

Reformation Christian Ministries

Italy Report

~ ~ ~ December 2005 ~ ~ ~

December 20, 2005

Dear Friends and Supporters of Franco Maggiotto:

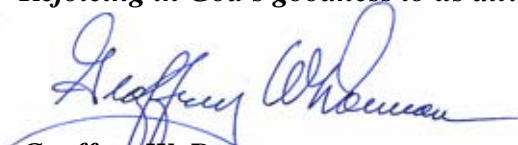
Our dear beloved Dr. Franco Maggiotto has just (on the 16th of December) sent his year-end newsletter to us. No doubt it is the grace of God that it was written, and it will be the grace of God that enables us to get it to you before year-end, much less before Christmas (which he addresses in his short devotional).

We ask your continued prayers for him, his health, well-being, ministry and outreach. Our plans are to meet with him sometime in April. Great things are happening in Italy that he has alluded to. We can only share so much and that will have to be more after the fact than in the midst of the great things. Why? Because both he and we are being watched and therefore must be careful as to what is mentioned. We wish we could be as straightforward as we wanted, but we must be "wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16). Pray for us all who want to shout for joy at what God is doing, yet feel muzzled like oxen due to the enemy's misuse of our joy when it is spread too far.

God gave us the liberty to advance Franco some funds for his medical costs not covered by Italian "Medicare" trusting the Lord to recover those funds through His abundance at a later time. Please pray that God will enable us to recover those advances in His time. If you wish to contribute to those needs, please mark on your check "Italy Medical Needs" and we will apply it in that way.

We join Franco in wishing each of you a joyous season of celebration at the birth of Christ. While some celebrate this but once a year, we know it should be an every day ~ yea every moment ~ celebration throughout our lives.

Rejoicing in God's goodness to us all!



Geoffrey W. Donnan, Director

To be added to our mailing list, or to make a donation, please cut and send to:

Reformation Christian Ministries. FOR: ITALY PROJECT (Ministry of Rev. Franco Maggiotto)

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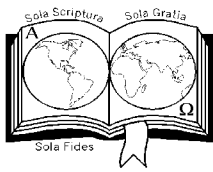
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(NOTE: Please make check payable to "Reformation Christian Ministries" and designate it to "ITALY PROJECT")

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Reformation Christian Ministries

Letter from Alpignano, Italy
Christmas 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Here are a few lines of news, just a few so that they might get to you as soon as possible.

My illness, which has taken me down the difficult road of chemotherapy, transfusions, lumbar injections, removals of bone marrow, and so forth, seems to be getting better and to be disappearing. What gives me great joy, even when in the grip of physical pain, is that the Lord has wished to make use of me, even through illness and pain ... The journey I mentioned in my last letter has borne much consoling fruit which will lead, as it has done already, to the furthering of the Authority of the Word in Italy. Aurora was with me and she was a great gift of God for all those who met her.

I am now continuing my work, answering letters and sending off messages of encouragement and Bible commentaries, as well as putting plans together for new meetings, and at the same time experiencing joy in feeling that more new things are coming into being. Isn't Christmas itself a New Thing from God who comes down amongst us?

The fellowships are starting to recover after my prolonged immediate absence. I ask for your Prayers for the fellowships that everything might be done to the greater glory of God.

As usual I send you a meditation arising out of God's Word so that I might feel near to you for this commemoration of the Birth of the Emmanuel. May the presence of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you every day, and may they be filled with His joy.

Your sisters and brothers through God's Grace alone, in the Love of God.

Alberto, Tabitha, Aurora and Franco Maggiotto

ADVENT

*“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.” Luke 1, 78-79*

There are two basic co-ordinates that hem in our human existence: space and time. The first of these we somehow bend to our requirements: transport gets faster and faster, and global communication potentially allows us to reach people thousands of miles away. All this creates the illusion that we may also master the second dimension, that is, time. There is however a psychological aspect of our relationship with time which continually reminds us that this pretension of ours has always been, and will probably for ever continue to be, an illusion. That aspect is waiting. Sometimes it can get to be exasperating and sometimes it may be pleasurable, but most often it is transformed into a monotonous, daily process — that of “killing time”. The common denominator of all kinds of waiting is always the sensation of impotence when faced with the passing of time.

In the liturgy of the Christian churches, the hymn of Zacharias (Luke 1, 78-79) is linked to the season of Advent, which is the period of waiting par excellence. Some exegetes have even put forward the thesis that the text transmits to us one of the hymns sung during the meetings of the first Christians. In the Western Monastic tradition the hymn of Zacharias announces, during lauds at matins, the ending of night and the arriving of the new day. During the grey December mornings or the dark winter afternoons these words become very suggestive: the dawn shining over the darkness and the shadows; the way of peace which, far off

though it may be, can clearly be discerned on the horizon that is wrapped in darkness, but already visible. All this causes us to enter into another dimension of time: into a waiting which is not waiting but fulfilment, into a future which is transformed into the eternal present of God; the God who, however, is not just the all-powerful God of time and of eternity.

The dawn, which tinges the dark blue of the sky of a long, cold winter's night with violet, reminds us that the God of the patriarchs and prophets, moved by feelings of compassion, draws near to mankind's cold solitude and wraps it in the warm cloak of His inexhaustible Grace. These statements will certainly not lessen the hardship of winter evenings for those who have to face the lonely dimension of waiting. Maybe empty and wearisome waiting will get even harder for those who have been neglected by relatives and friends and who face the experience of old age or illness. Yet the joyful cry of the aged priest Zacharias still has the power to reach out into the darkest corners of our cities, towns and villages. And the echo of this cry is repeated in the middle of a long night, in a room full of disturbing shadows: peace be with you. Your God, who is merciful, is at hand and His Grace is transforming the world. Amen...

Franco Maggiotto