

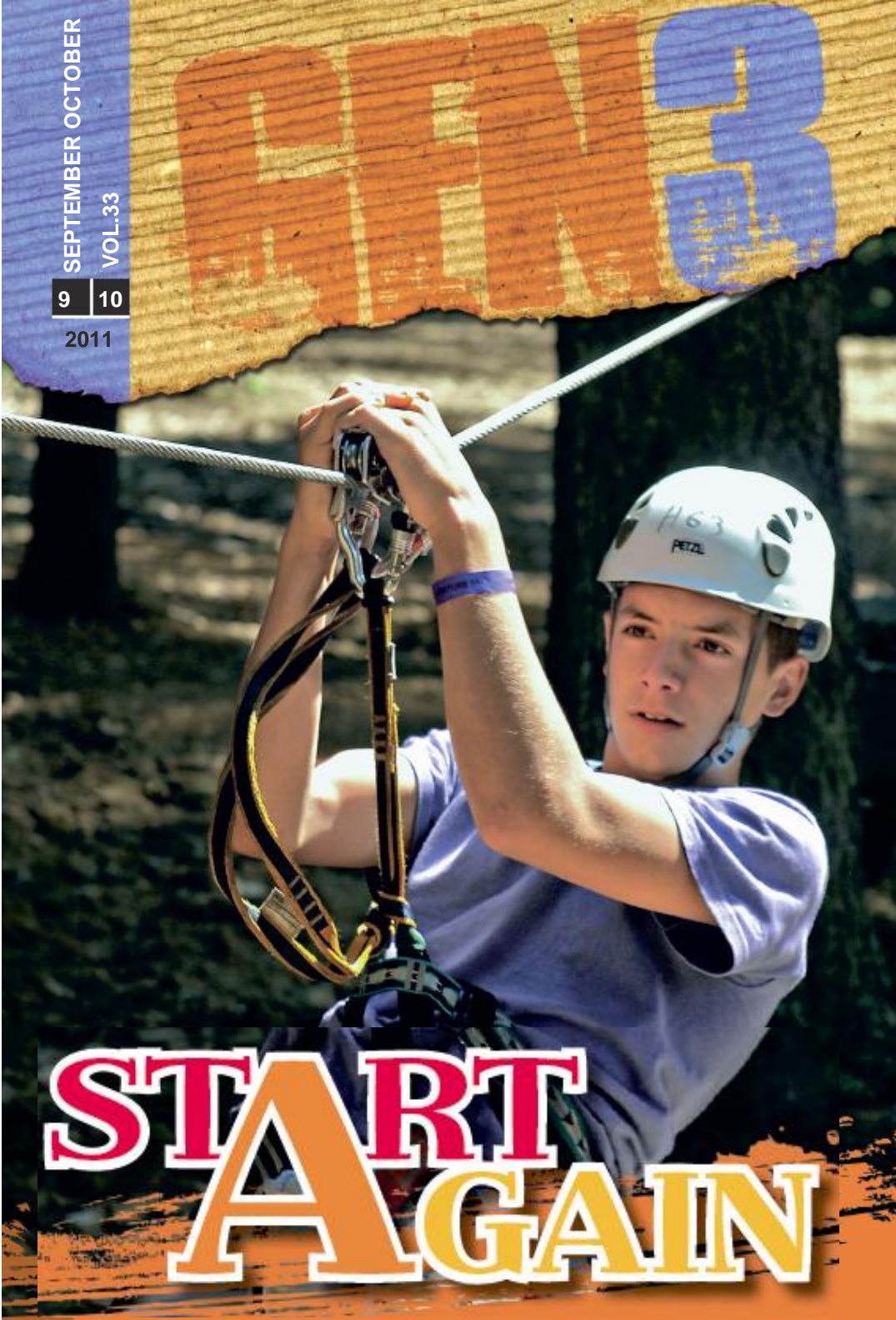
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START



# START AGAIN

# from seeds ... come ripe fruits

In a far-off country, while walking along the streets of his town, a little boy saw a store with the sign, "We sell gifts of God here." He went inside and saw an angel behind the counter. He asked the angel, "What do you sell here?" The angel answered, "Just about everything ... all gifts from God." "Do they cost a lot?" "No! God's gifts are all free." The boy looked around and said, "Well, if possible, I would like to ask for everything. That there be no more wars, that every family lives with love and in harmony, that all slums and squatter towns would disappear and children would no longer have to beg in the streets. Then I would like every person to have enough water, food, clean air and material goods, so that there would no longer be any difference between rich and poor countries, and that all over the world, people would love one another and live in peace." The angel collected everything on the counter. The boy looked on in surprise.

