

YOUTH Messenger®

JANUARY–MARCH 2004



SPECIAL REPORT
**International
Youth Conference**
at the Waldensian Valley

Resist and Shine!

Any place has its history. Any place says something to one who chooses to hear. Yet there are times when a place and a special event can bring nature, the history of bygone generations, the Bible, the joy of fellowship, and the light of God's presence to converge all together into a bold, unforgettable experience. Such a thing occurred last summer when, for one week, the Pellice Valley hosted God's young people, as it had for centuries for the children of God—the Waldenses—during the Dark Ages.


For all privileged to partake in this Youth Congress, the Lord could speak in a special way. "The massive rocks and towering mountains that rise in the distance are not the result of chance. They speak in silent eloquence of One who sits upon the throne of the universe, high and lifted up."—*Our High Calling*, p. 251.

The Waldensian valley. Everything around it speaks silently about the grandeur of our heavenly Father. The towering cliffs seem to speak with authority, pointing upward and crying, "Heaven is your home! Stand unmoved, as we do! God set you and us here; we'll remain unmoved until the Lord calls us! Keep standing for the eternal truth, though the heavens fall!"

Down below, far from the shadows of these majestic mountains, was the pallid human replica, the Roman clerical empire. No comparison. Pitifully weak yet incredibly

rich, proud, and arrogant, for more than a thousand years it sought to cast its darkness over nature's God and the people of these valleys, people of rock, people rooted in the Rock of Ages, imbued with the same characteristics as the mountains they loved, inextinguishable as the rocks themselves. Hunted for generations as dangerous animals, persecuted for centuries in any diabolical way imaginable, the Waldenses remained steadfast as the cliffs surrounding them. "God is Himself the Rock of Ages, a refuge for His people, a covert from the storm, a shadow from the burning heat. He has given us His promises, which are more firm and immovable than the rocky heights, the everlasting hills." (Ibid., p. 251).

This is the secret which the Waldenses are sharing with us: "We prevailed, because with Him we are invincible! Do not fear, do not tremble! You will prevail as well. See you soon, in the great day of the Lord!"

Dear young people, now is our time! To be clean, pure as linen, white as snow, in this corrupt age, is a great privilege. But the Lord offers even more. To be of Him means to shine, even "as the brightness of the firmament" (Daniel 12:3). This offer is extended to you, to me, today. To shine as the Waldenses did, to indeed be precious diamonds of the Lord as they were, the light of the world through Christ in you. May this be our daily experience! 

Contents

JANUARY–MARCH 2004

Vol. XXIII, No. 1

Editorial

Resist and Shine! **2**

Report on the International Youth Conference

"The light shineth in darkness . . ." **4**

Esther's Courage

A worthy example for the future. **10**

Outing in the Mountains

An unforgettable journey! **12**

Caleb's Strength

Caleb's most notable feature was his living faith. **14**

Abigail's Individuality

A consecrated Christian life ever sheds light and comfort and peace. **17**

The Word Behind the Scenes

A word from one of the organizers of the IYC 2003. **20**

What Did You Think of the IYC?

A sample from the interviews. **22**



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R E P O R T O N T H E INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

“The Light Shineth in Darkness”

JULY 7–14, 2003 in BOBBIO PELLICE,

by Cristina Mihail
writing from Romania—19 years old

It was the 7th of July when the International Youth Conference of the SDA Reform Movement started this year in Bobbio Pellice, a little town in one of the Waldensian valleys. The conference lasted through July 14th, and offered young people from more than 15 countries a special opportunity to learn more about the keepers of the

light which shone during the Middle Ages. The motto of the conference was the first part of John 1:5, “The light shineth in darkness,” the same which once could be found in many Waldensian churches of that era.

The camp *Centro Vacanze* (Vacation Centre) where the Youth Conference took place, is managed

by the Salvation Army. The first thing one notices when arriving is the structure of the buildings: All are made of stone, suggestive of the strength and steadfastness of the Waldenses, but also their simplicity, because there are no adornments on the walls, except for some flowers at the windows.

The conference opened on July 7 in the evening, when Br. Radu Ionita presented the lecture, “Jesus, the Light of the World.” After the program had finished, every participant had the opportunity to greet and be greeted by the others. As it was already getting dark, we soon went to our rooms, because the lights had to be switched off between 10:00–10:30 p.m. So we realized that the first day of the conference had already passed.

