres for the rehabilitation of mothers.

The Canossian Family: For two years the Canossian Sisters have lent a part of their house in Bunia to a NGO which is concerned with this evil. When we come into contact with these women, we try to assume a positive attitude, showing them respect, compassion, solidarity and helping them to find a Centre where they can receive help until they can re-insert themselves into their families and society.



BIBLICAL ASPECT

God made Adam from mud. He had something in common with plants and animals. Then God infused in him a soul made to His image and likeness. So man is a composite of body and soul. Satisfaction of needs of his body and soul are inherent in man. We are dealing with one aspect of man's needs and that is **HUNGER**. God cares for man in his totality as we see in the Old and New Testaments.

+ Give food to the Hungry ... in the Old Testament

- . God gives his people manna in the desert for 40 years ... Exodus 16:17
Let everything left be for the stranger, the orphan and the widow ... Deut 24:17-22
- . We have an obligation to observe the laws of social solidarity
Have I taken my share of bread alone, not giving a share to the orphan? Job 31:16-20
- . This text speaks of concern for one's neighbour.
Share your bread with the hungry ... Is 58: 6-11
- . We are going to share, without oppressing others.



+ Give food to the Hungry ... in the New Testament

- . Jesus had compassion on the crowds and asked His disciples:
“Give them something to eat yourselves ...” Mt 14:13-18; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6
- . Jesus identifies Himself with the hungry ...
“I was hungry and you gave me to eat ...” Mt 25
- . Our relationship with our neighbour implies our relationship with Jesus Christ, because whatever we do to others we do to Christ. **The love of God is necessarily expressed in the love of our neighbour.**
When you give a lunch or a dinner, invite the poor ... Lk 14:12
At his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus ... Lk 16:19
This explains the wide gap between the rich and the poor who are marginalised and rejected. The rich man did not even see Lazarus at the door.
- . When Jesus talks of hunger, He does not only mean a grumbling stomach but indicates a deeper hunger. He means **hunger for justice**.

Each one of us meets people who hunger for: love, affection, affirmation

* to possess something that nourishes their soul: words which give life

* a sense of consideration for others that raises them up.

126



پیش ECCLESIAL ASPECT

The Church has published various documents dealing with injustice. We have been recently studying and reflecting on the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church”. The Document reflects how the principles of justice and social solidarity are inspired by the gratuitousness of the salvific event wrought by God and that they do not have merely corrective value for practices dominated by selfish interests and objectives, but must rather become a prophecy for the future. These principles become the focus of the prophets’ preaching, who seek to internalise them ... This process of internalisation gives rise to greater depth and realism in social action, making possible the *progressive universalization of justice and solidarity*, which the people of the Covenant are called to concretize in favour of all men and women of every people and nation. (n. 25)

Human activity, when it aims at promoting the integral dignity of the person, the quality of living conditions and the coming together of people and nations in solidarity, is in accordance with the plan of God, who does not fail to show his love and providence to his children. (n. 35)

The God of the Covenant, whom the Virgin of Nazareth praises in song as her spirit rejoices, is the One who casts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty, scatters the proud and shows mercy to those who fear him. (Lk 1:50-53)

The Church, the community of faith, continues announcing the Good News until Christ will come again. And we, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, continue His Mission in His name and love.

CHARISMATIC ASPECT

“I have always wished to place myself and all that I own at the service of God and for the benefit of the poor.” Magdalene of Canossa

Magdalene said we are Servants of the Poor. This calls us to help the poor of mind, heart and body; the three Branches of Charity and the Spiritual Exercises.

In Jesus Christ and in the revelation and fulfilment of his love on the cross, Magdalene finds the integration of motivation, yearnings and tensions she had sought and struggled to achieve in her youth. From her “Memoirs” we can identify five such yearnings:

- **The search to please God**, the desire to anchor her life in the one and only God, her “God Alone” , is the path that leads her, at the beginning of her spiritual life, towards the cloister.
- **The need to help the poor**, those who are marginalized and deprived of the opportunities that society offers.
- **The commitment to counteract evil** and to foster all that is life-giving, to release the salvific energies of the Gospel.
- **The missionary thrust**, the understanding of the universality of the Gospel as the unconditional love of God for all people.
- **The search for the glory of God**, her desire to “*seek only the glory of God and the salvation of souls.* (Mem Ch 2, n. 50)

These yearnings find their source of integration in the two-fold commandment of love that culminated in Jesus on the cross.

