

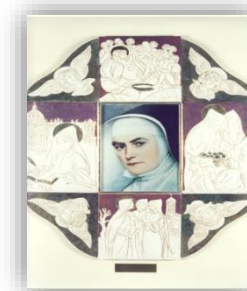
## CULTURE OF THE ENCOUNTER in Mother Thouret

Some months after her arrival in Naples, mother Thouret falls sick and she even fails to walk. As she writes to Mgr. Lecoz, she refers to the Neapolitan climate which is “entirely unfavourable, due to the high temperature which is totally depressing”. But it’s not simply a matter of the suffocating heat: in that letter dated April 1811 we find a strong description of the various difficulties, obstacles, oppositions, prejudices which the French sisters have to face and which mother Thouret has already presented repeatedly, to the minister of the Interior of Naples, to the point of being constrained to address the king of Naples, Joachim Murat. It’s only as of January 1813, according to what the minister pointed out in his report, that one could finally glimpse the paths for dialogue and collaboration which mother Thouret and her Neapolitan interlocuters will seek to put together. A fresh page starts putting in the first place the sick people’s interests in the wards of Incurables’ hospital, the needs of the sick poor who are visited in their homes, the miserable and abandoned street children to be welcomed and instructed in the classes of Regina Coeli. .

Not only. It’s worth noting that mother Thouret, after having expressed numerous perplexities regarding the vocational quality of the Neapolitan aspirants while regretting the French Comtoise ones,

**she finally decides to bet on the Neapolitan novices.**

*Hence the charism starts its realisation in the Kingdom’s capital: focusing on the sick poor, the needy girls, while welcoming and inserting the novelty brought forth by the Neapolitan novices.*



Work sheet 2  
2021

Friends of  
Jeanne Antide

with "Fraternity and Social friendship"

We resume our reflection on the encyclical under the guidance of the charism of JA. In the first worksheet, we have looked at “universal fraternity” and in the light of the parable of the good Samaritan, we tried to change it into “social love”. We, as lay people, says pope Francis, are called to encounter each other in order to take care of the poor and to share with those whom we meet.

But simple sharing doesn’t help us to change, and to meet the other in a deep manner; the Pope says that it is necessary a further step, namely **the method of dialogue**. Let’s listen:

### DIALOGUE

**Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another**, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word “**DIALOGUE**”. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue. (FT 198).

Some people attempt to flee from reality, taking refuge in their own little world; others react to it with destructive violence. Yet “between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations; **dialogue** among our people, for we are that people; readiness to give and receive, while remaining open to the truth. A country flourishes when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: (FT 199)

Authentic **social dialogue** involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view, and to admit that it may include legitimate conviction and concerns ... Indeed, “in a true spirit of dialogue, we grow in our

let's reflect

1. **Which aspect in the work sheet challenges us most and to which step do I/we feel called?**
2. **What helps us to go “beyond” in the difficulties of the dialogue?**
3. **What can JA’s journey teach us in the welcoming of the culture?**

ability to grasp the significance of what others say and do, even if we cannot accept it as our own conviction. In this way, it becomes possible to be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together ». (FT 203)

*let's reflect*

*Is not the indifference and the heartless individualism into which we have also fallen a result of our sloth in pursuing higher values, values that transcend our immediate needs? (FT 209)*

In a pluralistic society, dialogue is the best way to realize what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus. Such dialogue needs to be enriched and illumined by clear thinking, rational arguments, a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view. Nor can it exclude the conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld. (FT 211)

## **A NEW CULTURE**

«Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter». I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions. This means working to create a many-faceted polyhedron whose different sides form a variegated unity, in which **“the whole is greater than the part”**. The image of a polyhedron can represent a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching, and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. This also means finding ways to include those on the peripheries of life. For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centres of power where weighty decisions are made. (FT 215)

To speak of a **“culture of encounter”** means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life. (FT 216)

What is important is **to create processes of encounter**, processes that build a people that can accept differences. Let us arm our children with the

weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter! (FT 217)

## **Parable of the Good Samaritan**

In his encyclical on “Fraternity”, through the parable of the **good Samaritan**, pope Francis helps us to live the culture of the encounter ... **“he went near him ...”**. So this encounter of mercy between a Samaritan and a Jew is highly provocative; it leaves no room for ideological manipulation and challenges us to expand our frontiers. It gives a universal dimension to our call to love, one that transcends all prejudices, all historical and cultural barriers, all petty interests.” (FT 83)

## **CULTURE OF THE ENCOUNTER -Let's try to reflect:**

Another new issue identified by the Pope in the encyclical is the **“culture of the encounter”**, namely, a culture in which every human being finds equal dignity and equal human rights.

The complaint that “everything is broken” is answered by the claim that “it can't be fixed”, or “what can I do?” This feeds into disillusionment and despair, and hardly encourages a spirit of solidarity and generosity (FT 75): but this must not be an excuse; the world must always face evil. This cannot however justify our indifference in front of a need.

There are many ways to pass by at a safe distance: ....Or simply look elsewhere...as in some countries, or certain sectors of them, where contempt is shown for the poor and their culture, and one looks the other way, as if a development plan imported from without could edge them out(FT 73). What is more, caught up as we are with our own needs, the sight of a person who is suffering disturbs us. It makes us uneasy since we have no time to waste on other people's problems..... A society that seeks prosperity but turns its back on suffering. (FT 65).

**The Samaritan**, by approaching and making himself present, he crossed all cultural and historical barriers (FT 81). It is necessary to create a different culture, in which we resolve our conflicts and care for one another, (FT 57) to arrive to say **“WE”** both as persons, as peoples and as nations.