With great amazement, the boy saw all the gifts were gathered into a small bag that lay in the palm of his hand. "How is that possible?" the boy exclaimed, "Is it all here?" So the angel answered, "Yes, it's all here, my dear boy. In God's store, we don't sell ripe fruits, but rather small seeds that need to be cultivated."

Emmaus spoke to the gen 3 at their congress in Castel Gandolfo, and told them a fairytale that illustrates what she expects from all of us Gen 3!

## *What do I wish for you, Gen?*

That while you are here in Castel Gandolfo for your convention, you can take advantage of God's store full of gifts. You have come here to buy every gift from God.

But **God doesn't sell these gifts.**

**They're free - he gives them to you!** What are they? They are all the seeds of the Ideal that come into your heart and need to grow and ripen.

This gift can be the love you have for your friends, for example; the change of heart of one of your classmates; helping someone to understand that the Gospel matters more than anything else. These are all fruits. But **you will need to cultivate them with your life and make them become fully mature.** This is what I wish for you and I am sure you will do it. You must live off of the seeds that you receive here, and when you return next year, you will bring your ripe fruits!



a faith & gen 3, Walks, Roma



Some teenagers asked me for an infallible method to bring about the Gen revolution in the world. These gen live in very difficult environments, surrounded by thousands of people who are indifferent to any sublime ideal and are often immersed in the pleasures of this world.

I would tell these gen what I once told a young man, Julian, who was leaving for a country where most of the people were not Christians. I told him, "Go and don't talk about the ideal for at least six months. Tell no one your secret but instead love everyone, everyone, everyone, so as to establish a relationship with others... And make many, many friends!"

He left for this country where he knew neither the language nor the customs. Because of his work, he met many Catholic young people, but also those of other religions. He met adults, families, rich and especially poor people. He visited hospitals, schools and convents. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of love, and planted "landmines" of love, which would explode when the time was ripe. And that's ex-

actly what happened!

## An infallible method!

Months passed and Julian had more and more friends.

Everyone asked for him – they all loved him. Then one day, because circumstances required it, he spoke about the ideal to some people, and then to others, and then in many villages and in many cities. A big blaze started!

Julian's "Guerilla warfare" had been successful! I don't mean to say that he didn't have any difficulties.

The Gospel says we will be hated just like Jesus was. But Julian knew the weapon and key of the gen: Jesus Forsaken. And so he kept going ahead and the movement spread. Soon one Bishop heard about it, then another, and they blessed his work. Groups formed of adults and young people. Then the focolarini came and the first Mariapolis ever was held in that country! Doesn't that sound like a miracle to you?

Chiara

*The Gen Revolution*, pp 107-109

*The country Julian went to was Pakistan. See the next two pages on the life of the Ideal there now!*





AGOSTINO FROM THE WORLD GEN 3 CENTER RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO PAKISTAN TO MEET WITH THE GEN THERE.

# BUILDERS OF A UNITED WORLD!



**Rawalpindi, Dalwal, Lahore and Karachi** are the cities we visited on our fantastic tour from the north to the south of Pakistan. It was a joy to meet all the gen who have such big smiles and bright eyes and are so full of energy!

In each place we visited the neighborhoods of the gen, met their families and learned how they are impacting their world. It was a chance to “walk with them” along their holy journey and in this experience of unity we found the next step to take, going towards our goal together.

**Each area has its own characteristics.** In

some places the gen 3 dedicate their time to the

younger gen 3 and the gen 4, in other cities they work a lot to involve their friends in the project “Let’s Color our City with love.” One of the projects is to visit every month the people who are refugees from the terrible flooding of last year.

Here are some of their comments:

“These experiences fill us with joy because we feel that we are doing something useful for them. And our hearts are full of gratitude because we also receive so much from them!”

