

02 2017

teens

WORK IN PROGRESS 4 UNITY



Change our Hearts to change the world

Family

A difficult family situation in the Philippines

TEENS & ADULTS

Are they so different?

Model Teens

Blessed Chiara Luce
Badano

Change our hearts to change the world

Hi everyone, it's so great to be together again in this new issue of Teens! Have you noticed anything different? Well our magazine is undergoing some changes and updates. Just by browsing the pages, you might notice some new headings, new contributors and new topics. Among them is Andong, a native of Cameroon who lives in Belgium and wrote an article reflecting on the differences between being a teen and an adult. It is his first article published in Teens. We also thought that we will develop a theme on each issue. The first theme is: "Change our heart to change the world". An important and very current theme, don't you agree? In a world that is always speeding

along, without ever stopping for a moment, to have a heart ready and open to welcome others is very important! Some of the experiences in this issue will illustrate that. In particular, Diandra shares with us how she learned how to see the good in her peers, overlooking anything that is a defect. We also share the story of a teen on her way to being proclaimed a saint. Many of you know her already – Chiara Luce Badano, who continues to inspire people of all ages to change their hearts in order to change the world.

What do you think? We hope that as you turn the pages, you will let yourself enjoy the articles and be inspired by true stories of teens committed to live for a united world. And remember that you too can contribute to Teens magazine!! Write an article, do a book review, send an experience, or even a recipe to genmag.usa@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you!

*Anna Zanch &
Teens Editorial English Team*

Teens

Newsletter in

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Fine Tuning the Orchestra



discovered that we had a lot of things in common

Throughout most of my high school years, I distanced myself from people in my orchestra class because I viewed them negatively. Most were a year younger than me, so their behavior was immature in my eyes. They would get loud and wild in moments that require everyone to be quiet because someone is performing. Sometimes I saw their behavior as inconsiderate or rude.

However, as my senior year came to an end, I remembered that I had learned from the Focolare not to let negativity overpower my judgment of people, but rather try to build unity with everyone, so that I can establish wonderful relationships with others.

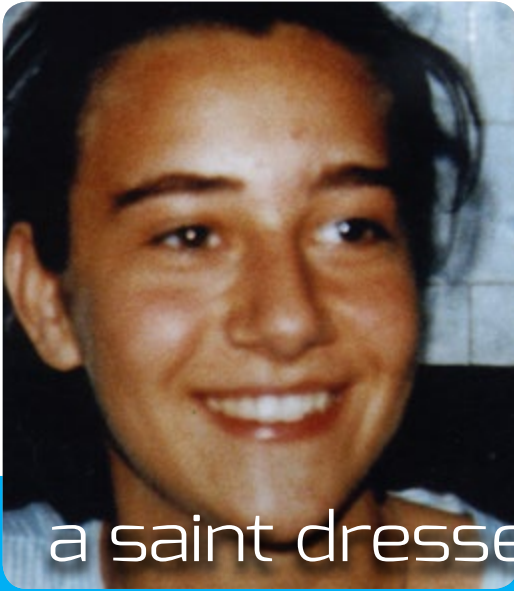
I let myself see the goodness in my

orchestra classmates, putting aside all my negative misconceptions and talking to them. I asked God to give me strength to ignore the bad traits and see the good. I realized that they did not portray the same behavior as I expected. One of these teens was my stand partner, and I realized he is a very kind-hearted person. Once I was having a bad day, and he was genuinely concerned. The fact that he cared was surprising to me.

I also found out I have a lot in common with most of these people. Even though we became friends just a few weeks before my graduation, it was worth it, and I want to carry on the same mentality over to college so I don't waste any time making friends. 🟡

Diandra Sarr, 18 (Georgia, USA)

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BLESSED **CHIARA
LUCE BADANO**

HAS AN IMPACT
ON YOUTH ALL
OVER THE WORLD

a saint dressed in jeans

OCTOBER 29
IS HER FEAST DAY

Seven years after Chiara Luce Badano was declared “blessed” by the Catholic Church (one step on the way to being declared a “saint”), young people and adults all over the world have taken up her torch. They are spreading her story and following her courageous “yes” to God, trusting in his love and his will in their lives.

She was chosen as one of the patrons for the 2013 World Youth Day (WYD) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and was presented to the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops as a witness of a teenager who is

becoming a saint.

“A saint dressed in jeans” was the title of a musical at the WYD in Rio designed to share her life with the young people there.

Chiara Luce grew up as an only child in Sassello, Italy. At 17, she was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, an aggressive and extremely painful form of bone cancer. Yet she trusted God’s plan, saying “If you want it, Jesus, I want it, too.”

Here is what some young people from around the world wrote about her impact on their lives.

Today I get to love

«If I could, I would tell every stranger I see about Chiara Luce. The truth is that her life is so beautiful that if more young people knew about her, there would be a revolution.

