

# THE BOND OF CHARITY 3D

## FORMATIVE JOURNEY FOR THE GUANELLIAN FAMILY

2022 – 2023

### PART TWO



*"I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35)" (EG n.99).*

*POPE FRANCIS*

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## INTRODUCTION TO A JOURNEY THAT CONTINUES

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

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

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

### An Ecclesial horizon

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

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

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

Providence made it so that this proposal comes in perfect accord with the synodal journey promoted by the Church for the coming two years, offering “the grace to move on together, to listen to one another, to start a discernment of our time, becoming in solidarity with the labours and desires of humanity”, as Pope Francis underlined in his opening speech.

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

### A prophetic formation theme

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

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

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

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

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

“The bond of charity 3D” offers not only hints to pray, meditate, reflect, share, we would like to open paths of sharing for the Communities, the Groups, the three Branches of the Guanellian Family:

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

## A journey with three dimensions

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

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

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

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

With the third chapter – **the bond of charity: work in progress** – we contemplate the future horizon, what we are asked to share in mission and for mission. We offer paths of reflection and directions for action to start afresh with renewed passion our journey, aware that the bond of charity, when lived with constancy, is source of light and strength.

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

## A path that must be shared

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

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

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

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

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

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

May our holy Founder and Blessed Clair help us to live the opportunities to meet and share offered by this path in the coming two years, as moments of grace, so that, with the joy of the charism given us, we can start some processes of personal and community renewal.

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

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

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

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

O Lord, love is patient.  
Help me learn how to wait for others' pace.  
O Lord, love is kind.  
Help me desire others' good before mine, even if it pains.  
O Lord, love is not jealous.  
Teach me how to rejoice for others' success.  
O Lord, love is not boastful.  
Give me humility so acknowledge your gifts.  
O Lord, love is not inflated.  
Guide me, to put others at the centre.  
O Lord, love is not rude.  
Make me see your face in others.  
O Lord, love does not seek his own interest.  
Make me experience the joy of free-giving.  
O Lord, love is not quick-tempered.  
Remove from my lips all words who can hurt.  
O Lord, love does not brood over injury.  
Give me a loving gaze.  
O Lord, love does not rejoice over injustice.  
Open my heart to my brethren's needs.  
O Lord, love rejoices with the truth.  
Guide our steps to You.  
O Lord, give us the joy of feeling that You love us  
With a love that bears all things, believes all things,  
Hopes all things, endures all things.  
Only then can we desire to give  
Your Love to our brethren. Amen

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### MAGISTERIUM

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

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- CWM** L. Guanella, *Come-with-me for the American Missionary Sisters*, (tr. F. Lain) Abor, VR (Ghana), 2008
- FAC** DSMP-SoC, *With Faith, Love, and Competence – Handbook for Guanellian Staff*, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2000.
- LDP** Bollettino mensile della Casa Divina Provvidenza in Como (1892 – 1915) *La Divina Provvidenza*, Roma, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1982.
- MM** L. Guanella, *Maxims of Spirit and Method of Action* (tr. F. Lain), Abor, VR (Ghana), 2008
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- SpC** L. Guanella, *Scritti per le Congregazioni*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, IV, Centro Studi /Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1988.
- SIP** L. Guanella, *Scritti inediti e postumi*, in Opere edite ed inedite di Luigi Guanella, VI, Centro Studi Guanelliani/Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2015.
- SGC** Associazione Guanelliani Cooperatori, *Statuto generale*, Roma 2016.
- WFG3** L. Guanella, *Writings, Vol. 3* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Bristol, RI, 1987.
- WFG5** L. Guanella, *Writings, Vol. 5* (tr. P. Di Tullio), Havertown P.Co., Broomall, PA, 1993.
- Sulla frontiera** M. Carrera-P. Pellegrini, *Luigi Guanella sulla frontiera dell'emarginazione*, Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1986.
- Life** L. Mazzucchi, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, (tr. P. Di Tullio), Springfield, PA, 1985.

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# THE BOND OF CHARITY IN OUR DAILY RELATIONS

A “Guanellian” gaze on Pope Francis’ comment to the Hymn of Charity  
(Amoris Laetitia Ns. 90-119)

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

So, let us go deeply in the Founder’s thought, hearing him strongly repeat “*charity is a bond that binds hearts*”: how can we make this faith reality living, evident, and acting, with the limits and frailties of our human nature?