*“It’s an experience that makes us all grow, both those who give and those who receive, because it is good to meet and get to know one another, respect the other person’s culture and religion, better understand their lifestyle and different environments.”*

“It’s an opportunity for dialogue that helps build a piece of the united world right in our own country.”

“It’s a way to live for universal brotherhood in a concrete way.”

“It’s a chance to share some time with people who have great needs, but we also receive a lot from them!”

“In one of the camps, a group of us went more often than once a month. There is a lot of work to do there – preparing sacks of food and useful items, like heavy sweaters since it’s getting cold, and also toys for the children, or snacks...”





At first the children were very serious, but when we gave them the games, they played and sang with us and **the atmosphere in the camp was completely transformed!**

One of the gen told his experience of understanding *how* to love a person in need. He tried to understand what they could *really* use, so that the next time we could come back with those things.

**"The group going to the camps is getting bigger and bigger because others want to help, too. This gave us great joy!"**



# What will satisfy my heart?

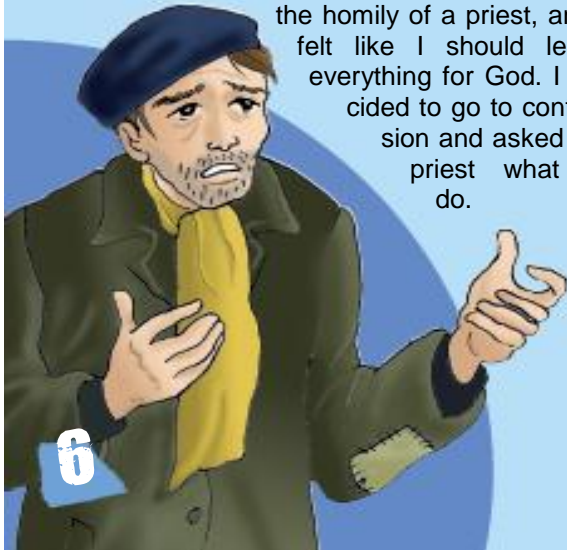
Meeting Graziella, one of Chiara's first companions



I was born in Trent. My dad worked in the post office and was a communist while my mom was a strong Catholic and very sweet. I had three brothers. When I was three, my grandmother showed me the Gospel and even at that young age, I understood it was something very important for my life.

I had great aspirations. I wanted to learn the harp, the violin and the piano, I did gymnastics and was very good at swimming, racing and basketball. I was also in the choir and took up theater. But none of these things really satisfied me. In fact, when I was 15 I got a lead part in a play, but I quit because I was so upset by the relationships among the actors. I wanted to go to college and study everything! I liked philosophy, literature and languages. My parents made me choose between becoming an actor or going to college, so I chose college.

Then one day I was struck by the homily of a priest, and I felt like I should leave everything for God. I decided to go to confession and asked the priest what to do.



He told me, "I will pray for you every day."

This priest had lit a fire within me and I understood that priests are a bridge between our soul and God.

One day, while going for a walk, I met a poor person. I opened my lunch bag and gave him everything I had. He was moved and kissed my hand. It really surprised me and in my heart I heard a voice telling me, "You have to change your life!" I felt more joy than I had ever experienced in my whole life. Another day, I saw a statue of St. Francis of Assisi. I asked him, "If God exists, if you are a saint, tell me what happiness is."

Because of the continuous bombings, I couldn't go to college, and instead I got a job to help with the family expenses. One day, while I was at the office, we got bombed. I started to run home to be with the rest of my family, but on the way, there was a series of three violent bombings. Between one explosion and another, I saw my life pass before my eyes like in a film. With fear I understood that God does exist, but I was living as if he didn't. With my whole heart, and without caring who heard me, I cried out, "Oh God, don't let me die, because now I've understood what it means to live!"

One day, a co-worker invited me to a meeting. I asked her if it was a religious meeting and she said no. I decided to go, but I dressed very fashionably, as elegant as possible, so that I would look very different from them, because at that



time religious people often dressed very badly and not in fashion. I thought in this way I would ridicule them.

When I got to the hall, the doorway was narrow, the steps down were steep, and the hall was low and dark. When I entered the hall I was surprised to see a statue of St. Francis with his arms wide open as if welcoming me. I asked myself if he would perhaps answer my questions that day.

