

Ministry Update from Reggio Calabria, Italy

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2016 Year-end – 2017 September

Dear Family of God,

It has been a great challenge for me to find the time to write to you. I apologize for such a long silence.

Since last autumn, through one new friendship God has opened the door for more work, more ministry and more blessing. We just have to keep up with the rhythm of this fast new pace.

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In the winter, when there is nothing left to do in the garden, and the animals don't have much grass to eat, our work usually slows down a bit. The visitors never stop coming, but in the cold season, there are less of them than in the summer. However last winter didn't seem to slow down for us at all.

Last autumn, by God's perfect will, Carlo got to make a new friend in Giovanni Vizzari. They actually met back than when we moved here, but it was just a meeting with a short conversation and that's it. We haven't seen him ever since. He lives in San Roberto, and is the mayor's brother.

Carlo shared with him the reason why he came back to live in Calabria. Giovanni is Catholic, and has a sincere faith in God. They work together, hunt together, share meals together, visit people together, and evangelize together. Carlo reads the Bible to Giovanni, and they discuss each and every situation in the light of the truth. Giovanni has brought people to our house for marriage counsel, people with serious health issues to minister to and pray for, and through him the door to San Roberto has opened as well. Remember we are residents of San Roberto, but a half an hour away, outside the town. Since we moved here, we used to once a year drive down to town to the city hall to pay our taxes and take care of our legal documents. This last winter, for the first time in 8 years, we were invited to a family gathering in San Roberto. It was a real privilege.

Ever since God has provided more work for Carlo near at hand and more ministry for us. We have spent many Sunday afternoons in San Roberto visiting people after we finished church in Bagnara.

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This summer we had African refugees start to come to our church. We hold our services now both in English and in Italian. Carlo teaches in English and has had Anna Chiara to translate for him into Italian. With our new members, we have more children in church too. However, the room we could use for the children's ministry for free, we had to return to the owner early this spring. We are praying for a solution to this.

By the grace of God, Giuseppe is still with us in church; even though do to his illness he has gotten much weaker. Michelangelo has passed away in May, and with him, we

lost our only guitar player for worship. We are praying for replacement.

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We had a wonderful very busy summer full and full of work and ministry. A young Sicilian man, Simone came to stay with us for a month. He comes from a broken family of divorced parents, who once used to go to church. Simone has seen his father and mother use drugs and commit adultery, and has used himself too some of the substances.

Andrea, who works in a home where they cure people with addictions, our old friend, who also has sent in the past various people to us to cure and minister to, is a friend of Simone's uncles. Simone has decided to quit the drug use and had the choice to go to this home, where Andrea works, or come and stay with us for a while. Since staying in a structure like this would have left a mark in his resume and official papers, he was counseled by Andrea to come to us.

Carlo warned Simone that it is not going be a vacation here. Carlo has organized by God's provision work for Simone for every single day for the duration of the month. They have read the Bible every day waking up at 4:00 am, than grazed our sheep and goats together for an hour at least, than they went out for work (gardening), returned for lunch, had a 2 hour nap time, than back to work until the evening, than graze our animals again for an hour at least, than dinner and bed. Simone had to read during the day different passages from the Bible assigned by Carlo and a book titled The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren. The month Simone has spent here was very intensive both physically, mentally and spiritually. The wonderful news is that Simone is drug free ever since then, has a purpose in life to help



his family, especially his sister to get off drugs, and is looking for a job for the first time in his life. Carlo encouraged him to consider spending two years of his life studying deeper the Word of God in the bible college in Montebelluna. We pray that God would protect him and the vision He gave him to continue to walk in victory. (On the above pictures, with Giovanni Vizzari and his wife, we prepared a surprise Goodbye-dinner for Simone just a day before his departure.)

During Simone's stay, we had Anthony and Darlene visit with us. They specifically came from Montebelluna to teach our children to play the guitar. In just two weeks, they have made such progress, that the kids were able to read the music notes and play four worship songs. Anna Chiara has started playing the piano in middle school and Darlene has taught her some new worship songs as well. Even after Anthony and Darlene have left, we continued to meet once a week over skype for more guitar and piano lessons. We were greatly ministered to in the midst of us ministering to the locals. They also were a great encouragement to Simone not to give up in the midst of the difficult times and invited him to visit with them in Montebelluna.

Also during this time, I was asked to prepare a high school student, Nino for his English test that he failed in June. (Just as the English class in Melia we do for free, so did we prepare Nino too.) Nino is from San Roberto. He was given another opportunity at the end of August to retry. As we started our lessons three times a week, I realized what serious difficulties this boy has in English. We did everything possible to prepare him (sometimes even Carlo worked with him), but I just didn't feel secure in all of our

preparations that he could pass the test. My fear was that he was not going to pass because he had difficulties remembering even the things we did together. I prayed every day that God would help him remember everything on the day of the test. At the end of August, we did receive the good news to much of my surprise. I am definitely sure that this has served as a testimony in the town of San Roberto.