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

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

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



## 1. AN OPEN EYE ON FAMILY RELATIONS

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

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

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

### CHARITY IS PATIENT AND AT THE SERVICE

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

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

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

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

### CHARITY IS NOT JEALOUS

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

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

Envy is a terrible sentiment, as the Pope says, it is “opposed to love”. It even leads to hatred to the point of desiring the person to be physically eliminated. A person can be eliminated even simply by

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

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

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

### **CHARITY IS NOT BOASTFUL**

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

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

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

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

### **CHARITY IS GENTLE, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN INTEREST**

Don Guanella *“appeared as a good, sweet, gentle priest”* (Life p.397). Pope Francis calls *“loving kindness”* what St. Pauls means by writing *“Charity is not rude”* and invites to have a kind look between spouses, between children and parents, among Guanellians ... to be ready for a true encounter with the other; and to use a kind language made of words that encourage, comfort, strengthen, urge, on the example of Jesus. Such a kind look will allow us to go beyond the other people's loopholes, seeing all the beauty that is in them. Cardinal Ferrari was able to see beyond, when he met in 1891 the kind look of don Guanella. He started a friendship that lasted for life, with a brotherly exchange of giving and receiving. At don Guanella's funeral *“the illustrious Cardinal based the eulogy on charity as written by St. Paul and practiced by Father Guanella together with all other Christian virtues* (Life p. 461).

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

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

### **CHARITY IS NOT RUDE AND FORGIVES**

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

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

*To this aim, drive back always the wave of anger. And then, give kind signs of affection to your opponents. Forgive, brother, as God forgives” (SAL p.8).*

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

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

## **CHARITY REJOICES WITH OTHERS**

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

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

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

## **CHARITY BEARS, BELIEVES, HOPES, ENDURES ALL THINGS**

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. AN OPEN EYE ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS

**PREMISE** In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Amoris Laetitia*, the comment to St. Paul's Hymn of Charity highlights "some characters of true love", in which we can see the sheds of the mystery of Love that also consecrated persons are called to reflect in their fraternal life.

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

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

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

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

### CHARITY IS PATIENT AND KIND

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

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

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

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

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

### CHARITY IS NOT JEALOUS

The absolute opposite to benevolence is envy. Sometimes open, sometimes hidden, it causes "sadness

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

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

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

### **CHARITY IS NOT BOASTFUL, NOT PROUD**

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

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

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

### **CHARITY IS GENTLE, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN INTEREST**

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

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

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

In this way "love can transcend and overflow the demands of justice, expecting nothing in return, and ... can lead to laying down one's life for another", for those who "*can climb to the greatness of the divine mind, the just and ample criterion of the charity of Jesus Christ*" (SpC p.512), in the words of Don Guanella.

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

## CHARITY DOES NO ASSAULT AND FORGIVES

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

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

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

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

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

## CHARITY REJOICES WITH OTHERS

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

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

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

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

## CARITÀ BEARS, BELIEVES, HOPES, ENDURES ALL THINGS

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

God call also consecrated persons to a journey along these steps, because “it is the love of God, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, from which religious community takes its origin and is built as a true family gathered together in the Lord's name” (VFC n.8).

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

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

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

### 3. AN OPEN EYE ON EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS

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

This is the method I used:

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

#### 89. LOVE IN MATRIMONY

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

To love, to cherish, to seek the other person’s good, also in the educational field is an essential theme. Even more so in a Guanellian pedagogy. The founder understood education above all as a work of the heart, symbolically expressed as “surround with affection” (PEG 22,23,29,31,32,33,43,86 – FLC 25,74). Every interaction has its source from the ways of the heart and moves along the ways of the heart. It is based, it grows it is fostered by the affective dimension, that goes on to produce attitudes and behaviours. To follow the ways of the heart means to involve, respect, and sometimes also “jump into” apparently impossible or useless undertakings. It means also to reach the deepest point of the other person’s soul and allow the other to do the same. It leads to defend, when the way becomes harder, the “primacy of the heart over technics”. Of course, it is a love enlightened by intelligence. A love that is felt and also thought, that allows us to “enter in an educational syntony” with the other, no matter the condition. It means being ready to take on the delicate task of being part of the other person’s life, entering the person’s deepest dimensions, with the risk that the other will reach our own deepest dimensions. Each human being loves and needs love. And this is the human being’s greatest richness.

