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Journeying with VOICA *Dare Di Più Returns!*

So much has happened since our last publication that perhaps we ourselves are wiser from the silence. We now resume the line of events...

In the last three years, VOICA has traversed the world, reaching even the Far East. Some of our new communities have included:

2002

Malawi—A community of four volunteers began teaching at the new Bakhita Education Complex in *Balaka*.

2003

East Timor—We opened new communities of educators in *Comoro*, *Dili*, the capital of East Timor, and in *Ossu*, a remote village in the heart of the island.

2004

East Timor—A small group of VOICA volunteers arrived in *Baucau* to work in informal education for women.

Tanzania—An international community of three from India, Poland and USA settled in *Mugana*, on the hills of Lake Victoria, to work in a hospital.

Plans for 2005...

We are now busy planning the **2005 INTERNATIONAL VOICA CONVENTION** that will be held in Rome from 31 July to 5 August 2005. Together with the Canossian Institute, we will be preparing ourselves to be

greater witnesses: *living on the side of the poor with the poor.*

We are opening even more sites in *Egypt* and *Brazil*, which will be entirely VOICA establishments (houses and community).

Projects Since 2004, we have pledged support and dedication to establishing the dispensary in *Togo*, a large and compelling project to offer hope for the local people. At the beginning of 2005, a project of dentistry studies began in *Kajiansi, Uganda*. Other projects in *Africa, Latin America* and *Asia* have been supported by short-term volunteers, the summer groups that depart from Italy every August.

The volunteers are always called to offer their gifts and capabilities, whether in professional performance or in the demands of service. As always, the VOICA volunteers are missionaries of Jesus, making Him known not with words, but through their living witnesses. They maintain an attentive attitude toward others through selfless service.

We invite you to join us as we journey through the past and into the future of VOICA...

*Sr. Patrizia Livraga, FdCC
VOICA International Coordinator
Rome, Italy*

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Make sure to visit the VOICA Web site
for the latest news and updates on VOICA or
for more information on our missions and becoming a volunteer.

Get to Know YaYrA

In 1998, VOICA lay volunteers established the first Yayra volunteer community in the small village of Kové, 20 km from the capital of Togo, Lomé. They joined in collaboration with the Canossian Sisters, who had begun their Kové mission in 1994.

Currently, there are four volunteers in the Yayra community. Maristella Bigogno, a Canossian lay missionary, is the community leader. She has lived in Togo for 6 years and has big heart for the poor—as well as for her cats. Meghan Kelly, from the USA, teaches in the vocational school for young ladies. She hopes to become a medical doctor. Claudia Quevedo, from Bolivia, is in charge of cooking, dancing and caring for the sick. Sabrina Colombo is a social worker who has traded home visits in Milan's subsidized housing with home visits among the villagers of Togo. She has become the dance and fried plantain aficionado of the community.

The community assists with various projects: a professional

school for women aspiring to become hairstylists, dress makers, and administrative assistants, a retreat house, and such community outreach as helping the sick (providing counselling, rides to hospitals, and medicine subsidies), assisting small-business initiatives, subsidizing school costs, and assisting in job searches.

Affordable, quality health care is one of the most pressing needs in Kové. The volunteers discovered that the best way of attending to this need was to construct and operate a neighbourhood health clinic. In their outreach to the poor, they often must rely on distant clinics that cannot offer competent care. To resolve this problem, the volunteers planned and began construction for a dispensary last year. The bishop laid the first stone on 1 April 2004.

The Yayra community is guided in their work by the four pillars of VOICA.

Spirituality. "Many aspects of our mis-

sionary experience attend to our need for spiritual growth and discernment: daily morning mass to evening community prayers, from individualized spiritual counselling to personal moments of meditation and prayer. We consider *Spirituality* to be our sustaining pillar from which we derive the discernment, energy, and encouragement to meet our daily challenges."

Formation. "In addition to our cultural formation, such as studying the local tribal language, we seek spiritual formation through a weekly Bible study."

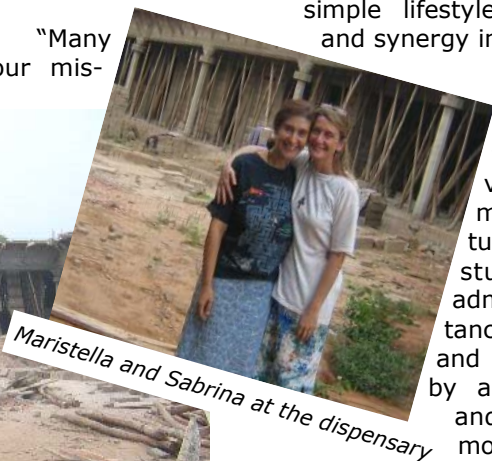
Community. "We strive to create a harmonious community life, in which we can learn from each other, grow together, and encourage each other in our individual work. We recognise and value the individual talents and limits of each member, realising that we come from different backgrounds and life experiences. The defining traits of our community are a simple lifestyle, shared prayer, and synergy in our work."

Service. "We are dedicated to teaching and providing emotional, material, and spiritual support for our students through administrative assistance in the school and retreat house and by assisting the poor and the sick. Our most important service commitment, however, is our availability for the numerous tasks of the mission. From big to small jobs, we aspire to humbly serve in the model of St. Magdalene, with a patient, generous and amiable heart."

*Reflections by
2004-2005 Yayra Community*



Maristella, Claudia, and Meghan express their gratitude to donors for the Togo dispensary (under construction in the background).



