

New LEP apostolic mission in Sorisole, Italy

Sr. Patricia Rediu writes: "To love the poor, to persevere in this love, to live, die and rise with them". These words of Mary Ward have always touched me, but I must say that they resonated deeply in my heart this summer during the Ongoing Formation course given to us by Sister Gemma Simmonds. Providentially we were given a questionnaire asking for availability for universal mission beyond the borders of our country. That night was a struggle for me. I experienced once again that at the moment when the Lord calls us to the Magis, to "something new", to something more, the evil spirit also appears in full force to unsettle the soul, to frighten, to discourage. The restlessness was so strong and violent that I wanted to postpone my answer. I decided not to make any decision while I was agitated, but to pray, to remain in adoration and to wait for Him to speak to me calmly. And so it happened. In front of Jesus in the Eucharist the storm calmed down, peace came and with it many memories of how the Lord was close to me every time I asked for something. The memory of the many good things received rekindled in my soul the desire to love him more and more, to serve him and to go out of the confines, out of security, and to go to the poor, to the peripheries, to the most needy as Pope Francis often invites us to do.

To my surprise, my "Yes" was taken into consideration, I accepted the new assignment and I left with the desire to love and serve.

I would like to share with you the beginning of this new apostolic experience in Italy.

I greet you with joy from Sorisole, a town in the province of Bergamo, in the north of Italy, where I arrived on the 4th of November, in the Community of minors "Don Lorenzo Milani", Patronato S. Vincenzo, in the province of Bergamo, and where I began my service, in collaboration with sister Angela Cadori of the "Poverelle" of Bergamo. Together, we lived an inter-congregational community experience, trying to give the best of ourselves and to bring a little love, serenity and hope in the midst of this community of children, young people and adults in need of welcome and collaborating with many volunteers, educators, collaborators and operators.

We are present in the community of Sorisole five days a week and we offer our services according to the needs: we work with young people in workshops, we help young people without studies with Italian to improve their communication skills; with some volunteers we go to the station of Bergamo to offer something to homeless people, clothes and food. As I have a driving licence, I go to two places to collect unused food, which we then take to the homeless at night.

The reality of this community is vast and complex, and we can say that we still know little about it. In addition to the internal services in the Centre, each one carries out pastoral services such as catechesis, distribution of communion, accompanying the catechists, etc. Sister Angela is present in the parish of Ponteranica working with Fr Paolo Riva, I work in the parish of Ramera with Fr Alessandro Locatelli. Two days a week, each of us goes back to the community of her own congregation to share the experience and maintain the link with it. In this way, we also regain new strength, energy and serenity to bring them into this male-dominated world.

The children of the community are happy with our presence. There are a large number of minors, about 80, from different countries of the world, mostly Muslims. There are also young adults, and together with the staff, we are about 150 people. Almost all the minors have the possibility to go to a school in Bergamo to receive Italian lessons, and for some who cannot go out, they receive lessons

at the Centre. The volunteers are retired people and also young people, they come to teach them Italian, which is essential for them to be able to integrate into society and find a job.

Our presence has also been well received in the two parishes. On Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays I also go to the parish of Ramera. On Sunday afternoons I accompany a group of teenagers to catechesis in Ponteranica. Our days are very busy. We always have lunch with the kids and when our pastoral commitments allow us to do so, we also have dinner with them. During the week we have mass in the morning in the small chapel, celebrated by Fr. Dario Acquaroli, who is the director of the Centre. We try to inhabit this reality as much as possible, we want to be a significant presence and bring God into the simple things of everyday life, through a greeting, a smile, a question, a dialogue. We learn from them how to do the different jobs in the workshops, we learn a few words in their languages, etc.

I personally feel blessed to be in this reality and it feels good. The daily challenge is to free myself from my ideas and expectations and be open to what is presented and asked of me, trying to grasp God's presence in everything and everyone. It is an exercise and a gift.

I thank Sister Jane who wrote to me and reminded me: "Where there is one of us, there are all of us. You are all present in my prayers and in my heart. Every day we pray for our sisters and the missions we have. We commend ourselves to your prayers and wish you a happy and holy Advent.

United in spirit, we go together to meet the Jesus who is and who comes again and again, calling us each day to bring with him the good news that the Father loves us and trusts us to build his Kingdom.

Sr. Patricia Rediu CJ