**Are we, Lay Canossians, committed to implement
“the five yearnings” in our environment?**

127



SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT

Each year, hunger takes the lives of approximately 7 million children. Each day 19,000 people die of hunger and hunger-related diseases; that is, 13 people die every minute of every hour of every day.

Hunger and malnutrition are, in fact, the number 1 risk to health worldwide, greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

Besides the obvious sort of hunger resulting from an empty stomach, there is also the hidden hunger of micro-nutrient deficiencies, which make people susceptible to infectious diseases, impair physical and mental development, reduce their labour productivity and increase the risk of premature death.

Hunger does not only weigh on the individual. It also imposes a crushing economic burden on the developing world. Economists estimate that every child whose physical and mental development is stunted by hunger and malnutrition stands to lose 5-10% in lifetime earnings.

Only with our good will can we hope to take focused, effective, formative action.

WHAT is HUNGER?

Hunger is not appetite. It is a profound, debilitating, devastating, intensively painful human experience. It keeps us from working productively, from thinking clearly, from resisting disease. Ultimately, if it goes on long enough, it kills us.

How do we measure HUNGER?

The most accepted standard for determining the extent of Hunger throughout a country is the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).
The IMR is the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1000 live births in a given year.

Who are the hungry?

Most of the world's hungry live in **developing Countries**. According to the latest statistics of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), there are 925 million hungry people in the world and 98 % of them are in developing Countries.

They are distributed like this:

Every 3.6 seconds a person
dies of hunger
75%
of them are children

Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER
Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER
Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER

578 million in Asia and the Pacific
265 million in Sub-Saharan Africa
53 million in Latin America and the Caribbean
42 million in the Near East and North Africa.



Daily under-nourishment is a less visible form of hunger, but it affects many people from the shanty towns of Jakarta in Indonesia and the Cambodian Capital Phnom Penh to the mountain villages of Bolivia and Nepal.

This morning,
one billion people
around the world woke up
hungry and tonight,
they will go to sleep
hungry.



Impact of Hunger

A critical component of a healthy life is nutrition. Good nutrition, particularly in the first three years of life, is important in establishing and maintaining a good foundation that has implications on a child's physical and mental health, academic achievement and economic productivity later as adults.

Unfortunately, food insecurity is an obstacle that threatens this critical foundation.

Mental and Physical Health

Insufficient nutrition puts children at risk regarding illness and weakens their immune system. The weak immune systems of young children aged 0-5 make them especially vulnerable to nutritional deprivation and, as a result, the ability to learn and grow, as well as fighting infections, is adversely affected. Stunting, for example, affects more than 147 million pre-school children in developing countries.

Iodine deficiency is the world's single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Unsafe water and sanitation can also cause malnutrition.

The lack of adequate nutrition affects the cognitive and behavioural development of children. Food insecurity, low income households provoke in people irritability, fatigue and difficulty in concentrating. Research has shown that food insecurity is associated with grade repetition, absenteeism, mental retardation, anxiety, aggression, poor mathematics results, psycho-social dysfunction and difficulty with social interaction among children between 6-12 years.

Food insecurity not only has an impact on children's mental health but also on their mother's as well. For malnourished women, pregnancy becomes risky and they cannot be sure of producing nourishing breast milk. A malnourished mother is more likely to give birth to an underweight or unhealthy child. Malnutrition is a process with consequences that may extend not only into later life, but also into future generations.

Human poverty

Hunger leads to human poverty. It includes deprivation on a material level e.g. lack of proper diet, clothing, shelter and work. It also includes social deprivation such as denial of employment, participation in social institutions and education. The UN's Economic and Social Council has described human poverty as ... **a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity.** It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities from society. It means susceptibility to violence and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments without access to clean water or sanitation.

Rural hunger facts ... Three-quarters of all hungry people live in rural areas, mainly in the villages of Asia and Africa. Overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture for their food, these populations have no alternative source of income or employment. As a result they are vulnerable to crises. Many migrate to cities in their search for employment, swelling the ever-expanding populations of shanty towns in developing countries.