Maristella and Sabrina at the dispensary

Answering a Need



VOICA Volunteers establish a rural Clinic in Kové, Togo

For the past seven years, VOICA volunteers have served the community of Kové, Togo, through Catechism classes, a professional school for women, and pastoral care for the poor and sick. During that time, one of the greatest needs has been for accessible, quality health care. The volunteers are often called on to provide emergency first aid, to transport those in need of care to hospitals far away, and to assist in purchasing necessary medications or medical supplies. The volunteers realized that they were spending much time and money helping the sick, but they couldn't be assured that the sick were receiving quality, reliable care. They decided that there was a better solution: to open their own clinic.

The volunteers planned and designed a full-service medical clinic to be operated and staffed entirely by volunteers. The St. Josephine Bakhita clinic includes examination rooms, a laboratory, gynaecological and obstetric facilities, a pharmacy, two large wards, and dental examination rooms. The clinic also includes a children's play area and consultation areas.

The clinic will provide diagnosis, treatment, and prevention for the most common ailments, such as malaria, sexual transmitted diseases, and parasites. The clinic will also administer vaccinations for such diseases as polio and tetanus.

The volunteers hope that by managing their own clinic they will be better able to ensure timely treatment, accurate diagnoses, and quality care for the sick. In addition, the clinic will reduce both the time and money spent by the volunteers on care for the sick because they will be able to treat the community locally and to monitor the prescriptions.

The clinic is intended to serve the most needy of the community, so they will provide care to all regardless of ability to pay for the services. The pharmacy will provide medications at cost.

Construction on the clinic began on 1 April 2004, under the supervision of the volunteers, lay missionary, and Sisters now at the mission site. They expect to complete the clinic by the end of this year. Meanwhile, volunteers in Italy and the United States are raising funds to support the construction and operating costs, and the VOICA office in Rome is recruiting doctors, nurses, and others to staff the clinic.

The clinic is a true testament to the legacy of St. Magdalene and St. Bakhita: the spirit to give our service to whoever needs it, however it is needed, wherever it is needed.

TO MAKE A DONATION

BY WIRE TRANSFER...

To the VOICA Onlus account:

Volontariato Internazionale Canossiano Onlus

Banca Intesa
P.le Gregorio VII, 10
00165 Rome
ITALY

C/C 231256 - 33 **CAB** 05032 - 8
ABI 3069 - 2 **CODICE CIN:** R
IBAN IT88 R030 6905 0320
0002 3125 633
BIC-SWFT BCITITMM700

Please specify *Togo Clinic, Uganda Project, or Praia Grande Project* as the purpose of the transfer (see page 14).

BY CHECK...

To the VOICA office. Checks should be made out to VOICA and should specify the project in the memo line.

Send checks to

Sr. Patrizia Livraga
VOICA Onlus
Via Aurelia Antica, 180
00165 Rome
ITALY

To make a tax-deductible donation from the United States,

please contact Sr. Patrizia Livraga for details before sending any money.

E-mail: voica@fdcc.org
Tel: +39 06 39375103

MAGDALENE WAS RIGHT!



In one of my visits to the villages, I encountered a **feticheur** (*witch doctor*) who asked me for money so he could 'free' some of his patients to go with me to the hospital. The patients we wanted to **steal** were a young girl (extremely anaemic with sores all over her body and a big wound on her foot caused by the boiling water the feticheur was using to treat her) and three-month-old baby twins, (one later died of intestinal parasites). There were many sick people with him—epileptics, handicapped, some with tumours, others with parasites.

I refused the feticheur's request and, hiding my **big fear** with a strict face, I explained to him and all the others that if they really wanted to get healed, there was no need of ceremonies nor of making cuts all over the body. They needed the right medicines and hygiene. I didn't listen to his insistence.

The next day, the surviving twin, her mother and the girl came to us. We immediately brought them to the hospital, where they both improved. The mother, who has two other children, was even given the possibility to rent land to cultivate. The girl—who had never attended school—expressed her desires to study in the coming school year.

Another day, two young mothers came to us with their ill infants.

Both of the children appeared to be filled with parasites.

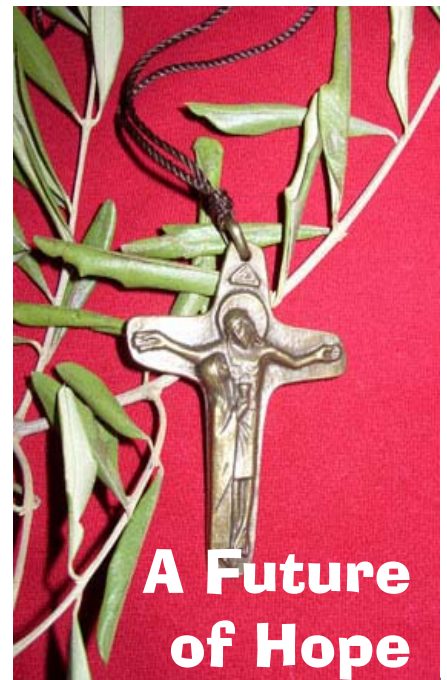
The mothers admitted to having given the infants unboiled water from the well, a common practice. One child was becoming blind (or was already blind). The mother said the child was born like that and she wanted help so that her baby could open her eyes. Though I didn't have much hope (I suspected the mother had some sexually transmitted diseases), I sent them to the best paediatrician in the city. As is usually the case, the girls did not have husbands and, being so young, they were naïve in regard to raising families. The poor young mothers didn't even know their ages nor when they delivered their babies.

In a society that places so much importance on having children, the question of responsibility in raising them—the great challenge for the missionaries—is answered in the Gospel values. When these values are accepted and lived, they help the people become more aware and conscious about responsibilities towards their very own children, brothers and sisters.

