



Giornata Mondiale
dei Nonni e degli Anziani
2022

Intervention by Mrs. Giancarla Panizza

Good morning to everyone.

First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity of being here today to share my experience. Reading the Holy Father's message was very reassuring because I felt supported in the values in which, I, both personally and with Auser Sartirana Solidale, the association of which I am President, have always believed: brotherhood, acceptance, peace, social justice and inclusion. The basic principle behind Auser is that elderly people are a resource for society.

In the small association that I represent, in an area characterized by an aging rate of 420%, the senior volunteers with the most energy are at the service of the "older seniors", of fragile families, of people with disabilities, and they accompany children, who live far from the country and on farms, to school.

Our commitment is oriented towards ensuring that people can remain in their own living environment for as long as possible, trying to guarantee access to healthcare and to peaceful time together. We value everyone's skills. We built a photographic exhibition on the "Skillful Hands" that try to communicate just that: a collection of elderly hands as they sow, embroider, paint and manage our association's administration, in keeping with younger hands. We brought Pope Francis the photo of the hands of an elderly person sowing, in tune with the Gospel passage "they will still bear fruit".

Now we're finalizing a project where older people will talk about the history of water - ours is a land of water and rice fields - and they will teach children and teens how water is precious to life, and how wasting it is an insult to life.

My experience in Auser started by chance, many years ago. Until then, I had always dealt with minors, and I thought I was not suited for working with middle old and very old people. Now, instead, I receive much more from these elderly people or people with disabilities than I give to them.





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I really liked Pope Francis' definition of "projects of existence" rather than assistance. So, that's what we're going to try to do, **projects of existence**, and if the Pope allows us to, we're going to borrow that as the title for the project for grandparents and children.

And today we are going to speak precisely about a little girl, baby Airis, Caterina's granddaughter, a refugee even before she came to be, who was born prematurely in Italy, a symbol of rebirth, of overcoming death caused by war, of life that conquers. The name her parents chose for her means Rainbow in Ukrainian. The arch of light and color that comes after the flood, the flood of bombs that we all wish would end immediately. Airis' mother, Anna, arrived in Sartirana as a guest of the family where her own mother had assisted a non-self-sufficient person in the past. Caterina is very well liked in the village for her helpfulness, and my fellow citizens came together to welcome and help her relatives arriving from the tormented Ukraine. Among them was Airis's paternal grandmother, a painter who in a short time made paintings of every corner of our village.

A cradle, a crib, clothes and food were collected for the baby. However, Caterina is a person of great dignity. She often sends any aid back to Auser, so that it can arrive in Ukraine, where it is most needed.

The volunteers accompanied Anna to prenatal visits and now they accompany the grandmother to visit the little one, who is in an incubator at the Policlinico in Pavia.

Then one day Caterina showed up at Auser and said she wanted to become a member, our first Ukrainian member. Auser's 88-year-old Vice President volunteered to become Airis' "Italian grandfather."

We would like that Airis and all the children and young people who flee from all wars could have the same rights as Italian children, but today unfortunately this is not yet the case.

Even for this reason, for all people who suffer or are alone, without distinction of ethnic origin, we would like to contribute to the **revolution of tenderness**, the unarmed revolution of which Pope Francis speaks.