I noticed a group of girls coming towards me - Chiara, Natalia and Dori. Chiara was particularly beautiful, dressed with good taste and fashionably. She had a beautiful perm - it was a new way of doing your hair and she was one of the first to do it.

They greeted me as if they had always known me. They didn't put on a fake smile, but rather they were really genuine. Little by little, other girls started arriving. Chiara started talking to us and her words captivated me! That's when the magical moment of my life occurred. It was so strong and so intimate that I almost couldn't talk about it. It was a great gift from God. **While Chiara spoke, I saw a great light with the eyes of my soul,** and I understood that it was God, Infinite Love.

The understanding that came from this interior light was immediate and very profound, and completely satisfied my soul. **I thought I would die of happiness.**

Even though the war was destroying everything, I felt God remained steadfast in me, and not only, but I had found everything I had always searched for! For a long time afterwards I remained struck by the light that had filled me and spread everywhere. The next day, when I went to work, nothing had changed externally, and yet one of my co-workers asked me what had happened to me. I guess it was evident that something quite revolutionary had taken place in me! The happiness that filled my heart was visible to people around me! From that moment on, I started my adventure and that of the Focolare Movement.

You can't imagine what an adventure God prepares for you when you decide to live for Him!



MAIL  
FROM ...

We recently met **Chiheb** and **Amin** from Algeria, two Muslim Gen 3, and we asked them a couple of questions.



### We would like to get to know your country...

**Amin:** Algeria is located in northern Africa. With Tunisia and Morocco, it makes up the area that is called the "Magreb." About 99% of the population is Muslim. About 80% of the territory is covered by the Sahara, the largest desert on earth, making Algeria rich in petroleum, iron and other minerals. Our city, Oran, is the country's economic capital and Africa's largest port. It also has magnificent, well-known beaches.

### What has changed since you regularly meet with the Gen 3?

**Chiheb:** The Movement has given us so much. We've understood how to be more understanding, and above all, to love more. We have so many experiences. For example, one time we went to visit a disabled person who had suffered a lot. For two years, she hadn't been able to go to the beach, and she really wanted to go. We immediately decided to take her. We prepared sack lunches for everyone and we also found a wheelchair for her to use.





### Are you able to meet with the Gen 3 from other Algerian cities?

**Chiheb:** Yes, for example, at the Gen Congresses, which are really beautiful moments. During one of those Congresses, I understood that in everything I do, even while playing games or sports, I should respect the other person's feelings so I can build true relationships and be friends with everyone.

**Amin:** We also meet other Gen 3 at the Mariapolis. At first, we didn't know they were Christian, but we didn't feel any difference between us, because the love among us was even stronger.

Thinking that it would make her happy, we also invited our friends. We spent a beautiful day together. At the end of the day, we understood it had been a special day for her, too. When she said goodbye, she said, "This was the most beautiful day of my life!"

**Amin:** We have a lot of opportunities to love also at school. During a basketball tournament, I had to pick the players for my team. I picked one of my friends who I knew was a good player. Instead, my co-captain wanted to keep him on the bench. I decided to sit it out instead myself, so that my friend could play, and this made my co-captain a little annoyed. Then another friend took a turn on the bench so I could play, and that's how all three of us got a chance to play. It was a beautiful experience, because each one gave up something for the others. We won the game, we reconciled with the co-captain and all of us became good friends.





## standing up for the truth



"IF, DURING A BATTLE, ALL THE TALIBAN WERE TO DIE, I WOULDN'T CARE ONE BIT!" COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT THOSE WORDS CAME FROM MY TEACHER? UPSET BY HER WORDS, I WANTED HER TO EXPLAIN THIS COMMENT, BUT SHE CUT ME OFF WITH A SARCASTIC REMARK.

Days later, her thoughts on the Taliban came up again. Convinced more than ever, I told her, "If this is the way you speak to us young people who don't always know how to defend our ideas, we'll all end up thinking the way you do! And also, what if the Taliban, who you'd like to see dead, decide to change their life the next day?" My teacher wanted to understand better what I was saying and asked me, "So you would be ready to die if he decided to change his life?" "Yes!" Our conversation went back and forth like a ping pong game, as if there weren't any other students in the room. When some of my classmates started making jokes about me, my teacher stopped them and said: "This is a lesson on *life!* It's at moments like these that we see how mature you are!"