Magdalene was right — education is the best way to liberate a person from all types of poverty and ignorance. The poverty and diseases will continue, but our mission to help the people live their poverty in a less miserable but more dignified way also continues, hoping against hope that we can make a difference in the years to come. God entrusted to us this work of making HIM known and loved so that poverty may be lived in the spirit of love as HE Himself exemplified.

I am grateful for the opportunity to welcome those in need and am proud to be one of His missionaries.

*Cecille Icaro
Canossian Lay Missionary
Kové, Togo (2001—2003)
Comoro, East Timor (2003—2005)*



A Future of Hope

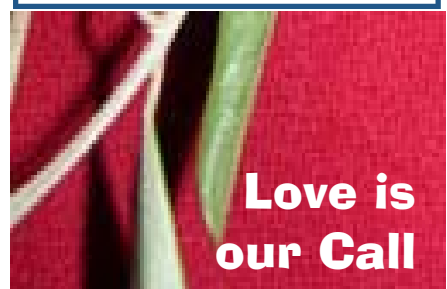
I am not a teacher by profession, so I was a little nervous about saying 'yes' to teaching at the Canossian School in Ossu, East Timor. The words of Jeremiah prompted me to accept, and I have no regrets:

"For I know what my plans for you are, plans to save you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and to give you hope. When you call on me I will listen."

When I look at the other VOICA volunteers, I am encouraged to serve rather than to be served. I plunge into this mission wholeheartedly, willing to accept the challenges of teaching in a rural school.

I hope and pray that my contributions, though small, will improve the condition of the children who call me **Abu**.

*Dr. Diana Gomez
Ossu, East Timor (2004)*



Love is our Call

East Timor: Walking the Path

East Timor is a country of contrasts: sorrow and joy, tragedy and hope, economic poverty and natural wealth. For many years, the country was torn apart by conflicts as powers from within and from outside struggled for control of this small nation. These conflicts left East Timor devastated: entire villages had been massacred; few buildings remained after the looting and burning. But the conflicts could not destroy the spirit of the people. Today, East Timor is becoming a shining example of a country on the path to recovery.

But the people of East Timor have an uphill battle. Besides the physical and emotional wounds, the people need to overcome overwhelming poverty and a lack of education. According to a recent survey, nearly half the population has never attended school. Although primary school is free, the costs of secondary school are

extremely prohibitive, often costing as much as 40 to 45 percent of the household income.

In order to help ensure the East Timorese path to recovery, the Canossian Sisters strengthened their presence in the country, and the first VOICA Volunteers arrived in 2003. Among the services provided through the Canossian missions are education for all ages, skills training, health services, agricultural development, and youth ministry. The Sisters are currently working at ten missions in the areas of Dili and Baucau.

VOICA volunteers have assisted at three of the missions. In Comoro, part of the diocese of Dili, volunteers have taught English, math, music and etiquette at the Canossian College and the Secondary School. One of the volunteers has even taught kindergarten using Tetum, the local language. In Ossu, part of the

diocese of Baucau, volunteers have taught at a secondary school and worked at the Canossian Foundation for Development Programs to create new opportunities for service in Timor. In Baucau, two volunteers serve as teachers in the 'Country Teachers Programme', a set of courses put up to help women develop their knowledge and skills.

VOICA will soon be expanding its presence at the Canossian missions in East Timor. Among the most pressing needs are for professional teachers, particularly for Portuguese (the official language of East Timor) and such sciences as chemistry and physics.

For more information on the missions in East Timor or to become a volunteer, contact our office at voica@fdcc.org or visit the VOICA Web site at: www.voica.org/en.

Teaching more than ABCs

I really admire secondary school teachers or those who would like to teach, because it is not an easy task. I had a good laugh the other day, though.

I had just started a new violin class with donations we had received, and since I knew one boy was interested in music, I asked him if he wanted to join. He told me he wasn't interested because he wasn't smart, but I left the issue alone because it was his choice.

On one of the first days of class, the boy showed up. He sat watching and talking with some of the students but not playing. So I asked him in Tetum (the local language) if he wanted to try to play. He replied in English with a smirk, 'I quit.' Although I would like him to try, it is his decision and I at least had a good laugh at his few choice words in English.



Jola, Anne, Alyssa and Cecille, the 2004–2005 VOICA Comoro Community in East Timor with Mother General, Sr. Marie.



Alyssa assists a student during violin class at the school.

The students have also received donated electric guitars and a bass guitar with amplifiers from another volunteer's school in New Zealand. The students love to play guitar and to sing, so they have been enjoying this immensely. They even used the instruments to accompany a school mass. The students often ask me for piano and guitar lessons (which I can barely play). If they had their way and I had the instruments, I would be giving lessons eight hours a day and on Sunday!

Alyssa Kerestes
Comoro, East Timor (2004–2005)

A New Beginning in a Long Tradition

About two hundred years ago, Magdalene of Canossa began her ministry by educating the poor girls of Verona. Today, that tradition is continued in the Canossian community of Balaka, Malawi. The Bakhita Education Complex is part of the Institute's ongoing commitment to provide disadvantaged girls with an academic and moral education.

Planning for the school began in 2000, after closing the Bakhita Secondary School in Balaka due to administrative changes in the government. The Canossian community subsequently conducted an extensive study of the needs in Malawi. The study revealed myriad problems, including poverty, hunger, oppression of women and children, and AIDS. In the tradition of St. Magdalene, the community determined that the best way to address all these issues was through education and that a new school was needed.

