



Vittoria, 01 aprile 2019

Dear Rotarian friends,

Allow me, before talking about this month's theme, to, once more, express my grief for the death of Sebastiano Tusa, who lost his life during the tragic Ethiopian Airlines flight accident early in March. Sebastiano, Past President of Club Teatro del Sole, will be sorely missed by Rotary District 2110 and by the world of Archaeology of which he was an eminent and highly competent member both in Italy and worldwide.

I would also like to mention RLYA and the inter-District competition held in Rome on 29th March.

RYLA was held in Palermo on 16th March. Once more, this was a greatly successful event seeing quality lecturers and enthusiastic participants. You can read more about the activity in some other pages of this Magazine. As well as Rotaractors, I had asked the clubs to send also deserving youths from less privileged backgrounds and to my satisfaction there were nine of these participating with the support of District which paid 50% of their participating fees while the clubs covered the rest.

On March 29th the final ceremony was held in Rome for the Inter-District competition entitled '*Legality and the culture of ethics*'. No less than 33 clubs from our District took part, this is quite a record. Our young people fared very well presenting projects on the theme of '*Respect for the person and education to values and sentiments in contrast to violence and the violation of human rights*'. They won three first prizes, a second prize and three third prizes as well as seven mentions and a special prize. More details are available elsewhere in this magazine.

We also fared very well in the Good News Agency competition with the theme: '*Freedom of expression, search for the truth, ability to co-operate: the values of journalism as a contribution to peace and justice in the world.*' Details are available elsewhere in this magazine.

We are preparing for the the 41st District Congress which will be held at Giardini Naxos (Me) from 21 to 23 June. The theme will be '*Be inspirational*' and it will be addressed from various points of view of communication and sociology by renowned speakers. Of course, there will be much more as we are working to make sure that this important yearly event is interesting and pleasant. I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR COMING IN NUMBERS!

Let us now discuss the month's theme: '***Mother and child health***'.

This theme is one of the six areas of intervention of Rotary and it does not only concern third world countries but also the 'so called' rich nations which, owing to the worsening of the economic crisis, have limited or reduced their resources dedicated to this field which should be the best business card of advanced society.

Estimates on child mortality by UNICEF, WHO, the UN Department for the Population and the World Bank in 2017 say that more than 6.3 million children under the age of 15 lost their lives, i.e. 1 child every 5 seconds. Often these deaths are by predictable causes. Most, 5.4 million are children under the age of 5 and half of these are new born. Half of these in Sub-Saharan Africa and 30% in Southern Asia. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 child in 13 died before his fifth birthday, whilst in the high-income nations the rate was of 1 in 185 children.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, *'Unless immediate action is taken, within 2030, 56 million children under the age of 5 will die, half of them newly born'* said Laurence Chandy head of data, research and policy for UNICEF. *'Since 1990 we have made much progress in saving children but millions are still dying because of the circumstances in their place of birth. With simple solutions such as the providing of medicine, clean water, electric power and vaccinations we can reverse this trend'*.

For all children worldwide, the first month of life is crucial. In 2017, 2.5 million newly born died within the first month of life. A child born in Sub-Saharan Africa or in Southern Asia stood nine chances more of dying than a child born in an affluent nation.

Besides, even within nations there are disparities. The mortality rate of infants under the age of 5 in rural areas is of 50% higher than that of infants living in urban areas. Furthermore, children born of uneducated mothers have more than twice the possibility of dying before the age of 5 compared to children born to mothers having a secondary or superior level of education (*La Repubblica.it - Sept. 2018*).

According to the National Observatory on Female health, more than 500,000 women (1 one in every minute) succumb due to pregnancy or childbirth. The WHO has signalled out as a target the improvement of the quality of life of mother and child; reducing child mortality and improving the health of mothers are the fourth and fifth of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Rotary has made close strategic alliances with WHO, UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the UN Fund, Rotarian action group on Population Growth and Sustainable Development, etc., in order to improve mother and child health, reduce unwanted pregnancies and mother and child death in developing countries, to eradicate polio, to spread the culture of vaccination and to improve nutrition. How can each Rotarian collaborate?

Rotary can be leading with its volunteers each taking action.

Many Rotarians worldwide are doctors. It is necessary that they stimulate Institutions to strengthen sanitary systems and improve the integrated approach to the quality of medical services.

Rotary can provide medicines, antibiotics and vaccines, offer medical services and train sanitary operators who can assist, fight poverty and improve the quality of life of populations. Rotary can give access to medical assistance of quality to mothers and their children, who are the more vulnerable, in order to guarantee to them a long and healthy life.

With regards to health, and hence to woman and child well-being, the most efficient and indispensable factor is prevention. It is necessary to promote an educational path towards a conscious motherhood that includes pregnancy, motherhood, neonatal health and the necessary vaccines. Rotary and Rotarians must offer their qualified service.

So, dear friends in Rotary, I end my letter this month reminding you to BE INSPIRATIONAL through your competence and professional ability so as to improve the conditions of life of mothers and their offspring.

Yours in Rotary,

