

Little House: A House of relationships and holiness

SUPERQUARK: After the forced closure of his first little hospital, Giuseppe Cottolengo is not discouraged and starts the "Little House of Divine Providence" in Turin, in an area called Valdocco (the current headquarters). He bought some rooms to accommodate new patients and, whenever the need arose, he welcomed people in need by creating special spaces, without thinking at all about the availability of resources to support them, trusting only in Divine Providence. This is how numerous groups that he called "families" came into being: the hospital for the sick, the home for elderly men and women, the families of the deaf and dumb, of the epileptics, of the mentally handicapped known as "Good Sons" and "Good Daughters", etc. For the service of the Work, Cottolengo founded several religious congregations.

Stop...Stop...we will continue us, now

NAME?

SARA. Sara

ROBY. Roberta

LUIGI. Luigi

SIMO. Simone

AGE?

ROBY. 27

SARA. 22

SIMO. 21

LUIGI. 28

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?

SARA. Student, studying to become a social worker

SIMO. University student of Communication Sciences

LUIGI. I'm a railway man

ROBY. I work in a condominium administration office.

HOW DID YOU GET TO KNOW THE COTTOLENGO?

ROBY. Through the parish where I was a youth animator, I had to do voluntary service with the young people and so we came to know the reality of Cottolengo.

SIMO. I was set up by my girlfriend who told me: "tomorrow come with me to a Cottolengo meeting ", Ok.

LUIGI. I have always gone to the Cottolengo parish, but my sister Chiara brought me to do voluntary work here at the Little House.

SARA. In a summer camp here at the Cottolengo

WHAT SERVICE DO YOU DO?

SARA. volunteer at Holy Innocents

SIMO. on call

ROBY. volunteer at Santi Innocenti family

LUIGI. I am a youth animator in the Cottolengo parish.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GOING THERE?

ROBY. 5 years

SARA. 4 years

SIMO. from the Christmas show of 2019

LUIGI. To the parish since I was a child, and to the Little House in the last 5/6 years.

WHAT STRUCK YOU ABOUT THE LITTLE HOUSE?

SARA. The feeling of being part of a family

SIMO. The fact that it's a world of its own

ROBY. The sense of home

LUIGI. the fountain with the fishes... it's beautiful!

WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "LITTLE HOUSE"? THAT IT'S A HOUSE FOR GNOMES?

SIMO. I don't know in what way is a little house, I just know that when you come inside here it feels like you're in a world that has nothing to do with what's outside.

SARA. No, not in terms of size, in fact it's very big, I always get lost. But Little means that when you enter this house you discover the beauty of being little.

ROBY. Home because this family becomes part of your daily life and represents a safe place where you feel accepted.

LUIGI. the sense of home is that sense of sharing that I also experience in the parish through moments of sharing between youth animators and boys and girls in the summer camps and in various parish moments.

BUT IS THE LITTLE HOUSE ONE OR THERE ARE MANY OF IT?

LUIGI. no there are many, I also know the one in Mappano.

SARA. there are many scattered all over the world: India, Miami, Ecuador... a bit everywhere.

SIMO. There's definitely one in Turin, I'm sure of it. Then I know that Sara, my girlfriend, wants to open one in Puglia.

ROBY: There are ones scattered all over Piedmont, Italy and the world, but there is certainly one missing in the most beautiful region of Sicily.

SUPERQUARK: The Little House is a "city of charity", a Charity that passes through the sufferings lived with generosity, serenity, self-giving by so many Guests and frail people, who have found in it a welcoming and familiar environment. Welcoming those who are not welcomed by anyone was an imperative for Saint Cottolengo, and still today in the Little House assistance is lived as a mission, a way of making tangible to the weak that they too are children of a Good Father.

QUESTIONS IN PAIRS-

AND NOW SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE SAINT'S LIFE. WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

SARA. Bra

ROBY. Bra.

SIMO. Bra.

LUIGI. Bra

WHERE DID HE DIE?

SARA. C.. - Chieri

ROBY. It's not Chivasso - Chieri

SIMO. I heard Chieri on the other side

LUIGI. I confirm, I confirm

THIS IS EASY: THE YEAR OF THE PROCLAMATION OF HIS CANONIZATION.

SARA. yes in 1900,... – 1934 (*nineteen hundred, ten thirty-two, nineteen thirty-four*)

ROBY. sure in 1900 - 34 - yes 1934

SIMO. Nineteen (and something) ...