The result of the Sisters' hard work and dedication is an impressive complex—a sprawling campus of brick buildings. The central features of the complex are the two classroom blocks, one for the secondary school and one for the technical college. The campus also includes a main hall, a dining hall, a library, an amphitheatre, a volunteer house, a

convent, and a student hostel. The campus has two athletic courts and gardens.

VOICA volunteers arrived at the new mission in December 2002, with just a month to prepare before the school first opened its doors. The volunteers and Sisters met daily to set the school schedule and to determine the curriculum. In planning, they strived to blend Malawian traditions, the Sisters' experience, and everyone's ideas to ensure that the school would integrally develop the students.

Students came from all around Malawi. Nearly seventy students enrolled for the first year of secondary school, and about twenty students registered for the first year of the technical college. The volunteers took on teaching duties at both the secondary school and the college, as well as organizing sports teams, clubs, and special activities and staffing the computer lab and library. In addition, the volunteers reached outside the school walls to visit students in their homes, play with children at an orphanage, and teach English to young men at a nearby seminary.

A year later, the secondary school and college have expanded to first and second year students. The school has also opened its hostel,



Students and teachers celebrate the official opening of the school.

with fifty students now in residence. Three of the four volunteers from the original community have stayed for a second year; they are joined by two new volunteers to help with the additional work. The current community includes Jenny (USA) who teaches business communication, typing, and religion; John (USA) who teaches science, business and computer classes; Katie (USA) who teaches mathematics; Justyna (Poland) who runs the library and assists with the hostel; and Gabriella (Poland) who works in the administrative office.

The volunteer experience in Balaka goes beyond the school to include spiritual development through prayer and formation, community development through shared meals and activities, and enculturation through language study and 'chatting' with the local people. All of this results in the community's commitment to making God's love known through spirituality, service, formation, and community.

*Lisa Bintrim
Balaka, Malawi (2002—2003)*

NB: Currently in 2005, the community consists of Gabi and Ewa from Poland and Gary, Andy and Kateri from the USA. They continue the mission of education, reaching beyond the walls of BEC.



Lisa teaches English to Bakhita Secondary School students.

What's in a Name?

VOICA Volunteers educate a new generation of women in Malawi

Sema Betcha. Joana Boby. Patricia Chaona. When Bakhita Education Complex (BEC) first opened its doors in January 2003, these were just words on paper. Now when I look at these names in my attendance book, I see faces and personalities. I see their smiles, laughs, defiant smirks, and shy wonder through the etchings of their names.

With the busyness of teaching at BEC, we have to make a point to step back and reflect on where we've come from and where God is leading us.

The school's core mission is to create 'agents of change' in Malawi—and in the world. Bakhita Education Complex will not change Malawi; these young women will. With a goal as grand as this, each day in the classroom brings new challenges to inspire those 'agents of change.' While treading unknown waters, we tried to balance innovation and custom into an empowering education for Malawi's young women. Often the greatest challenge—the real formation—lies outside the classroom.

Our girls come from a variety of backgrounds. First on the attendance list for form two is Sema—a Muslim girl, often late to school but always ready with a mischievous smile. Next is Joana, whose father works for

a mission in town. She is popular and from a well-to-do family. Then comes Patricia. Her mother died a few months ago, so she is now an orphan in the care of a relative. These girls come from different religions, tribes, socio-economic standards, and living situations. But when they put on their cream-coloured blouses and maroon skirts—the BEC uniform—the lines of division blur. The



Students in the BEC uniform.



Jenny with some of her students in the secondary school.

school encompasses their one body, and each individual plays a part.

There are many opportunities for these young women to discover and develop their skills and talents at BEC. But it's not enough. To be agents of change in their society, they must learn how to use their gifts to serve others. That's where the real beauty lies.

When we celebrated St Bakhita's feast day on 8 February 2004, we thought it was important that the students ended the feast day in the joy of service. With help from the church, we put together a list of poor people living in the school vicinity and collected donations for two weeks. Then, on the feast day, we organised groups to deliver the donation baskets with prayer and conversation. I was struck that most of the students in my group hadn't done something like this before. I didn't expect them to look to me for guidance in conversation and attitude during our visit. The service activity was a step back to bring us forward—a reality check and a motivation in our quest for educational success.

The young women of BEC—girls like Sema, Joana, and Patricia—are no longer ink on a page to me but living seeds of a mission. They are the bearers of fruit.

*Jenny Brink
Balaka, Malawi (2002–2004)*

If you have articles or photos for "Dare di Più", send them to voica@fdcc.org for publication.



Voica COncVeNTiON 2005

31 July - 5 August

Rome

Italy

Poor with the Poor
let's write a new page...



SuNraYs of a DaY

When I think about what I want, what I desire to write about living 'poor with the poor', tears come to my eyes.

This mission raises the daily question, 'how to be poor with poor'? Many questions regarding this knock at my heart every day that I am here. After a few months in Balaka, I already love Malawian people and our girls in the school. I desire to serve them with all my strength and with all my heart.



Poor with the poor... Jesus Himself become poor and in this gave us an example of how to serve, how to love the smallest ones. Every day I keep my eyes on the White Bread of the Eucharist, on the Poorest One, and in this moment I am reminded that I am here and now, *sic et nunc*, to be a servant and to make Jesus known. This moment grants me consolation and joy. With Him, I am a poor one, too.

To me, the poor are the sunrays of a day! They are the most beautiful flowers in God's garden! They are everywhere! In them I can see Jesus Himself. I find it amazing to just walk and to greet everybody on the

way. It's amazing to talk with them in the *msika* (market). It's amazing to pray with them. It's amazing to hear stories of their lives during the school breaks. It's amazing to be with them at the very last moment. The poor are also the most wonderful of life's teachers. They are showing me the way to reach a goodness, to make it, to live in simplicity, to share a small daily joy. Who am I without the poor?

