



XXXIX MEETING EDITION FOR FRIENDSHIP AMONG PEOPLE
The forces that move history are the same that make man happy

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You can be happy

The glass eye

Rimini, Tuesday August 21st – «Any destiny, broad and complicated, consists in reality of only one moment: The moment when man realizes who he is forever».

This sentence by Borges left everyone feeling moved this afternoon in Sanpaolo A3 hall. Perhaps because the quote came from the young voice of Veronica Cantero Burrioni, a fourteen-year-old writer or because this tiny girl said it with a crystalline simplicity from her wheelchair with a lot of wheelchair equipment. Her eyes were filled with gratitude.

Veronica, through a short video, tells about herself, her gratitude for life and her passion for writing. Evidently it is also very good. Her last novel (she has published 4 novels already) is called “El lardon de sombras”, and The Italian title is “Il ladro di ombre”.

The book won the 2016 Elsa Morante Ragazzi Award and is declared of legislative interest by the city council of Campania, where Veronica lives with her family. She talks about her meeting with Pope Francis. «I wrote this sentence on my book that I gave to Pope Francis: “Dear Pope Francis, I dedicate this book to thank you for everything you have taught me. You taught me to use my glass eye and my own eye, because it’s my dream, a dream that I live today”». Veronica explains what a glass eye is. Between the ages of ten and eleven She didn’t ask Why from God but rather why did he give her such a condition: «He told me: “I give you this gift so that through it you can show people that under any circumstances they can be themselves”».

Veronica truly is herself, she is discovering her mission in the world. She talks about writing as a necessity like a great author. This faithful young girl talks about her illness, without false sentimentality or modesty and the pain that always makes them face the harsh reality. Everyone confides to the girl: «I started writing my personal prayers. In them I poured the last drop of pain, the doubts and the fear that I carried inside me» - Veronica continues - «I asked him above all to give me five things: strength, hope, trust, patience and peace. Suddenly God turned into an inseparable friend whom I could talk to everyday».

Paola Cigarini, head of the João Paulo II educational center in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, also shows a video narrating the after-school experiences offered to the poorest families in the favelas. Talks about people is tragic situation also their poor educational system that everyone, including children and the youngsters had to face since forever. The educator declares: «In Brazil, life in the favelas is constantly variable». In fact, there are factors that Westerners are taken for granted: having a salary, having something to eat, being able to go to school and find teachers there.

These are elements not at all obvious and unstable in Brazil for 60% of the population. The João Paulo II center offers the possibility to carry job start-ups to a large group of children, around 500 a day, to work on the subjects learned at school. «Our structure - explains Cigarini - is very beautiful and the children take very good care of the equipment unlike in their own schools where they tend to de-



stroy everything. The key is presence for these guys, a presence that includes a conversation with them on a human level. All the educators take everyone seriously , helping them face their needs and problems , in an age so fragiley exposed to the violence. This method is not a magic recipe, it takes a lot of work but even if they put themselves at risk, there’s someone to talk to. With this method, in a society, like that of Brazil, where vertical mobility is quite unlikely, if someone is an outcast and not included, we can help them face it without it turning into violence and we hope that their future is not determined to be other people in their society but they can be free within the complexity of the reality».

This is the force that moves history and that can make the human heart happy. Today someone has done it in a luminous way.