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

#### 91. LOVE IS PATIENCE

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

Patience is a great pedagogical virtue. It is not by chance that it has an important place in the Guanellian educational documents, being listed among the basic pedagogical qualities (FLC 80 –PEG 27,34,35,36). It is rightly underlined that patience is not resignation, but “the virtue of actively waiting for the person’s growth, doing all that is possible to favour this growth”. It rules out imposition, rather it “goes by the ways of conviction and persuasion”. Patience means being able to wait, to respect times and limitations, our own and the other’s. it often means to accept frustration and being able to manage it. To be patient does not mean to give up, to surrender, undervalue, reduce; it means never to lose hope in the “treasure of good” that each person holds. It means to have always confidence on the person I face, as we are invited by Don Guanella that wrote: “*it is good to encourage always, never to humiliate*” (SpC p.1043).

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

## **92. LOVE ALWAYS IMPLIES A DEEP SENS OF COMPASSION**

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

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

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

## **93. LOVE IS KIND: THE ATTITUDE OF BENEVOLENCE**

“Patience, as said in the first place, is not a completely passive attitude, but one accompanied by activity, by a dynamic and creative interaction with others. The word indicates that love benefits and helps others. For this reason it is translated as “kind”; love is ever ready to be of assistance”.

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

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

## **97 - 98. LOVE IS ALSO HUMILITY**

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

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

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



### **103 - 104. WITHOUT INTERIOR HOSTILITY**

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

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

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

### **105 - 106 - 108. FORGIVING**

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

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

- ✓ How hard is it for me, to forgive? Who do I forgive more easily, and who less? Do I have a nice remembrance of a personal experience of forgiveness?

### **111 - 112 - 113. IT BEARS ALL THINGS**

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

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

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

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

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

Our PEG states: “trust is a very important pedagogical rule: it fosters trust in others and liberates their best energies” (36). Trust generates freedom and lays the foundation of optimism and therefore hope. In education, the effects of this attitude are well known. Many studies have proved the outcome of the “Pygmalion or Rosenthal effect” as a prophecy that is self-accomplished: when a teacher thinks that a child is less gifted (and thus has less confidence in the child’s abilities), the teacher unconsciously behaves with this child in a different way, and the child will behave consequently.

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

## 126 - 127 - 128. JOY AND BEAUTY

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

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

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

## 133 - 134 - 135. AMORE CHE SI MANIFESTA E CRESCE

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

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

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

**136 - 137 - 138 - 139 - 140 -141. IL DIALOGO**

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

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

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

**143 - 145 - 146 – 147.**

**THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS, GOD LOVES THE JOY OF HIS CHILDREN**

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

Guarding the necessary attention, I think also in education we should talk of desires, feelings, emotions and passions. They are the fire that warms up our interactions, the strength moving our activities, the supply of energy allowing us to face with courage also the hardest challenges. They are essential dimensions of the human being and of interrelations, particularly in education, to the point that for some years now, in pedagogy and psychology, we talk of emotional intelligence, of how to detect it and educate it. Not less important, in this journey of growth, is the call to renunciation and setting limits. (FAC 48-53 – PEG 4,14,18,59,77,86,87,89,90).

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

## FROM BD. CHIARA BOSATTA WRITINGS AND EXAMPLES

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

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

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

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

### WAITING FOR THE NEXT STEP ...

This is the end of the second step of the formation journey for the Guanellian Family for the years 2022 – 2023. We received some hints to deepen our personal and professional experience within the Guanellian Family at the light of the words of the Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia. We receive the light of three points of view, different and complementary, well grounded in our daily life, to live **today** the bond of charity.

We are invited to guard well these hints, waiting to add more with the third and last part, that will set our look on the **future** horizon, and what it requires to share in our mission and for our mission. We wish you to move on with new impulse and new passion, aware that the bond of charity consistently lived is source of light and strength.