

Together is better!

By Br. Enrico Muller, FSC (Scampia, Italy)



As a Lasallian community and as Lasallian educational ministries, the Lasallian cooperative Occhi Aperti (Open Eyes) and the association Arrevutammoce, we found ourselves, like everyone else, affected and overwhelmed by the pandemic.

Like all of us we experienced fear, frustration, estrangement, silence... but the voices of the people that the Lord has placed beside us and to whom He has entrusted us brought us back to the reality of our call that must permeate and shape our lives as Christians and Lasallians.

As a Community we immediately set to work with the Sisters of Providence of Father Scrosoppi, the Jesuits, the Chi Rom and Chi No and Magma Associations to respond to the needs of our Roma brothers and sisters and beyond.



The group we created is called BAM, Brigata dell'Appoggio Mutuo (Brigade of Mutual Support) and in recent months has distributed food parcels for the Roma families of Scampia and Secondigliano, and for Neapolitan families, 1400 people, every 10/12 days or so, all finding among our friends and crowdfunding campaigns the necessary funds to buy food, detergents and everything needed for children 0-2 years.

The action of our Lasallian community has always turned to the Roma of Giugliano in Campania, a town about 7 kilometers from Scampia; there are about 150 families, all very large and we have managed to make three distributions of food and personal cleaning materials.

Occhi Aperti is also accompanying the students of the second chance school "IO VALGO" (I'm Worth) to the license exam with distance teaching so that the students can prepare the thesis they have to present at the end of this unusual school year.



Another initiative taken by the Lasallian members of Occhi Aperti have developed in the Vomero district in collaboration with other realities: the Shekinà Youth Pastoral Centre, the Scouts of the city of Naples and the Association “Be a tourist in your city” to help families in economic difficulty during the pandemic. The initiative is linked to the experience of the “solidarity and voluntary workshop” for young people that the Youth Pastoral Care Centre and the Scouts had been doing for a long time, but had a novelty in how it was run, in the extraordinary motivation, the pandemic, but also in the new collaborations.

The social media were the means chosen to promote the initiative everywhere and invite people to donate basic necessities that could be brought by individuals to the Youth Centre, collected weekly in shops or condominiums by the volunteers, or entrusted to the “social taxi service”, which gathers taxi drivers who volunteer for collecting “food bags” and bringing them to the Centre.

The response, both from volunteers and donors, crossed the border of the neighborhood and involved people from Melito, Casoria, Giugliano... cities of the Naples’ area.

The social media also allowed people who were in difficulty to know this opportunity and came for the weekly distribution: Neapolitan families, but also Ukrainian, Sinhalese, Moroccan, Roma...



This occasion has also created a bridge between the neighborhoods of Naples, especially with Scampia, which is a little known neighborhood and because it is a suburb, little respected.

The creativity of people knows no limits: a mother wrote a letter to invite mothers not to get gifts for Mother's Day, but to donate the sum for a solidarity food bag.

Of course, vulnerable people always teach us a lot and they are our teachers: a gentleman who had come to pick up a "food bag" came back the following week to give us some oil he had received so that others could enjoy it.

In both situations, a wider network has been created, for example, with parish Caritas, to respond to respond effectively to those most in need.