I've always been healthy and strong. I even played basketball in college. When I developed the initial painful symptoms of an illness related to multiple sclerosis, it was the first time in my life that something was stronger than I was. The tests at the hospital were also very painful, and I was scared because they would have to be repeated.

That's when I first read Chiara Luce's story. I found a best friend in her, someone whom pain couldn't conquer. And I started to invite her into my day. For example, if there was some act of love I didn't want to do for someone, I would think that Chiara Luce would have done it, and then everything became easier.

Then, after several months, I realized that Chiara Luce was leading me toward the spirituality of the Focolare that she had lived. I finally understood her secret in loving: Jesus on the cross. He had felt abandoned by the Father, and yet continued to love and give his life for humanity. She knew she could love as he did, and I wanted to do that, too.

Discovering her secret redeemed everything I had suffered, because it showed

me that my suffering was a meeting with Jesus. And life became so precious, more beautiful — I would wake up in the morning so excited to start the day, because all I could think was, "Today I get to love!"

She made me understand sanctity in a new way. I thought it meant going to church to pray, pray, pray. But she also loved God in the normal everyday things. So I've realized that spending part of a Friday night at a pub with my coworkers and just listening to them is another way to reach sanctity. Missing my last youth group event at church in order to surprise my grandma with dinner — that's also a way to reach sanctity in the present moment.

Now I want to spend my life so that other people can know about her, too, and have her example to help them. I share her story whenever I can. Sometimes the people I least expect are the ones deeply touched by her life and ask her for help.»

Jessica Berends, Michigan

Don't take yourself too seriously

«It is Chiara Luce's simplicity that fascinates me. Her love was always concrete; she didn't distinguish between important and less important moments in her life. She made each person feel his or her very special value in every present moment. I am quite the

opposite. I dwell on everything, on each person, and I worry about a lot of things. I can't forget wrong decisions and the mistakes I've made. In the summer of 2012, together with some friends, I spent two weeks in Sassello, the hometown of Chiara Luce. It was a very beautiful and important time for me, but then I made a mistake that was very painful. I was not able to accept that I had done such a thing and just couldn't go beyond it.

The next day I went to Mass, feeling discouraged. It was a 20-minute walk, so I started to pray the rosary. Just before getting to the church, where Chiara Luce was baptized, I felt that she was talking to me with her unique, luminous smile. She said to me, "Johann, don't take yourself too seriously!" Practically, it meant: if you think about your mistakes, you are basically conceited, narcissistic. You are so busy thinking about yourself that you don't have time to love others!

This phrase changed me totally; it was her secret message for me. She never took herself seriously; she was always there for others, like her friends said after her death.

Now, when I get lost in my mistakes and my imperfections, I say to myself with a smile, "Johann, don't take yourself too seriously!" »

*Johann Schmitz,
Germany*





ANN WROTE
"FAITH" AND
SANG FOR 12,000
YOUTH AT THE
2012 GENFEST
IN HUNGARY

A call to everyone



When I think of Chiara Luce Badano, the phrase, "A life lived to the full" always comes to my mind.

Through her experience, I have understood that the significance of our lives is not measured by how long we live or how many things we have accomplished or experienced, but rather *how* we have lived. She has given me the courage to embrace wholeheartedly the reality of each present moment, and to live it to the full.

A few years ago, the young people of the Focolare in the Midwest U.S.A decided to have a program on the life of Chiara Luce Badano. Since many knew that I enjoy writing songs, my youth coordinator at the time, Margaret, asked me if I could write a song for it.

Song writing had always been very spontaneous for me, and I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to come up with the right words. But I also felt that this was my opportunity to contribute to this program, so I said yes.

In the weeks following, I couldn't think of anything worth writing. One day Margaret called me to ask how the song was coming, and I told her quite honestly that I had not

written anything yet. She said, "Think of the one person in the audience who is lost or alone and needs to hear the call from God to follow our life, as young people in the Focolare, the life Chiara Luce lived!"

That night, I was lying in my bed and thinking about our life being a call. Suddenly, the whole song came to me, and in the next 10 minutes I had written it down. Then I shared the song with the others, and we decided that it would be a perfect fit in the program. Many people approached me after that program and said how much the song had touched them. I felt so blessed to be able to show people how much Chiara Luce had influenced my own life just through a song. In the following months, many people from all over the world heard the song, and I ended up being able to sing it for 12,000 young people in Hungary at the Focolare's international youth festival, Genfest 2012. If we could each live like Chiara Luce, inspiring those around us, I think the world would be filled with saints.

Ann Rusher, Ohio

FAITH

by Ann Rusher

Wake up to another day,
Sometimes it's hard to roll out of bed,
And face the world again.
Put on my bravest smile,
Look to the sky and say I'm ready
For anything you've got.

