

Catania, 1 dicembre 2015

Directions of growth and a wish that goes beyond

Dear fellow members,

December is the month dedicated to disease prevention, a subject which need not be commented upon nor does it need explanation, so well acquainted are we with the term.

Our District is certainly in line with R.I. in this particular area. Last month we collected nearly €13,000.00 net for Polio Plus through the successful piano recital by Master Francesco Nicolosi, at 'Theatre Massimo – Vincenzo Bellini' in Catania. Besides, amongst the programmes proposed by District to the Clubs this year are the prevention from Colon Cancer and the matters concerning support to the siblings of the disabled. Our District has been working for several years in collaboration with Morocco to fight Thalassemia in that country. We have now indicated Pancreatic Carcinoma as a new field in which Clubs, many of which are already active in the field of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), could possibly operate. I shall not make further references as the examples are very numerous and I feel I must mention the Diabetes screening run by the Pantelleria and Sant' Agata di Militello Clubs, as well as the various actions in the field of healthy eating, such as the District Project headed by Pino Disclafani, 'Give your day the right colour'. It is quite evident that this month's theme clearly indicates the idea that competence, professionalism and availability for service are the basic role of a Rotary that is anchored to social needs.

As I write, I can say that I have visited about one third of the District Clubs where I have seen that 'service, substance and sobriety' are messages that have been perfectly received. Rotarian 'Service Above Self' is exercised in a thousand and substantial manners. From my privileged observation point, it is incredible to see the quantity and the quality of good that Rotary is able to do. At times, however, I can perceive within Clubs unjustified internal contrasts. Let us try to fly high, to understand and tolerate before taking umbrage, all the more this month which will see the democratic renewal of Club positions.

The Christmas Season is also the time when, during the meetings for the season's greetings, it is hard to abide the practice of sobriety.



Let us be mindful of this when we prepare menus, when we think of the usual little gifts which frequently are useless and are always costly.

When we will be tempted to abound in superfluous invitations let us remember that resources may be destined to noble causes, without taking away the joy of conviviality. The rethinking of how to spend Rotarian funds is one of the themes that are dear to President Ravindran and I am pleased to repeat this not only because, in my humble person, I represent him but because I full agree with this principle.

I share with him also my thoughts about Membership, a theme we must always keep in mind. A month ago, R.I. increased its membership by 18,600 compared to last July.

But, in the same period of time, our District while not decreasing has not increased in numbers. Let us use our abilities in finding new ways of service to also find new ways of increasing membership.

The young, women and the new professions are all sectors to be tapped, but we can also work on ex members, trying to meet them in order to find out whether the reasons why they had left are now obsolete and they might be giving the matter a rethink. Let us also not give overdue importance to traditional parameters such as University degrees or family prestige, which though important and not discriminatory should not hinder us to look at potential new members for whom the lifestyle, the abilities and readiness to service should be sufficient factors for admittance.

I bring my letter to an end wishing all Rotarians and their families a blessed Christmas and New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francesco Filazzo".