



Vittoria, 01 settembre 2018

*Dearest friends, dear members,*

I cannot but begin this September letter, which Rotary usually dedicates to literacy, without mentioning the terrible tragedy in Genoa as well as the sad event in the Pollino Park. These events leave one speechless and angry. I express deep condolences for the people who lost their lives due to the carelessness and superficiality of those whose duty it was to maintain and supervise structures and, in the case of the Pollino, to secure the safety and accessibility of the site. We cannot, however, limit ourselves to complaining while it would be auspicious that Rotary takes up its role of active defence and service to Society. As citizens and as Rotarians we must take up our civic commitment and responsibility towards our communities.

As I have said, September is the month dedicated to literacy and basic education. Literacy is the process of teaching and learning those graphic conventions that make communication possible through distance, space and time.

In ancient civilizations, the exclusion of the majority of the population from the process of literacy prevailed for many centuries. There was a limited diffusion of the practice of reading and writing during Imperial Roman times. During Medieval times, literacy was practised within abbeys and convents. It was then extended to the administration chancelleries and to commerce. The Protestant reformation gave a strong impulse to literacy with the obligation for the common people to read the Bible. Finally the rise of the Middle Classes stimulated public and State education. In the second half of the 19th century, the majority of European States applied programmes of basic schooling and secondary education was also introduced.

Since 1951, UNESCO has stated the distinction between instrumental and functional literacy. While in the first case we have a fragmented and purely executive form of reading and writing, the second refers to an active and differentiated form of written culture at the service of the complex varieties of communication that are typical of the industrial age. Functional literacy, hence, refers to instruction that exceeds the simple ambit of reading and writing.

In general, the process of literacy has not yet been achieved worldwide. A high level of illiteracy exists also in the industrial world which sees a strong immigrant influx wherein the process of education is not fully consolidated. The lack of motivation to refine the ability to read and write produces a phenomenon called 'return literacy' which can be found in several developing countries. In this field, which is one of the 6 priority areas of intervention, Rotary and our District have been, and continue to be, very active.

A further extension to the concept of literacy is now emerging with regards to the revolution created by the use of calculators and modern IT instruments such as the personal computer and the now very common tablet. These require electronic skill levels which are still inaccessible to the vast majority of the population.

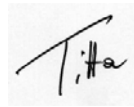
Allow me, therefore, to extend the concept of literacy and basic education within our clubs where there persists, notwithstanding years of training seminars, an inadmissibly poor knowledge of Rotary rules and procedural regulations. This is often the cause for scarce efficiency of certain clubs and also causes conflict

between the Club Presidents and their team. We also register poor propensity in the use of the electronic systems such a Rotary Club Central and My Rotary which are now indispensable for a proper administration of the Clubs. Both these unpleasant situations, of course can be remedied primarily by a more frequent programme of training. We need to talk more about Rotarian regulations and less about the colour of butterfly wings! With regards to conflict within clubs, what is required is common sense and a spirit of humility while, regarding IT, it is a matter of patience and a pinch of good will.

Before bringing this letter to an end, I wish to remind you that the closing date for applying for Global Grants is set for 30th September. This applies both to projects as well as to scholarship grants. No funds will be set apart particularly for scholarships but, in order to maximise the use of funds, once the applications are received these will be properly evaluated and the relative decisions will be taken.

Let us *be an Inspiration*, in order to spread literacy and in order to become more literate ourselves!

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Sallemi', enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.