I know I'm blessed beyond compare,
But that doesn't mean life is perfect at all.
But I've been given everything,
To make it through this thing
Called life.

So I step out to the street,
See all the problems in this world
That are facing me.
I know you love us so much God,
But people are homeless and hopeless,
Children die in their sleep.

I know there's a reason for the pain,
But more than anything I just want to
make a change.
So when the sun is gone and dark is left,
I close my eyes and pray

Chorus:

*This is a call to anyone who's ever felt alone,
Who's wished for something more
Then what they're living for.
This is an anthem to the broken hearted,
A cry in the night
For the souls who cannot fight anymore.
Together we can make this right
If we have faith tonight.*

I still recall how the ending starts,
How can I forget the pain?
It felt like a bullet in my heart.
It felt like a whole lifetime,
As I waited to hear them say
This could be the end.

I placed my head inside my hands
And cried for the life I might never have.
And when I was done I wiped the tears
from my eyes
And said with all the strength left in me

Chorus

I did the best that I could,
I loved until the end
Cause when the rest fades away love is left.
And when the ending came,
I saw my fathers face,
I took his hand and I said with a smile
on my face
I really hope you understand.
Please be happy,
Because I am.

This is a call to anyone who's ever felt alone,
Who's wished for something more
Then what they're living for.
This is anthem to the broken hearted
A cry in the night,
For the souls who cannot fight anymore
Together we can make this right
Cause we believe tonight.

We believe tonight.



Are teens and adults so different?

Domenico Salmaso

by Irene Homer, age 13

Most of you teens would understand that satisfying your parents is a difficult task, cause they are adults and they have their own priorities as you have yours.

We all often get into conflicts and feel stressed. In such situations, you can notice the differences between a parent acting as an adult and a teen, but I think the only difference is the age.

Characteristics

We all have different ways of thinking,

communicating and even presenting ourselves to others. For example, both teens and adults watch how they dress in order to impress others. But teens worry more about that because we are more concerned about what people think of us. Another characteristic is that we have lots of dreams about what to do, but when we find an obstacle, we just give up and forget about the dream!

Age

A big thing that makes teens and adults different

from each other is our age, and also the different responsibilities we have, depending on our age. When you're a younger teen, like 13 or 14, you are still pampered and you don't have a lot of responsibilities, which means you don't have much weight on your shoulders. You barely notice your responsibilities. When you get to be about 15 and on, you begin to notice that you are being given more responsibility.... The result is that your freedom seems to decrease and your 'childishness' starts to disap-

pear. When you grow to be about 18, you are on the brink of forming your own life. Starting your own life means that you start to think more for yourself and take more responsibilities for your actions. Teens often believe that becoming an adult is a 'solution' for all their problems but, in reality, it's only the beginning!

Living as a minor

Minors aren't allowed to do much. We have the impression that if we want something, we should have it now, without even thinking about the consequences. Parents are always scared that something bad will happen to their children. Because of this, we are barely allowed to do anything we want to do - or at least that's what it feels like. We're angry or unhappy and we blame our parents for it. But, if you really think about it, you'll notice that you are allowed to do more than your younger siblings. We just don't notice all the things we are allowed to do.

Parental control

We are all children. What makes you different from your mother or father? We were all born as a baby and all grow up to become old women and

old men. All of us have parents, deceased or not. They're older than us, but they still live a life as 'a child' of someone, and often their parents try to control them, too! All parents want to make their children happy and have a good future - no matter what their age.

Ways of taking action

We haven't experienced life, so we make mistakes that we remember and learn from. Adults on the other hand, have had a lot of experience and so are more cautious about making the drastic decisions we sometimes make. They think it over carefully, because they don't want to regret something they did.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES DEPENDING ON YOUR AGE

We always have difficulty in making decisions and that's one of our differences. Our parents mostly make the decision for us but they do ask our opinion - sometimes. Adults have it harder than us. They make decisions that can have a huge influence on their family or their career. This is my opinion on this subject and I did ask other people, from different age

groups, for their opinion. From what I have said, it may seem to you that there are a lot of differences between adults and teens, but I don't want to put adults or teens in a negative light. We all individually have our own difficulties and problems and precious memories (Andong, Belgio). ■





A pact that helps you remember to give the best of yourself with everyone. Do you want to join us?

Are you like me and, even though you want to give the best of yourself, it's hard? I really want to relate well to those around me but then I find myself responding badly to them. Or maybe I want to help, but am always in such a hurry, that I don't do it. Or else I want to give something to others, but then my selfish desires got in the way. That's why my friends and I came up with an idea. It all started with two of us who found it very hard to always give the best of ourselves. We realized that the best tool to use was mutual support. It's easier to please and respect others knowing that someone somewhere else is trying to do the same.