During the break, I began to think that we had perhaps wasted an hour of class, so I apologized. Instead she said that it had been very important, and she added, "You are a very mature girl!" I talked to her about the Gen, who try to love every neighbor and spread the Gospel message.



After the break, my teacher told the class: "I want to thank Diletta for what she helped us understand. Now I also agree that I can't kill a person without thinking that the next day that person could change for the better."

With this experience, I understood that Chiara's Ideal makes us experience truth and joy, and now, I try even *more* to love everyone.

Diletta from Trent  
(10 years old)



# operation Riiing!!

## NO ONE SHOULD PASS OUR WAY IN VAIN

I was in school but I had no desire to study. I SAT IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM AND DIDN'T TALK TO ANYONE OR PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE ACTIVITIES, because I didn't want to be contaminated by any bad companions. I didn't even know the name of the boy sitting next to me. After a few days I asked to change classes. I FELT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD UNITY IN THAT ATMOSPHERE. A few months later I learned that the boy who had been sitting next to me was in jail, accused of a terrible crime. It was a shock for me – it was partly my fault, too! I COULD HAVE LOVED HIM MORE! Instead I just gave up. I made a promise that that would never happen again! So I started getting to know all my classmates, starting the day by giving them a big smile and saying, "Good morning!" It wasn't much, but I hoped it gave them the feeling that someone loved them. It actually had a fantastic effect! Little by little some of my classmates started telling me, "I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GOOD IT



FEELS WHEN YOU SAY 'GOOD MORNING!' TO ME. YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON WHO TREATS ME NICELY!" or another one said, "Sometimes I come to school only because I know you will say 'Good morning!' to me and I really do have a very good day then!!" I know the people in my class much better now and I saw that starting with just a small gesture I can change not only myself, but the life of those around me.

Giovani- Brazil





### HAVING FUN TOGETHER

There was a boy whom no one liked sitting by himself while the rest of us were having fun on the dance floor. **NO ONE, APART FROM ME, SEEMED TO NOTICE HIM.** I couldn't stand to see him by himself. Even though he wasn't one of my favorite people, there was no reason anyone should come on such an exciting and enjoyable trip and feel exiled from the dance. **SO I DRAGGED MY FRIENDS OVER TO CHEER HIM UP.** He smiled but kept saying he didn't want to dance. I pulled him to the dance floor and moved his arms to the beat like a puppet. When I turned away for one second, he was back at the table with his head on his arms. I felt like a failure, but I didn't want to make him feel worse, so I left him alone. The thought of him all alone kept tugging at my mind. Then my friends called my name, and when I turned around, I saw him right behind me. He had come back and was even showing off some impressive moves! When we got on the bus to go home, the boy was much more cheerful. **I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HIS NIGHT.**

Tochi – Atlanta, USA

### IN CLASS WITH CHIARA LUCE

When we came back to school after the summer, the teacher asked us to tell what we had done. Since no one answered, she picked me and so I told them about my experience at Mariapolis Piero in Kenya, where I attended a gen school. Everyone was very interested and I was happy to answer all their questions about the gen life. I was even more surprised when my classmates decided to live the art of loving! **BUT THAT WASN'T ALL!**

In the same class there is another gen 3, Janet, and one day we swapped books – she lent me **HER BOOK ABOUT CHIARA LUCE** and I gave her mine, called "God loves you immensely." When the girl who sits next to me saw the book about Chiara Luce, she asked if I could let her read it. Since then, **THE BOOK HAS BEEN GOING AROUND OUR CLASS, AND IN FACT, WE HAD TO MAKE A LIST OF WHOSE TURN IT WAS TO READ IT NEXT.** I was amazed at the

effect Chiara Luce had on my classmates! They usually don't like that kind of book, and instead they got so enthusiastic that they said they want to be gen, too! My whole class has certainly changed – no doubt about that! **AND TO THINK THAT BEFORE WE HAD A PRETTY BAD REPUTATION AS A CLASS!** Now everyone is trying to love the others and when there is a disagreement, you hear someone say, "See Jesus in her." I have to thank Chiara Luce because I am sure she is the one who helped me to have this experience.

Berenice - Nigeria