At 7:30 the next morning, we had our morning worship. Bro. Giordano Tinta spoke about the life of Tabitha, a faithful woman who lived during the early Christian era. She made the best of her opportunities to help her fellow men and thus

was a light to those who surrounded her. Her good example was a powerful sermon. Today, too, there is need of such devoted Christians who can be a blessing for the world. At the evening worship, Bro. Slavic Shamrey also referred to this need. The theme was “The Bible: A Lamp On the Path of Salvation.” Only the Bible can teach us the requirements of God. Through Bible study we can become a light in the world, true Christians, responsible and steadfast, as the Waldenses were, preparing the way for the Reformation.

The main study we had on July 8th referred to “The Waldenses: a Light in the Darkness of the Middle Ages.” Bro. David Zic presented the reasons why these courageous people denied the papal authority, and the consequences of their decision to obey God. We learned about the Waldensian schools, about their way of doing missionary work, and about the persecutions they suffered. We discussed for forty minutes about the lessons we can learn



from the history of the Waldenses. The subjects we focused our attention on were:

1. Draw a parallel between the history of the Waldenses and the history of the SDARM.

2. How can we do missionary work today?

3. How can we make sure that we do not lose our faith?

4. What should we do if someone comes to us with “new light”?

5. What should we do if we have to face persecution?

After six workshops were presented, we went out for a short trip in nature.

On July 9, Sister Andrea Burisa presented the example of the Jewish queen of Persia, who saved her people through her courage in a time of special need. “We need the same courage for the events in the future” was the message of the morning worship, “and the place we can get it is at the feet of the Almighty, from where Esther also received her courage.”

The lecture we had at 9:30 was on “The Adventist Light in the Waldensian Valleys: the Beginning of Adventism in Europe.” Bro. Daniel Campodonico drew a parallel between the understanding the first disciples and the SDAs had of the verses in Matthew 28:19–20. There was a similarity between them: They did not understand their mission at first, but when they realized its meaning, the truth spread all over the world. M. B. Czechowski was the Seventh-day Adventist who brought the light of present truth to Europe, beginning his work according to his long cherished wish among the remnant of

Waldenses in Italy. As a result of the work begun here, the Adventist belief spread to Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania and finally in all of Europe. But unfortunately, the SDARM has not reached every language, nation and person, even nowadays. We were invited to reflect on our work for Christ and on ways to improve it, so that we might fulfill our mission. In the six workshops, plans were discussed on laboring for students (by the Serbo-Croatian group), people in poor countries (by the German group), immigrants (by the Hungarian group), businessmen and rich persons (by the Romanian group 1), politicians and people of high culture (by the Romanian group 2) and for every person, nation, and language (English group and GC representatives). The plans were presented at a Waldensian monument we visited during our afternoon trip.

The evening sermon had the title: “The Importance of Health Reform” presented by Bro. Hennady Melnychuk and it reminded us of the close relationships between our body and mind, and our character and the food we eat. We were advised to learn better the rules of our bodies.

On Thursday morning we had our worship at 5:30 because of the trip we had planned. Br. David Zic read to us Psalm 121 as an answer to the question “From Whence Cometh My Help?” Sister Bruna Tuleu gave also an answer to this question, giving as an example Caleb, who received his strength through communion with God. “Caleb’s strength” can be given also to us.



In nature, presenting the result of the workshops

On Friday, July 11, we began our day by learning about “Abigail’s Individuality.” Bro. Matyas Ferenc Csongor presented the wise way in which this woman worked to save her family. We were reminded of the influence every person has and were also advised to consider the influence we have on others.

The lecture “The Youth: Children of Light” was presented by Bro. Radu Ionita. The main idea was: The world is in darkness, so we have to be a light. We cannot become a light by ourselves, so we have to accept Christ in our lives, to become partakers of His divine nature and He will shine through us. We have to fight against our natural propensities, and to believe in the Lord and take up our cross. We all have opportunities before us and choices to make, but we have to make the most of them. Christ has to be our example; we have to let Him shine through us. In the workshops, our attention was focused on: The level of light we

have (Serbo-Croatian group), How can we become children of light? (Hungarian group), “How did the light of Christ shine in His life?” (German group), What do Jesus’ words, “Ye are the light of the world” mean for us? (English group), How can we lose the light and become darkness (Romanian group 1), and How can we keep the light and grow in it? (Romanian group 2). All of the groups had to think of the rays of light (the practical lessons) we had received the day before.