Challenges facing rural areas differ from urban areas in several significant ways:

- Employment is more concentrated in low-wage industries
- Unemployment and under-employment are greater
- Education levels are lower
- Work support services such as flexible and affordable child-care and public transportation are less available
- Less communication and transportation network.

What causes Hunger?

Food has never before existed in such abundance, so why are 925 million people in the world going hungry?

In purely quantitative terms, there is enough food to feed the entire global population of 7.6 billion people. And yet, one in nearly seven people goes hungry. One in three children is underweight. Why does hunger exist?

Nature ... Natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and drought have calamitous consequences on the food supply.

War ... In developing countries fighting displaces millions of people. In war, food sometimes becomes a weapon. Soldiers will starve opponents into submission by seizing or destroying food and livestock thus wrecking local markets. Fields and water wells are often mined or contaminated, forcing farmers to abandon their land.

Poverty trap ... In developing countries farmers often cannot afford seed to plant the crops that would provide for their families. Craftsmen lack the means to pay for the tools to ply their trade. Others have no land or water or education to lay the foundations for a secure future.

The poverty-stricken do not have enough money to buy or produce enough food for themselves and their families. In turn they tend to be weaker and cannot produce sufficient food. In short the poor are hungry and their hunger traps them in poverty.

Agricultural infrastructure ... In the long term, improved agricultural output offers the quickest solution to poverty and hunger. Too many developing countries lack key agricultural infrastructure such as enough roads, warehouses and irrigation. The results are high transport costs, lack of storage facilities and unreliable water supplies.

Over-exploitation of the environment ... Poor farming practices, deforestation, over-cropping and over-grazing are exhausting the Earth's fertility and spreading the roots of hunger. Increasingly, the world's fertile farmland is under threat from erosion, salinization and desertification.

130



Hunger is a sign that proclaims, without a shadow of doubt, people's fundamental need of eating in order to live.

The security of countries, both great and small, depends first of all on a population that has enough food, enough jobs, adequate energy and safe comfortable housing. When a society cannot provide these basic needs, all the guns and bombs in the world cannot maintain peace.

We have turned our attention to Africa since our group reflected in depth on this continent.

Hunger tends to claim more lives in Africa

- Hunger in Africa is one of the greatest problems that the continent faces in the 21st century.
- A combination of factors, that is, a poor economy, damaged farmland, questionable leadership and corruption has caused many nations throughout Africa to suffer from hunger.
- There are a number of organizations that attempt to address these issues; however, the need is greater than the available resources.
- Roughly 80% of the residents of the continent sustain themselves on less than \$2 a day.
- In many parts of Africa, the production of food depends upon the intense work of every family each year.
- The disaster emerges from the fact that large areas of Africa are dislocated by war, adults die from the scourge of AIDS, and so fields cannot be worked on, resulting in poor food production.
- Many, especially women and children, are forced to depend upon handouts of food.
- Unpredictable weather also aggravates the situation: climate change as a consequence of global warming, deforestation, degradation of the environment...
- A prolonged period of extensive drought has caused many parts of Tanzania's northern zone to be in dire need of food. Livestock is also being depleted as pastures have gone dry.
- This year, 10 million people risk going hungry in Kenya after harvests failed because of a severe drought.
- In Malawi, almost 5 million of its 13 million people depend on emergency food aid.
- In Uganda, it is estimated that over 35% of the population is affected by hunger, ranging from moderate, acute to chronic hunger
- While in Sudan, famine is a humanitarian disaster caused mainly by human rights abuses, as well as drought.

One of the recent causes of hunger

- Action Aid has been looking at the causes of hunger in Tanzania and one of the recent causes is bio-fuel investment.
- In Tanzania and Kenya food security has been compromised by bio-fuel production as land, water and labour, which should be used for food production, is being used for bio-fuel

Taking a stand ...

- Reality shows us that people are dying of hunger! The bio-fuel investments do not benefit Tanzania by bringing any local development.
- Four million hectares of land was being requested for bio-fuel production without a policy!