God, do not let me lose even a small occasion to meet the poor, to serve them, to serve YOU!

Ewa Habel
Canossian Lay Missionary
Togo (2000–2001)
Malawi (2004–present)



It has been five years

since our last international gathering of past, present, and future volunteers. At the 2005 Convention, we will reflect together on the theme **"Writing a new page: POOR WITH THE POOR"**, attend prayer services and concerts, and visit Roman sites. We will also narrate experiences of past voluntary service and look forward to future service projects. It will be an occasion to gather together once again to praise the Lord for His call to **service** and **unconditional love** for all.



OTHER EVENTS CONVENTION

Pilgrimage around Italy

Subiaco—Assisi—Florence—
Verona—Schio
6—11 August

Voluntary Service in Rome

(prior to World Youth Day)
6—14 August

World Youth Day 2005

15—21 August in Cologne, Germany
By bus from Rome to Cologne

For registration, write to Sr Pat:
voica@fdcc.org
Log onto the VOICA Web Site
to download
registration forms:
<http://www.voica.org/en>

LINKS

Companions on the Journey

When Jesus commissioned the 12 disciples, he gave them the power to cast out demons, to cure the sick and to proclaim the Gospel. But He asked them not to carry with them a knapsack, nor sandals nor money. Jesus lived all his life in simplicity and performed his entire ministry in poverty, to arrive in the end at the total gift of Himself.

Since I arrived in mission, I have always thought that it was the Lord that sent me and that to be able to be His disciple I should imitate His example. Jesus sought the poor, preferred them, listened to their cries (recall the blind person of Jericho), perceived their touch (the haemorrhaging woman), listened to their mourning. He met them in their fragility (adultery), answered to their need of truth (the Samaritan), transformed their mourning into delight (the widow of Naim). He

did all this while being a companion on the journey, a man among men in all things but the human dimension of sin. Jesus did not have privileges to defend (titles,



houses, money), which gave him a large freedom and accessibility. The truth He announced shone clearly across the value of His example. Today, to be disciples and credible witnesses of the Teacher, it is necessary to do as He did.

Becoming neighbours with the poor means being close to them without showing off our privileges and without creating dependence and a sense of inferiority. It is necessary to live near them in a simple manner, but attention must primarily be focused on their spiritual and material needs. Jesus said to do for others that which we would want others to do for us. When I stand before a child who cannot afford to go to school, I cannot feel indifferent and be at peace to simply say 'God loves you'. I must be ready to make him feel that the Lord is with him, fighting against his situation of injustice.

Poverty for me means simplicity of life, sharing of myself and of what I have.

*Maristella Bigogno
Canossian Lay Missionary
Togo (1998—present)*

FiGhting fOr thE LiViNg

Laura Hazuka shares her experiences in the first month of mission, working as a nurse in Mugana, Tanzania

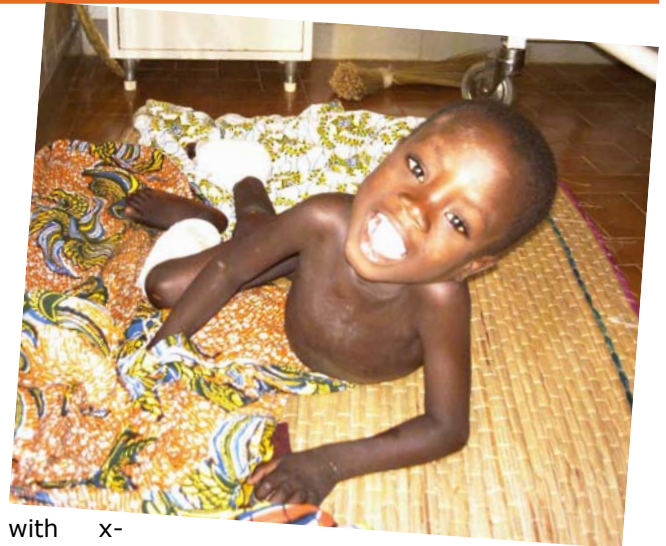
Hospital work has begun, and it is going to be an adventure to say the least. I feel very unprepared for my work here, but then again there is no way to prepare for this.

The role of the nurse is very different in Mugana. Instead of taking full care of maybe five to seven people, here there is one or two nurses for at least 30 patients, and the nurse is not responsible for things like meals and bathing. Instead, a family member is required to stay and take care of each patient, responsible even for remembering medication times and for watching the IV drips. There is need for greater education and motivation in the staff and in the families. There are just too many people and not enough supplies and resources to go around.

I am starting in the paediatric ward, and while there are only 32 beds, there are usually over 40 patients in the unit. When this happens, they have to put two or three patients in a single bed. It seems the vast majority of patients come to the hospital with malaria and anaemia, especially now during the rainy season.

The hospital has one staff doctor and Jain, a fellow VOICA volunteer. There are also three clinical officers who are like our physician assistants or nurse practitioners. The doctor must be able to serve as a paediatrician, OB-GYN, general practitioner, and surgeon, just to name some of his roles.

The hospital complex got electricity just three years ago, so stories abound of nurses and sisters working at night by kerosene lamp to do surgery or to assist with deliveries. The hospital is now e q u i p p e d



with x-ray and ultrasound machines, a lab, pharmacy, and surgical ward. So while the equipment and procedures are still not the most advanced, the staff are able to accomplish much with the little they have.