After the workshops drew to an end, we prepared ourselves for the Sabbath. At 7:30 p.m. we began our evening worship and the conference of the Italian Field was opened by the brethren Attilio Gastaldo and Giordano Tinta. Br. Gastaldo reminded us of the great joy the disciples had after Christ’s resurrection. We can have the same joy daily, exactly as the disciples did, if we begin the day with Jesus. His wish for everyone present was that

all should be a light, and that God might be with all.

From 8:15 we heard a sermon about “The Way of Salvation.” Bro. Emil Paul spoke about Jacob’s experience—about the ladder he saw in his dream, about his life in the house of Laban, his return home, and about his wrestling with God. The only way for Jacob’s salvation, as well as for ours, is through a serious, deep experience with the One whom Jacob saw at the end of the ladder.

The Sabbath morning worship was about “Joseph’s Life of Principle.” Bro. Novak Brajovic presented us the importance of principles in a young people’s life: Joseph would not have overcome the temptation which came through his master’s wife, if he had not had principles. His principle was to always do God’s will, and he received strength when he needed it.

The *Sabbath Bible Lessons* studied that morning were: “Our Need of Prayer” and “The Early Patriarchs.” We reviewed the first lesson together, and discussed the second in the workshop groups. After a break we began the Sabbath morning program. Before Bro. Marin Barbu began the sermon on “The Work of the Holy

Spirit in the Life of the Christian,” the young people’s choir sang the hymn “There’s a Land That Is Fairer than Day,” which they had prepared for this occasion. Brother Barbu’s sermon underlined the importance of the Holy Spirit in every believer’s experience. The Holy Spirit draws us to Calvary, and convinces us of our sin. We have to come to Jesus, to accept Him, and then our lives will prove that we have learned from Him.

During the afternoon, we had a song and praise program conducted by brethren S. Kiriakow and Hennady Melnychuk, when we enjoyed the songs and poems presented. Unfortunately, time was our



enemy and we had to stop, before all could present their praises.

The evening lecture was on “The New Earth—the Homeland of the Redeemed.” Brother David Zic underlined that heaven means not merely a beautiful landscape, but much more—the presence of Christ. The only upsetting thing is that many young people don’t bother about it. Therefore, they should become aware of the importance of their decision concerning eternal life. Everyone should decide to be steadfast, faithful and to be a coworker with God. Christ has to live in us, to be our “hope of glory.”

On Sunday morning, Bro. Vincent Lombard brought “Samuel’s Simplicity” to our attention. The strong moral principles this young man had were a shield against the evil influence of Eli’s sons. Simple, but resolute, he did the work entrusted him. He stood on God’s side. Samuel’s example contrasts with the example of Pilate, who did not know what to do with Christ. Young people have to decide what they want to do with Jesus, and we were advised not to delay this decision till our next meeting, because it might be too late.

Soon after this there was a baptism, when three souls made a covenant with God. Others made their decision to follow Jesus. Bro. Barbu read some encouraging words and reminded us in his sermon that Christ takes care of every tempted soul that asks for His help, because He knows what we feel, and we are precious to Him.

During the afternoon we visited some historical places of the Valley:

Collegio Dei Barba, the missionary school of the Waldenses, a Waldensian school where their children were educated and a cave, known as Ghieisa D’La Tana, where the Waldenses sought refuge from their persecutors. We also saw a monument that had been raised in memory of the day when the Waldenses decided to join the Protestant Reformation and decided to pay for the translation and printing of the Bible in the French language.

The evening worship was led by Bro. Radu Ionita who discussed Hebrews 11:36-39. He also expressed his wish that everyone of us should decide for himself to be on God’s side. This was our last evening worship in Bobbio Pellice.

On July 14, we began our day thinking about “Jonathan’s Abnegation.” Br. Marian Ionita directed our thoughts to the unselfish love which David and Jonathan had for each other. In the worst of moments, when David was about to lose his courage, Jonathan uplifted him. He willingly supported the one who was to become the king of Israel in his place. “May our names be written down in heaven beside the names of such self-sacrificing persons!” was the last thought shared in that last morning worship in Bobbio Pellice.