LUIGI. but... after the first world war - yes

DO YOU KNOW WHO THE FIRST NUN THAT COTTOLENGO MET WAS?

SARA. Mother Nasi

ROBY. Mother Nasi

SIMO. Sister Rosamary

LUIGI. Sister Marta

AND HOW YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH A NUN WAS?

SARA. Sr. Elena, I had contacted her by e-mail for this summer camp and I met her for the first time here at the Cottolengo where I had never come before.

ROBY. Sr Elena when she received me and my youth group for the voluntary service.

SIMO. It was a full immersion! I was recruited for the Christmas show, I entered the theatre, which was entirely populated by nuns... it was a good impact.

LUIGI. Sr Karina during the community week we did a few years ago together with the animators.

DO YOU GET ON WELL WITH THE NUNS?

SARA. Yes, yes, we get along well, it's just that sometimes the system is a bit dictatorial.

ROBY. eh... with me they don't even try to be too kind.

SIMO. absolutely, all I can tell you is that as well as being called a sweetie by a nun, she tried to get my girlfriend to leave me so that she would become a nun.

LUIGI. A lot!

**WELL, LET'S SEE IF YOU ARE MORE PREPARED ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
IF I SAY LITTLE HOUSE, WHAT WORD COMES TO YOUR MIND?**

SARA. guests

ROBY. relationship

LUIGI. growing up together

SIMO. hospitality

RELATIONSHIP ...?

ROBY. the relationship is the glue that binds everything together, the relationship with the guests, among us volunteers, with the sisters, with God and with all the others who live this experience with us.

GUESTS ...?

SARA. Guests, not as disabled people, but as friends and companions of growth, a relationship that goes beyond the simple service of volunteering.

GROWING TOGETHER ...?

LUIGI. growing together with young people, through groups to carry out Christian principles.

ACCEPTANCE ...?

SIMO. from the first moment I arrived I immediately felt included in the group.

COMMENT:

“Deo gratias”, this is the “thanks to God” we hear every day in the Little House. And is God we want to thank! Thank you to letting us know the beauty of being little. Thank you to letting us discover the importance of being accepted and part of a big family. Thank you to letting us meet you every day through the guests. (LUIGI)

Sometimes young people like us can seem a bit careless or just superficial, but not since we met the Cottolengo family. Since we enter the Little House, every gesture, even the simpler, like a greeting, a smile, or a hug, assume a different value for whom receives it and for us who treasure it in our lives. The Cottolengo is, infact, a house where everyone of us finds a place, from the shyest to the most social, where each one of us can contribute according to the talents they have to offer, where each one of us feels welcomed and accepted for they we are. (SIMONE)

Often, we are convinced that the guests cannot do without us, really, for our part, it is exactly the opposite. We feel the need to be with them and every time we go to visit them we become more and more dependent; dependent on their smile, their joy and their desire to live despite the difficulties. In fact, it is our experience at the Little House and our relationship with the guests that have taught us to look at things from a different angle. Sometimes changing perspective is the right key to learning how to look. (SARA)

Where there is the Little House there is relationship and where there is relationship there is God. The relationship found within this house is authentic, made up of concrete gestures, a relationship that looks to the littlest and consequently to God. When this relationship is shared, something magical happens, guided by a 'special good fortune' that Cottolengo called 'Divine Providence'. It doesn't matter how much faith young people have, what matters is that when we find ourselves in that house, something in our lives changes in meaning. St Joseph Cottolengo had a saying: 'cheerfulness has never spoiled holiness', and this is what we volunteer, youth animators and young people of the Little House carry within us, a cheerfulness to give, to share and to cultivate. (ROBY)

IF YOU WERE APPOINTED SAINTS TODAY BY COTTOLENGO HIMSELF, WHAT WOULD YOUR PRINCIPLE OF HOLINESS BE?

ROBY. Well, when I think about holiness I think of Cottolengo who was made a saint, and for being made a saint it means that his good works towards others are certainly still relevant.

SIMO. In fact, he left something behind that is still perceptible as soon as you enter the Little House.

SARA. Perhaps holiness is giving to that house and its guests something of ourselves, as he did first, and simply carrying it on.

LUIGI. whether it's through voluntary work, a personal journey, an invitation from your girlfriend or to young people to whom transmit principles.