In the month of August, my parents came to visit. My father for the first time. We had done a lot of work on our house both inside and outside such as painting the walls, rails and carport, creating shelves in our storage, repairing furniture, etc. Out of their 3-week-stay, we had only two days of vacation when we went to the beach and made a daytrip to Messina, Sicily.

My grandmother died at the age of 95 in the month of August. I went to Hungary in the beginning of September for the funeral and drove back with our much-needed new car.

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I meet once a week with the ladies of the Vita Vera church for our mothers-in-prayer meetings. We lift up our children, family, and each other in prayer, we also pray for the sick, for our churches and their unity and testimony, we pray for the schools, the political system and the leaders of this country, and the actual issues of the day.

I have had the opportunity in April to go to the Women's Conference just like last year. Remember, this conference is for the women active in the ministry in both South Italy and Sicily. I have met again many of the fellow laborers in Christ from last year and got to hear and share how God is moving in each of our ministry. It was a real refreshment.

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We continued this year too to take advantage of the holidays to invite people over to spend time together and share both food and faith. Through these friendships, God has been providing for us in such an abundance that we are able to share most of it (clothing and food) with the needy.

We are about to start a new season of English class in the town of Melia. We help both the elementary, middle and high school students to get their English homework done. Many elementary and middle school students bring their other homework – such as Math, Italian, History, and Geography - as well. As poor as the moral tone is of this town, we often have to fight in words with the kids and young adults who disturb our time doing homework. We are also responsible for the vicarage for the time we spend there. These kids often come and go in and out of the room, sometimes coming in with the soccer ball and playing inside, sometimes bringing a musical instrument and playing folklore music to disturb the class. Often they throw pebbles at the window or knock on the door endlessly to distract us.

We were constrained to look the door for the time of the class to avoid their molestations. Just before we finished last school year's season we almost clashed with them. They continued to bother us to the point that they were about to break down the entrance. Carlo went out to check on them, and they were ready to start a fistfight with him. By the time I got out, a big crowd of kids was around Carlo, and one little boy was beating him with a rod. In that confusion of couple of seconds, I ended up slapping that little boy, than went to visit his family, and tell the parents all about what happened. For the remaining of the classes until school finished, we had peace. We pray for these kids and their families that God would reveal Himself and pull them out of the darkness into His marvelous light.

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I am accompanying and assisting my elderly neighbor since March on her doctor's visits and shopping trips. She has sever deformed rheumatism, and because of it has difficulties walking and working with her hands. She is very precise and peculiar in her ways, therefore often really challenging to be served.

I couldn't be there for her if it wouldn't be for the Lord. He gives me the calm, the patience, and the wisdom to meet her in her need.

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In all this busyness of work and ministry, we receive a lot of blessing, but also we get really exhausted from time to time. Our kids show the first signs of this by disobedience. Then we know, it's time to slow down, rest and close our gate. Overall, we are really proud of our kids' progress both in school and with the music lessons.

Our little farm has produced greatly this year. We had long months from March to August of cheese and ricotta production. God has blessed us with a great season of fruit and vegetable harvest. Both in such an abundance, we can share and bless many others. Even though it requires a lot of work, our desire is to bring glory to our Savior.

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We just recently found out about an old friend and brother in Christ, who lives in Reggio Calabria, who has a terminal brain cancer and is suffering greatly from the pain. We visited him a couple of times and prayed with him and his family, and helped with chores. They have three daughters and three grandkids. Their oldest daughter has broken contact with the parent many years ago and has forbidden her two children to have contact with the grandparents too. We pray for complete healing for our brother, and healing in this family that they could be once again united.

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Craig Quam, the pastor of Calvary Chapel Montebelluna has contacted us that he is planning to visit all the fellowships in Italy with the bible college students, including us too. We pray for protection of their trip and blessing for each fellowship reunion.

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Please continue to keep us in your prayers, lifting up the Brethren fellowship in Bagnara Calabria (worship leader!), the English class in Melia, our personal one-on-one relationships and our family. We pray for healing for the sick, and for salvation for all.

We appreciate and thank for your prayers and support. It means a lot to us to know that you back us up. We are thankful to be co-laborer with you in the Gospel on this side of the world. You are welcome to visit us or be a part of this ministry. May God's Spirit strengthen us all in these last times to finish well.

With love,

The Nicolos

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