Looking back to the time we spent there, we can say with satisfaction that we spent blessed moments. May God abundantly bless each of those who participated, along with the young people! May everyone know the Light which led the Waldenses on their upward path!

Esther's Courage

Wednesday, July 9, 2003, Morning Worship

by Andrea Burisa
from Croatia—20 years old

In the old times, the Lord acted in an interesting way, through women united with other people chosen to be God's representatives in this world. He acted through women to win great victories. In some instances, even at moments of great urgency, He put them on the front lines, and, thanks to their efforts, many lives were saved. By queen Esther, God achieved a great deliverance for His people.

We all know the story about Esther. She was a humble Jewish woman who, thanks to God's providence, became the queen of Medo-Persia. She was in a privileged position, protected and safe, but was prepared to risk her life for the sake of her people. She succeeded and became a heroine, not only to her credit but also by the powerful hand of God.

Let us recall how Esther responded after hearing of the situation in which her people were, by reading Esther 4:15, 16:

"Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer: Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my

maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

What was Esther feeling at that moment? Was she having second thoughts? Did she panic? Was she complaining because of the risk by which she could have lost everything? No, she wasn't! She acted quickly, decisively, not trying to pass her duty onto someone else or perhaps by dealing with it in another way. But she was aware that all her efforts would be in vain unless God helps her. Therefore, Esther took time to talk to God, the source of her strength. She knew that real safety and protection lay in the hands of our merciful heavenly Father and His providence. He touched the heart of king Ahasuerus and arranged events for the sake of His people. Esther was supposed to stand before the king uninvited as a representative of her people. Mordecai told her: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

God had a plan for Esther, and He also has one for us all. He invites us to do something and we must be

ready to answer. He invited people in this history, and He does and will be doing the same until the period of His grace comes to an end.

The hard times that God's people went through were not confined only to Esther's days only, but will be repeated in the near future. We are living in the last days of this earth's history and we anticipate the soon-coming decree against all those "which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17). We will be persecuted, we will have to leave behind everything that we built during our lives, but Jesus encourages us with these words: "Blessed are they, which are persecuted for righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

The times that we expect to come are very similar to those in which Esther lived. King Ahasuerus, deceived by Haman, one of his men, signed the law against the Jews which is very similar to the law that we expect and therefore it is our duty to be brave as Esther was. No matter how hopeless the situation seemed, God gloriously protected His people through the hands of one single woman. She was practically alone as we will be, but the Lord worked in a mysterious way, and took care of His own.

Everybody's wish and prayer should be for the Lord to grant us the strength and the courage—Esther's courage—so that we can withstand the day when we will have to make a decision which will reveal how faithful and devoted we are to our Creator. We need this history of courage to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy of our souls just because we find it difficult to sacrifice what we possess and love in this world. Love towards God and His Holy Word should always come first to us, even above our very lives, as it was in queen Esther. May God in His grace and unlimited love help us achieve that. Amen.



Outing in the Mountains

Thursday, July 10, 2003

by Simona Panturoiu and Adrian Panturoiu

Writing from Italy—24 years old, 29 years old

Thursday, July 10, 2003, was the day most awaited by everybody: The excursion day. We got up at dawn and after the worship we took bags with food, and at 6:30 a.m. we were all ready to leave.

After driving a half-hour through a narrow and panoramic



way, we arrived at Villa Nova (1,223 meters above sea level), the departure point of our excursion. There a very beautiful waterfall welcomed us to the mountain world. After taking some group photos, we began our walk. We crossed the little Waldensian village formed by ancient stone houses,

and then we went on the mountain path which rises towards the "Conca del Pra" where we found the refuge Jervis (1,730 meters above sea level). There we made our first stop. The refuge lies in a wonderful green basin surrounded by a mountain chain with an altitude of over 3,000 meters and forms the border with France. Through many passes of this mountain chain the Waldensians did their long, wearing and dangerous travels. In this basin we had breakfast after prayer, warmed by the wonderful morning sun. After the pause the majority of the group

continued the excursion, having as their goal the top of the Palavas mountain (2,929 meters above sea level), on the border with France.


Now the path was even steeper, going over a wooded and grassy hill, until it reached the deep Pis valley, in the middle of which a stream of crystal clear water flows. The view which opened in front of our eyes was magnificent: Rare and colorful flowers, flocks of sheep and high mountain birds. After 2 hours of walking we made our second stop where we rested and praised God with spiritual hymns.