I had my first experience with death during my first week in the hospital. Three children died on the same day due to complications from malaria and anaemia. The following week, two more died from the same causes. I had never had a patient die, so it was a bit overwhelming. The children were so young—6 years, 6 months, 4 years, 5 years, one month.

I assisted with wrapping the bodies so that the families could take them home for burial. They bury their family members near their own house—there isn't a common cemetery. While we were wrapping one of the bodies, a nurse remarked to me, "Now you see how the Africans are dying...malaria..." Now I have seen, and sadly I know that they won't be the last victims of these sorts of diseases that could be treated and even prevented altogether—malaria, malnutrition, AIDS. The need here for education, healthcare, resources, and employment is incredible; the challenges are like mountains to overcome, one after the other. Amid all of my experiences in the first month of mission, I remembered something someone once said: "Remember the dead, and fight like hell for the living." So, the work continues.

*Laura Hazuka
Mugana, Tanzania
(2004—present)*



Dr. Agnieszka (Tanzania 2001) works at the dispensary in Tegeta, Tanzania



Vocation of Service

To what is God calling us?
His call is constant and
takes us on many
different journeys in the
'vocation of life.'

Finding a vocation that aligns with our values and desires can be challenging. Throughout life, we pray, research, and discuss our options with others. Amid all this, we strive to listen for a clear voice telling us exactly what we should do. It would be so much easier if God sat us down and told us what our life calling was!

I've been discerning that niche for a long time. During my final year of university, service tugged at my heart. My heart was yearning for a vocation of service, but my mind was torn over the logistics of that path. As I searched for direction, my mantra became "Not my will, but thine be done."

Pope John Paul II said that on the path to our vocational call, we receive a "gentle breeze of the clarifying touch of grace." The Holy Spirit breathes in us, shaping our "fragile human reality" and embracing our hearts with new light. It's only through prayer and perseverance that we are "captured" by the Spirit and directed in God's divine plan.

While I am still discerning God's plan for me post-mission, I recall the words a priest once told me: all God calls us to do is to act with justice. When this becomes the basis of our life's vocation and when we keep our hearts open to God's direction, we embody our vocational call. Vocation, after all, is not a destination but a way of life.

Jenny Brink

A Dream for You...

- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of living a time fully for God and for others in service to children and the poor? You could live this dream in Brazil, Tanzania, Togo, Malawi, East Timor, Egypt . . .
- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of using your profession in a different way, working for free for a year, two years, or more to share your gifts with the poor? We need doctors, nurses, teachers, hairdressers, tailors, computer experts, and many others.
- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of living in community with others who share your same values? You could join this community with other volunteers alongside the Canossian Sisters and lay missionaries.
- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of living a simpler yet richer life? In mission, volunteers strive to live in solidarity with the poor.
- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of deepening your relationship with God by committing yourself to discovering His call for you? Spirituality is fundamental to the VOICA volunteer experience.
- ▶ Have you ever dreamt of expanding your horizons by seeing a new way of life and facing a great challenge? In mission, volunteers are challenged—but it is worth it!

A dream that remembers the desires of your **heart**

A dream that recalls the yearnings of your **spirit**

A dream telling of a difficult **task**

A dream awakening the '**you**' that you want to become

A dream mapping a **path** to the summit

A dream simply reciting . . . **LOVE.**

If your response
is yes... follow
your dream
with **VOICA!**

When a little goes a long way

For some, the dream of volunteering conflicts with the realities of everyday life: work, school, or family. But volunteering doesn't have to mean spending a year or more at the mission; much needed work can be done in a few weeks.

Short-term volunteers spend four to six weeks during the summer helping at a Canossian mission. The type of work varies by location, but includes assisting with youth groups and children's camps, painting and repairing buildings, and providing pastoral care for the poor.

The short-term volunteer program is based on the same four pillars as the long-term program:

Spirituality, Formation, Community, and Service. The volunteers participate in pre-service formation sessions, through a programme especially put up for this purpose. The volunteers then go out in groups of five to ten volunteers, accompanied by a Sister. At the mission site, the volunteers live simply, in community and in solidarity with those whom they are serving.

Many of the short-term volunteer raise funds for their mission sites prior to leaving for the mission. They often continue their service after leaving the site by fundraising and educating others about the needs of the missions.

Summer Projects 2005

The short-term projects for Summer 2005 include the following:

Uganda

Lweza: Renovating a girls' dormitory and constructing hygienic facilities, an incinerator and a netball court (see page 14)

East Timor

Baucau: Repairing the house of a poor family; assisting in the summer skills training (English, Portuguese, computers, cooking and sewing)

Suai: Summer camp with the village children; building a small kitchen for the boarders and sisters at the Canossian House

Brazil

(three volunteer groups)

Praia Grande: Surveying needs of the local community for future projects; children's summer camp

Piabetà: 'Happy August!' summer camp with 200–250 children; volunteers also requested to raise funds to support 70–80 children in an informal education programme

Imperatriz: Summer camp with 180–200 children

If you are interested in becoming a short-term volunteer, please contact us at voica@fdcc.org or visit the Web site: www.voica.org/en for more information and an application form.

Be TrUe LoVers of the Poor.

St. Magdalene of Canossa

HapPy AugUst!

Happy August is a project that takes place every year in Piabetà thanks to the collaboration of the short term volunteers. It is a camp in which all the *meninos de rua* from the *barrios* near the mission participate. The volunteers also collect funds to help the Sunday school and support the children all year round.



The GOOD of the Poor is our only goal.

St. Magdalene of Canossa

Enjoy your Mission!!!

ADOPT a VoluNteeR

A GiFt... of life, of service, and of solidarity!

Sponsor a volunteer in mission and your generosity will multiply! With your contribution, you can participate in mission with the volunteers even if you can't be at the mission yourself.