- 4% of Tanzania's agricultural land is in danger of being used for bio-fuel production
- If we, the people, do not stand together against this problem, food insecurity will only increase in the future
- Not only, we shall not have enough food for our families – our children will be deprived of the basic health services, the right to go to school, and the right to have a bright future!

Together we can make hunger history

- Africa's land, labour and water is being exploited to develop bio-fuels that benefit the western countries. Is it right that we are growing food for the western vehicles, when OUR children are starving in our Country?
- That is why we are Food right Fighters, and you can be a Food right Fighter too
- Together we can create great social change and make hunger history. So take action!
- We have a collective responsibility to make sure that bio-fuel investments do not compromise food security. "No bio-fuel without a policy that ensures food security!"
- **Attacking hunger or attacking GREED, POWER, ABUSE and CORRUPTION at their roots?**

GREED that fuels agri-business speculation in food markets free trade (a coercion to trade) usury perpetual war unemployment figures in the millions outsourcing of industry and jobs supporting multinational corporations dominated by the mafia ...

POWER ABUSE and CORRUPTION Dictatorships military government with no interest in people's welfare political instability and corruption that stops the flow of food at specific times and places huge exploitation of the poor ...

132

The Antidote to sin: LOVE/CHARITY : St. Magdalene of Canossa



- Seeking to prevent sin, moved by the sentiment of love
- There is no act of charity more perfect than that of helping our neighbour to love God
- In seeing Jesus Crucified suffer again in the poor, Magdalene understood the ultimate root of the evil of her times: sin in its many forms. Thus, she initiated the ministries of charity to transform the culture that conditioned the morality of her time
- Magdalene judged the daily situation of an impoverished and hungry people as most devastating in which the indignation of the Lord seems clearly to demand a reform of morals.

I recommend to you my beloved Poor...

- The option for the poor necessarily has to advocate a strategic evangelization which counteracts a global economic and political system that continues to create more and more victims.
- **A faith that is 'life-giving' sees to the vital needs of the people**, that is, food, water, land, shelter, safety ... **It also aims at reversing** current social relationships which are mainly determined by economic factors into social systems which are regulated by God's law and a spiritual and holistic vision of the world.

PLAN OF ACTION

"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." Jn 10:10

Objectives: to reduce the ill effects of hunger in our Countries
to bring fullness of life to poor people

1. **Simple acts of charity:** + **living** a simple and sober lifestyle + **avoiding** what is superfluous + **not wasting** water, electricity + **fasting and giving** food to the needy + **distributing** other goods on special occasions and during times of calamities+ **giving** scholarships and free tuition+ **offering** remedial classes+ **networking** with NGOs to help people in their different needs
2. **Responding to their social and emotional needs:** + **becoming** witnesses of joy + **showing** warm, welcoming attitudes and friendly gestures + **taking time** to listen to them
3. **Involvement in the ministries as a way to empower them to be the agents of their own transformation:** + **education** + **catechesis** and evangelization + **visiting the sick** in hospitals and in homes + **journeying with the youth** (formation of youth groups)
4. **Preservation and use of our natural resources and the reduction of environmental exploitation:** + **updating** ourselves to the reality of today + **information and education** + **recycling** waste to clean the environment and to be used as a source of funds
5. **Finding ways and means to fight corruption:** + **encouraging** the lay faithful, those who live with integrity, to take up political positions in public service + **not indulging** in corrupt practices (e.g. receiving and giving bribes).



We recognize a deeper hunger which only God can satisfy. Therefore, we continue to strengthen and deepen our faith and live a life centred in the Eucharist, thus becoming bread broken and shared for others.

"... Give them some food yourselves ..." Mt 14:17

Come, You who are Blessed by My Father!

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on the throne of glory.

All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another, as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand,

“Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

**For I was hungry and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you made me welcome;
I was naked and you clothed me;
I was sick and you visited me;
I was in prison and you came to see me.”**

Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome? Naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?” And the King will answer,

**“I tell you solemnly,
in so far as you did this
to one of the least of these brothers of mine,
you did it to me.”**

Next he will say to those on his left hand, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.”

Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?” The he will answer,

**“I tell you solemnly,
in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these,
you neglected to do it to me.”**

And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.

Mt 25,31-46