Then we left for the final goal, following the path which runs along one torrent, and after one hour of hard climbing we reached a spring of pure water. This was followed by another more difficult climb, and after another hour we reached the border crest: The goal of our excursion. From there our gaze swept toward France. After resting an hour, some of us reached a lonely top. And our climb finished.

On the way back a rather worrisome episode occurred. Some young boys did not follow the group and



ended up in one narrow and deep rocky defile, from which it was dangerous to come out. But thanks to God everything turned out well, and we all returned to Bobbio Pellice safe and sound.

Notwithstanding this unpleasant event, this excursion will remain an unforgettable day for all of us. 



Caleb's Strength

Thursday, July 10, 2003, Evening Worship

by Bruna Tuleu

Writing from Germany—21 years old

Who was Caleb? As we know, he was one of the twelve spies who had viewed the Promised Land at the beginning of the long journey through the wilderness. When the messengers returned to the camp they related what they had seen to the congregation saying: "We came onto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (Numbers 13:27). Was it a good place for the Israelites to live? Of course it was, we can say that it was

the best place for them to be since it was the land promised by God. But how did they continue their report? They said: "Nevertheless the people are strong that dwell in the land and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there" (verse 28). Caleb's immediate reaction to these doubts in God's promise was to encourage the people with the words: "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (verse 30). He considered God's promises to be superior to giants or walled



German group

cities. While Caleb was declaring that the Lord would give them the victory the Israelites wanted to stone him, but he stood firm and the Lord protected and delivered him from their hands.

Although 45 years later the power of the Canaanites had been broken and one by one the cities had been taken, the land was still occupied by the enemies of Israel. Joshua had to divide the whole land among the tribes—not only the part which they already conquered, but also the part which had not yet been subdued. It was the duty of each tribe to fully conquer its own inheritance. "If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511).

Joshua, the high priest and the heads of the tribes determined the location of each tribe by lot. On this occasion Caleb came forward, accompanied by the heads of his tribe, with a special claim. What did he ask for? In Joshua 14:10–12 we read, "I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spoke in that day: for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced."

Caleb did not ask for a place which had already been conquered, he actually asked for the place which was the most difficult to sub-

due, Hebron, the seat of the Anakims, whose height had terrified the spies, and destroyed the courage of the Israelites.

What were his motives in making such a request at 85 years of age? Does it not seem that he wanted to boast, thinking that despite his advanced age he could do this work much better than anyone else? No. Inspiration declares that "it was no desire for honor or aggrandizement that prompted Caleb's request" (*Ibid.*, pp. 512, 513). What was it, then? "The brave, old warrior was desirous of giving the people an example that would honor God, and encourage the tribes fully to subdue the land which their fathers had deemed unconquerable" (*Ibid.*, p. 513).

Thus Caleb gave an example for us. "Take courage, then, when the burden is heavy, when the work moves slowly, and temptations, strong and fierce, surge in upon you. Cease not your effort as long as there is one soul to be warned by your words, one soul to be benefited by your example" (*The Review and Herald*, August 28, 1883).

These two examples of Caleb's life reveal that he was courageous and had strength not only in his youth but also when he got older.

Caleb had the strong desire to enter the Promised Land. Let us consider what made him so courageous and gave him strength to achieve this aim:

He submitted himself to God's will and relied upon his guidance. He said "If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said" (Joshua 14:12). Caleb did not say: "I will go and if the Lord wants he

can come with me, if not I'll go alone." He wanted to do God's will only.

Furthermore, Caleb trusted God and believed in His promises (Joshua 14:9). Caleb "had believed God's promise that He would put His people in possession of Canaan and in this he had followed the Lord fully. He had endured with his people the long wandering in the wilderness, thus sharing the disappointments and burdens of the guilty; yet he made no complaint of this, but exalted the mercy of God that had preserved him in the wilderness" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 512).

Caleb's most notable feature was his living faith. "It was Caleb's faith that gave him courage, that kept him from the fear of man, and enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly in defense of the right" (*The Review and Herald*, May 30, 1912). "Though the cowards and rebels perished in the wilderness, the men of faith ate of the grapes of Eshcol" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 513). It is interesting to see that each received according to his faith. "The unbelieving had seen their fears fulfilled. Notwithstanding God's promise, they had declared that it was impossible to inherit Canaan, and they did not possess it. But those who trusted in God, looking not so much to the difficulties to be encountered as to the strength of their Almighty Helper, entered the godly land" (*Ibid.*, p. 513).