With 80 Euros a month
you provide a volunteer



with the provisions necessary
to serve and to live safely
with such comforts as
the possibility to call his or her family
a few times during the year.

Thanks to your contribution a volunteer can live in according to the gospel and in community to serve the poor as a testimony to all of us that it is possible to live simply and joyfully.

At your request, we will provide you with the name of the volunteer whom you have adopted and a receipt from VOICA Onlus for your financial records.

VolCA Onlus is born

On 5 October 2001, Vo.I.Ca. Onlus was created as a **non-profit organisation** to raise funds for all VOICA activities.

The organisation encompasses three areas:

1. Specific volunteer formation, sending off and sustaining volunteers in the missions;
2. Outreach projects in answer to requests from various countries;
3. Promotion of voluntary service and an awareness of global issues;

Vo.I.Ca. Onlus is promoted by the Canossian Institute and was created through a collaboration with lay volunteers who have helped the missions in various ways.

As a recognized non-profit association, VOICA now has the means to issue receipts for tax deduction.

Anyone who wishes to make a contribution to specific projects or for the VOICA programmes can donate through wire transfer to the Vo.I.Ca. Onlus bank account.

Receipts for monetary donations will be issued to donors upon request.

See pages 2 and 14 for more information on our current projects.



**VOLONTARIATO
INTERNAZIONALE
CANOSSIANO onlus**

Banca Intesa
P.le Gregorio VII, 10 - 00165 ROMA
C/C 231256-33
CAB 05032-8 ABI 3069-2

Thanks!

Uganda Project

In response to a 1997 national initiative to raise the standard of girls' education, the Canossian Sisters are assisting with the renovation of a local girls' dormitory. The aim of the project is to increase enrolment and improve the living condition of students in **Lweza Village**, near Kampala, Uganda.

Currently, one of the school buildings is being used as the girls' dormitory. A sheet metal roof in disrepair, pavement in need of resurfacing and unstable beams comprise 'home' to 50 students. In addition, there are no proper hygienic facilities or a place for trash disposal, forcing the boarders to adapt to what's available.



There are 700 students enrolled in the Bishop Sisto Mazzoldi Secondary School; about 30% are needy students, including Sudanese refugees and a few students from Kenya. The Brothers of St. Martin De Porres, who founded the school in 1993, lack the means to improve the girls' living situation. They called upon the Canossian Sisters, who have

been carrying out their missionary work for many years in the Lweza Parish, for assistance.

In collaboration with the Brothers, the Sisters are planning to renovate the girls' dormitory, install a water system in the dormitory, put up conducive toilets and bathing rooms, construct a small incinerator, and prepare a netball field from cement for recreational purposes. The Sisters will both finance and supervise the project.

This simple but effective project is meant to meet the requirements of a healthy environment for the growth and the enhancement of these girls, who have already overcome so much.

Praia Grande Project



In Praia Grande, on the southern coast of **Brazil**, a community of Canossian Sisters is establishing a permanent VOICA volunteer house in order to attend to the needs of the local youth.

Praia Grande is situated in the state of San Paulo, an hour by road from the city of Santos, where the community of Sisters are working with street children in order to prevent their involvement along the path of prostitution. The Sisters expanded their pastoral work to Praia Grande in order minister to youth and in the parish, to visit families and to set up informal education for the street children.

Praia Grande lacks the necessary infrastructures for dignified living. Hygienic facilities, drainages and rubbish dumps do not exist. The level of schooling is very low, and the young people are often exposed to life on the street. Establishing a permanent volunteer residence will allow more continuous and effective care for the youth of Praia Grande as long-term volunteers arrive.

In collaboration with the nearby parish, the volunteers will help establish formative and recreational activities for the youth. Using the new VOICA building for the various activities, the children will be able to enjoy moments of peace and joy, far from the dangers of life on the street. In August, VOICA volunteers will prepare the first three-week summer camp for the youth of Praia Grande.



PLEASE SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THESE PROJECTS. THANK YOU!

A pencil in His hands

My name is Claudia, and I am a nurse from the province of Milan. I spent one year in Brazil as a Canossian volunteer. Many have asked me the reason for this choice. You may even be asking yourself.

I was about eight years old when I saw a television program about Mother Teresa of Calcutta and decided that it would be a great thing to be a missionary. I remember that my parents, incredulous, told me that first I had to serve in my home and my family. After this, I obeyed as I never had and attended to all their requests. But this time didn't last very long!

Time passed and even though there was in me a desire to become a nurse, I ended my advanced studies according to the wishes of my parents. Once I had

my diploma, I had to contribute financially to my large family. Taking a position in a firm, I worked for a year and a half.

Then, I decided to leave my job and do what I felt in my heart. I finally became a professional nurse. For four years, I was a part of the missionary centre in my diocese, through which I had two short-term experiences living in the Third World, in Brazil and Uruguay during summer holidays. Finally, I entered into the long-term experience with VOICA.

At that point, I asked myself, Why on earth am I here? Is it all God's will? Did He call me to this? I didn't know how to answer these questions, but one thing I was certain of: I wanted only to be like a pencil in His



hand and nothing else. What He thought, what He decided, and what He was to write . . . the pencil only needed to be capable of being used.

Now, I ask you to join me in prayer to ask the Lord for continued faith, strength, and courage to love; for freedom from our weaknesses; and for complete abandonment to Him, so that His will may be done now and forever.

*Claudia Oldani
Piabetà, Rio di Janeiro, Brazil
(2002)*



Why I am Here

One day when I was in secondary school, a missionary sister from Africa came to see us. Her words struck me such that, by the end of her testimony, I told her that I also wanted to be a missionary in Africa. I did not understand why I had this impulse, but God had put this first seed in my heart. From that day, I began to learn all about the mission.