So the first "pact" started to take shape. Each person pledged that in their own situation they would be firm in the challenge of giving the best of themselves to others. Then it developed further because we heard the experiences of other people and realized we all had similar things happen to us. So we had more and more people join together.

We wanted to find a symbol that would help us remember the "pact" every moment of the day, something that would remind us and encourage us. And so we came up with the idea of a white twine bracelet.



by *Patrizia Riberi, age 16*

The pact really became part of our lives. Since it has been such a great help for us, we decided to spread it to others in our city by sharing the experience with everyone we knew. This triggered a chain reaction and the news of this "pact" began to spread throughout Italy. In the last month, we received many photos and reports of experiences of people who have joined us.

So now we want to invite anyone who is interested to wear the white bracelet and take up this challenge with us. If you want more information or would like to share with us how you are doing it, or any beautiful things that happened to you in living this way of giving the best of yourself in every moment, write to genmag.usa@gmail.com. Your experiences will be part of the upcoming Teens magazine. 

This is the first of a series we will dedicate to looking back at significant moments in our journey towards a united world and reflecting on them to understand how they affect us today..

by the editorial staff

Love conquers all

Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), met with the students of Mary, Seat of Wisdom School in Fontem, Cameroon in 2000. They asked her for a message that would help them carry out the revolution of love and transform their school into a really beautiful place to be. Chiara gave them a slogan from an event that happened at the beginning of the movement she founded.

«**E**very revolution, whether for the good or the bad, starts in schools, especially in universities, because young people have ideas, and a revolution aims at changing how things are. In fact, young people are made for change (...) and then they influence the world around them.

The same is with our revolution, which we hope is for the good. It keeps going ahead.

My hope is that here in this school we may have a beating heart of our revolution of love, a heart full of love, that will help everyone to be part of this revolution of love. So I invite, not just one of you, or two or three, but all of you to do this. No one is excluded! (...) You also want a message that will guide you, a slogan or password. I give you the one I had when I started to

live like this. (...) My city, Trent, was heavily bombed and so my family fled to a nearby woods, where we slept on the ground under a starry sky. (...) At a certain point during the night I became convinced that my parents and siblings would have to leave the city. I loved my family very much and I was their financial support since I earned a salary as a teacher. How could I possibly leave them in that condition? I cried and cried from the pain I felt. Then all of a sudden I heard within my heart just one phrase, and it's what I want to give to you students today. The phrase was

"Love conquers all." (...) In the morning, my family left to go up the mountains and I went back toward the city. Trees were uprooted, houses had collapsed and I remember that a woman came running up to me and grabbed me by the shoulders, screaming, "Four died, four of my family died!" I was still crying about leaving my family but

I dried my tears and understood that I had to forget my own pain and dedicate myself to the suffering of humanity. And so the Movement went ahead. What helped me make this decision was that phrase, Love conquers all. You take it, too: "Love conquers all, love wins out over everything!"»



courage is my armor

by Valeria Palladini
age 18



From Cebu (Philippines), the experience of Virgil who, along with friends from the Bukas Palad Music Ministry and thanks to their support, managed to face and overcome a difficult family situation.

When I was a child, the street was my school. My family's difficult financial situation led my parents to seek comfort in alcohol and drugs. Getting us to school was not their priority. They were constantly arguing and so growing up we never experienced the value of being a family. We were just trying to survive, often looking for food in the trash to avoid starvation.

One day my dad came home drunk and drugged. He began to argue with my mother and he hit her so hard that she lost consciousness. At that moment, I thought I would kill my dad and I blamed God for abandoning us. Shortly after that, some people from the Bukas Palad Center in Cebu helped us with financial support from the New Family Association. I was able to go to school! I felt God's love for us personally! And to reciprocate this love, I worked hard at school and got a lot of awards.



After high school, my parents asked me not to go to college but to get a job and help them improve our economic situation. But since I had a scholarship from the university, I decided to continue my studies. I had to leave home, because we didn't have electricity so I couldn't study. While I was away, my family started to disintegrate. My sister had become a housekeeper, but I wasn't at all sure

that was a good place for her to be. My mom had gone back to drink and drugs, and just wandered around, leaving no trace of her whereabouts. I was devastated and wanted to give up everything to try to help them. Over those years, I had learned that true love was to give up myself so that the other could have life and so for me this meant giving up my studies to try to reunite my family. In tears, I informed my friends in the Bukas Palad Center who always supported me in my decisions. In talking to them, I realized that I had no control over the life of my parents and my siblings and that interrupting my studies would not change the family situation.

In all the pain and uncertainties, with the guarantee of prayers and the support of these friends, I felt full of courage and decided to finish my degree. Now I have a good job. My brothers and sister were able to go to college and one of them graduated. I found my mother. Now we are living together as a family in a small house, and we are very happy. I am convinced more than ever that unity comes only from God. It's his gift! ■