



One day, Maria Pia introduced me to Antonietta, from Bitonto, Bari, who was always accompanied by her husband. Her husband, however, never came into the house; he waited for his wife in the car because he said he did not believe. On one of her visits, I came out of the house and finally had the pleasure of meeting her husband I exchanged a few words with him and invited him in for a cup of coffee and showed him around what for us was our home. In reality, it was a shop that we had used as a home. He was surprised at the place where we lived, but, without saying much, he left with his wife. The next day, he himself asked his wife that he wanted to come back to us. The wife told me this in amazement because, knowing her husband well, this attitude was unusual. Antonietta's husband insisted on coming back to me, because he said that he had to talk to me and that he had been impressed by our meeting. Within a week, they decided to leave. When they arrived, he asked me many questions, but I did not understand why he was asking me so many things. I thought he wanted to go on a faith way, but his answer was categorical: "No, I don't think about it", then he stared at me and said: "Since I saw you, I was struck by your eyes and your simplicity and I felt I had to come back to you"; then he asked me if I was willing to move if I had the possibility to move and my answer was that if it was the Lord's will I would have done that too. So before he went away, he left me astonished and speechless because he offered me the keys of his villa in the country. . We all immediately linked his offer to Jesus' Message that the keys would soon arrive, and we were full of joy. I spoke to my mother about all this because I was afraid to leave a secure reality with something unknown. My mother said that if it was God's will everything would go well and also my Spiritual Father, without hesitation, gave us his approval, his support, and his love. I met Maria Pia and her husband Pino in San Giovanni Rotondo (FG) together with my mother, Esterina, Antonio, and my father. They took us to see the villa. -It was huge, beautiful, and immediately habitable. On the return journey, we had a lot of problems: how to manage such a large house on our own, since Esterina had clearly expressed that she would not have followed us from the start and what kind of service to offer in such a remote residence. But we were not discouraged and abandoned ourselves to God's will. But it was still not clear to us what kind of people we should serve, so I suggested that the first person who came to us for help, that one would be our direction. After a few days, a young drug addict knocked on our door. I had worked in Sister Elvira's Community in the past. I had already had a lot of experience with these types of people, so I knew that it was going to be a huge and total commitment. I spoke about it to Antonio and Esterina, and it was not easy to make this decision, because just the word "drug addicts" frightened them; in fact, Esterina exclaimed: "Just the word "drug addict" frightens me; eh, who's going to tell my children?". But we were so caught up in the desire to "do" that we went ahead despite our fears. Finally, Antonio and I, and this young drug addict, who had asked for our help, moved to Bari, naked of everything, entrusting ourselves to Providence.



Once settled in, we gave ourselves a rule that involved prayer and works in the countryside. The boys, who wanted to join the Community, would have an interview during which they would be told our rules. They asked for no television, cigarettes or anything else, we relied only on Christ-therapy. The fruits were seen day by day, so much so that, when the Parish Priest of Mariotto visited us, he was enthusiastic about the work we were doing. He began to spend most of his day with us, even celebrating Mass in the facility, because some of the boys were not ready to leave this protected reality. The Lord did not let us lack anything, Providence sustained us in everything. We also had the grace of having our own Chapel with the gift of the Eucharist. Between nuns, priests, and laypeople, we welcomed pilgrims into the structure to experience moments of prayer and sharing together, because the Community was open to welcoming everyone. Almost everyone was surprised that I, a small and very young man, was in charge. It was not always easy to reconcile my mystical reality with the difficult reality of the boys, because the boys needed peace and serenity to overcome their problems; on the other hand, many pilgrims came to us to meet me and listen to the Word of God. Managing these totally different realities was not at all easy. In fact, it wasn't long before I lost control of the situation and my Spiritual Father, who noticed on one of his visits that something wasn't clear, decided to take charge himself. He held a meeting individually with those responsible for the facility and lastly with me. He wanted clarity and, in tears, I told him what had happened, which I cannot report here out of respect for the privacy of some people; but I still carry within me the pain of that defeat, for which I alone was responsible. Father Mimmo asked everyone to be obedient and told us all to return to our own houses. As always, even in difficulties, God shows the greatness of His paternal love. In fact, He had previously arranged for Sister Elvira and me to host this nun's boys at our facility, and this allowed our guests not to be alone when the other leaders and I had to return home. Even today, I vividly remember the pain of such a drastic separation from that structure and from those boys, whom we wanted and loved so much. Since then, I have not set foot in that community. We arrived there "naked", with nothing, and so we returned.