Still, I lived my life like all my peers. I had a boyfriend with whom

I had thought about marriage. But inside me, I felt a certain dissatisfaction. Greater than my attachment to that boy was my desire to go to Africa. I decided to leave him.

In me was growing not only the desire for mission, but also the love of Christ. I felt more and more the desire to belong to Him, to grow through this experience in my love for him, and to be part of humanity. After a year of discernment, I arrived at VOICA, thanks to a Jesuit priest who knew the Canossian Sisters. I thought, 'Finally, I will leave for my great love, Africa.' But the steps of God are often different from my own. I needed to grow in my availability. To be a missionary I cannot be tied to one person but must be open to all people. Instead of Africa, God called me to serve the

people of Piabetà, Brazil. He was reminding me that I can't pick my desire but must serve all humanity and all the poor.

On 7 October 2001, I began my adventure with VOICA, bringing with me much enthusiasm and some fear. In Rome's formation centre, we were four girls from four different countries, with four different cultures, each with her own experience to be compared with and enrich one another. That which God achieved in our lives in that year was a special gift because each one of us carried in our heart the uncontrollable desire to grow in our faith and in His love.

*Letizia Lanza
Piabetà, Rio di Janeiro, Brazil
(2002)*

Volunteers on the Pathway of

ChRiST

I take a moment

and reflect on the meaning of **VOICA**, though I know it is clear for many. 'Canossian International Voluntary Service' is the movement that highlights the opening towards the world of persons, young and old, that want to give their time, talents, and their energies to the brothers and sisters **in the greatest need**. It means an availability: a gift of self that gets strength from and regenerates the charism of St Magdalene in that one spirit of Jesus crucified, who was 'the Servant of the Lord', the '**Volunteer of the Father**'.

Since ancient times, flowing along the centuries until today, suffering, injustice, and many other human barriers continue to break the initial harmony and communion of mankind.

Night still covers the earth and gloomy clouds veil the peoples, but Yahweh now rises and over you his glory appears.

See the fast that pleases me: breaking the fetters of injustice and unfastening the thongs of the yoke, setting the oppressed free and breaking every yoke.

Fast by sharing your food with the hungry, bring to your house the homeless, clothe the man you see naked and do not turn away from your own kin.

Then will your light break forth as the dawn and your healing come in a flash. Your righteousness will be your vanguard, the Glory of Yahweh your rearguard.
Is 60.2; 58.6-8

The original and infinite love of the Father did not withdraw from this brokenness. On the contrary, His passion for the world drove Him to send **His only Son** and to restore what seemed lost. The Word assumed the condition of a servant!

He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Phil 2.8

Jesus, faithful and consistent with the project of the Father, gave himself to mankind in order to reopen new horizons of love, compassion, communion, and sharing. Jesus prayed to the Father and freely consecrated us, sending us into the world to reawaken the love of the One who gave Himself until the end.

We become volunteers among the immense crowd of men and women, brothers and sisters, as we tread in the wake of His voluntary service in the world. Christ consciously gave Himself and has given us the same opportunity: to give ourselves to mankind. Thus, the gift becomes an untiring and uninterrupted journey that makes us capable of:

OPENING the eyes of our mind and heart to the true vision and concrete reality of the world that are easily in contrast to our own;

BECOMING aware of our many brothers and sisters that live in inhumane conditions so distant from our own;

FEELING in the depths of our being the deaf cry of daily and silent suffering in contrast to our own suffering that is often so little;

WELCOMING the existence of the poor into our own spirit by generously accompanying them on their unendurable journey;

LEAVING behind our own land and securities in order to meet those brothers and sisters that live in lands of forced exile;

SHARING generously with the poor, knowing that the wealth of our human Christian being and what we possess do not only belong to us;

WONDERING about the lives of the poor and valuing their culture, tradition, and nature of their country;

SERVING, by promoting a deep respect for the dignity of each person and a humble attitude of openness to what is different;

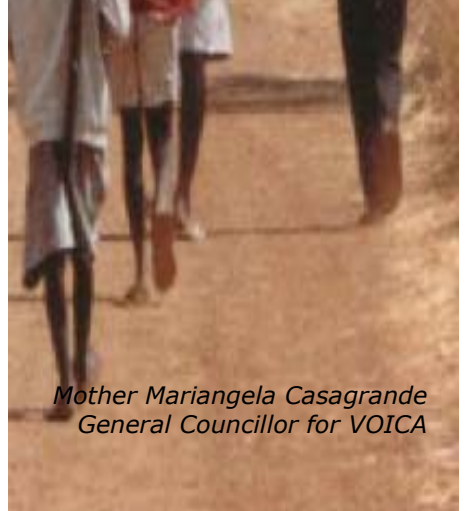
LOVING with sincerity of heart, with a contemplative attention, the beauty that the Creator has placed in each person;

WALKING together, helping each other, in the footsteps of *the way, the truth, the life*, towards the kingdom of peace, justice and love;

INTERCEDING and **PRAISING** together the Lord of all creation and mankind through the timeless liturgy.

We are the volunteers of the Father and journey together along the roads of the world with the Divine Volunteer. Out of love and obedience, He continues to raise us from our misery. Let us always take the risk to journey together under the same stars of the one sky, and together we will be able to say:

I saw in you heaven and a new earth because the former heaven and earth had disappeared.
Rev 21.1



*Mother Mariangela Casagrande
General Councillor for VOICA*

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this issue of *Dare di Più*.