



## Andrea Maria

### #ThankYouCaritasVolunteers

My experience in Caritas started a little further long than a year ago in a very casual way. With the term “in a very casual way” I mean that I am studying Arabic at university and not having anyone to speak with, two summers ago I had been looking for something to let me train the language, and so I found out the two summer weeks experience organised by Caritas Lodigiana together with Caritas Lebanon. It was the perfect occasion to launch myself into the language, while spending my time to make Lebanese children amusing in all the activities that we had organised all together. It was an extraordinary experience that helped me a lot to grow up, putting me in contact with the meaning of “to spend oneself for others”. Yes, until this moment, I helped people whom asked me for a help, but without giving too much attention to it, without asking me what does the help I had given to them meant. I began to understand how much important was seeing those smiles on the faces of these Lebanese guys and children, and how a joke made by chance make them laughing, or even to say to a kid that I was here for him, it was fundamental for them. I still remember when a little kid come to me with a little hat full of seashells and he showed me all of them one by one with the eyes full of joy. It was his first time to the seaside that day and he didn’t want his treasure to be stolen, so at the end of this contemplation, he got across me and asked me if I could take care of them. I nodded,

but the kid was not fully sure about it, so he asked me which was the room where I used to sleep. Once I brought him there, he asked me if he could hide them under my mattress. What should I say? He made me tenderness, but a lot. How could I say “no” to that kid? In the end I saw it was a fundamental issue to him, so I put them under my mattress, and stood in front of the door, controlling that anyone entered and at the end of the day he hugged me tightly and full of gratefulness. I felt really important for such a little event that still today I struggle to forget.

It thrilled me a lot also the attention that my group and I had given to a disabled girl that we went to visit. Just she heard us from her house speaking and just her brother told her we were in, she ran out of her house shouting out loud her happiness, hugging us one by one, and kissing us. She made me tenderness, because she care a lot about this little attention given to her and the fact that the Caritas group came to her house, it meant a lot to her. It was as if there was a good reason to have a party. Infact, we made her dancing and singing a lot, but we also made a lot to her, we helped her to sort and to clean up her house while her brother was out for work. When the brother came back home, he thanked us from the heart in order to have helped him that day.

Once returned to Italy, I felt something lost in me. I felt that I should have been useful in some way. So I contacted Luca Servidati, the organiser of the travel in Lebanon as well as worker in Carias Lodigiana, and I begged him to fit me in others activities, because I felt compelled to make me useful. What do I say?

Now I am in the alimentaty distribution service, a service that I consider highly useful because I believe that the alimemtation is an extremely important aspect in our lives that is taken for granted.

The fact that there are families in difficulty of different genre which ask for a help to our parish, it helps me to understand how important is our help towards them, because everytime we brought them the alimentaty packages, we show them that we really care about them by asking them how are they, then they tell us about everything, how their children grow up, showing us how they are grateful towards us. In addition to that, this experience makes me very happy also with the people I help to prepare all the packages, because being they older than me, often they tell me how things are changed in our city then their times and all of it makes me very respectful towards them.

A last activity of volunteering that I am doing with Caritas Lodigiana is the teaching of Italian to a Somali family. I think that this activity is the most difficult among the others listed because it is difficult to make them understand how the Italian language works by the fact they speak another one totally different from our and with different grammatical rules. But I can admit that I fortunatelly have the Arabic language that work in my favour, because some concepts are easily to understand in that language because of the familiarity they have with it than with English. They give me a lot of satisfaction because in a matter of few days they became better in the written exercise and I admit that I see the father very interested in it and launched in speaking, thanks to the method I am using to teach him italian, and I see the mother more and more sure about the writing part than the beginning and she is less ashemed by her fewer mistakes. They fulfill me of happiness because I notice lots of commitment and initiative by their side and I notice the interest they have in this thing that is very difficult for them. For that reason I am happy to be a volunteer and be present for them in a similar situation.