What about us today? We are also on the way to the Promised Land. Can we have the same strength and courage Caleb had to inherit the heavenly Canaan? Absolutely! "We may become

strong in the strength of Israel's God if we will believe and obey his word as did Caleb and Joshua. But if we are doubting, and unbelieving, and rebellious, as were the multitudes who fell in the wilderness, we shall be found unworthy to possess those mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for us" (*The Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1881). If we feel that we do not have the living faith which enables us to inherit the Promised Land then we should remember Christ's words: "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7).

Each one of us needs to ask for strength and grace from heaven in order to resist temptation. We are to receive our strength and courage to overcome obstacles in our lives that often seem impossible from the same source as Caleb. We cannot trust in ourselves. If we do, we will surely fail. Instead, let us keep Philipians 4:13 in mind: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

"It is through faith in [Christ's] might that we shall be made strong. . . . We have the assurance that His grace is sufficient for us, and that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear" (*The Signs of the Times*, March 6, 1884).

When the Lord tells us to go forward and not to lose courage on our journey, what should our answer be? Exactly what Caleb said: "If the Lord delights in us then he will bring us into this Land" (Numbers 14:8).

The Lord wants to bring us into the Promised Land, the best place for us to be.



Abigail's Individuality

Friday, July 11, 2003, Morning Worship

by Matyas Ferenc Csongor
From Hungary—25 years old.

And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal" (1 Samuel 25:19).

The scene of the story is in the time of David during the rule of Saul. While David and his men were in the wilderness of Paran, they protected from marauders the flocks and herds of a wealthy man named Nabal, who had vast possessions in that region. His character was churlish and niggardly. It was the time of sheepshearing, a season of hospitality. David and his men were in sore need of provisions. David sent messengers to Nabal and asked him for food. David and his men had been like a wall of protection to the shepherds and flocks of Nabal; and now this rich man was asked to furnish from his abundance some relief to the necessities of those who had done him such valuable service. David and his men might have helped themselves from the flocks and herds, but they did not. They had behaved themselves in an honest way. Their kindness, however, was lost upon Nabal, who refused their request with coarse words. In response, David became indignant and determined to punish the man

who had denied him what was his right, and had added insult to injury.

One of Nabal's servants hastened to Abigail, the wife of Nabal, after he had dismissed David's young men, and told her what had happened. Abigail sent to David the food that he had requested, and she went to him personally as well, but said nothing about this to her husband. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 664, 665.)

In the Bible we can find a short character sketch of Nabal and his wife: "Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings;

Her speech, seasoned with grace, and full of kindness and peace, shed a heavenly influence.

and he was of the house of Caleb” (1 Samuel 25:3).

What points can we observe?

a) Abigail did not tell her husband what she wanted to do. Why? She was “a woman of good understanding.” She knew that her husband would have argued with her; maybe he would have forbidden her to send food to that man whose request he had refused, and Abigail did not want to defy him or waste time in debate because something had to be done immediately.

b) Abigail sent the donkeys with the gift in advance. Why did she do that? She wanted to show her purpose, that she came with peace and not with the disposition of her husband, to divert the immediate danger. She wanted David to see as soon as possible that he did not need to attack Nabal and avenge the insult. This was “to clear the ground” for the talk with David. David had to calm not just his temper. The Lord wanted him to understand that he was headed in a wrong direction and He could employ Abigail because she “did not take to herself the credit of this reasoning to turn David from his hasty purpose, but gave to God the honor and the praise” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 666).

“These words could have come only from the lips of one who had partaken of the wisdom from above. The piety of Abigail, like the fragrance of a flower, breathed out all unconsciously in face and word and action. The Spirit of the Son of God was abiding in her soul. Her speech, seasoned with grace, and full of kindness and peace, shed a

heavenly influence. Better impulses came to David, and he trembled as he thought what might have been the consequences of his rash purpose. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God’ (Matthew 5:9). Would that there were many more like this woman of Israel, who would soothe the irritated feelings, prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom.

“A consecrated Christian life is ever shedding light and comfort and peace. It is characterized by purity, tact, simplicity, and usefulness. It is controlled by that unselfish love that sanctifies the influence. It is full of Christ, and leaves a track of light wherever its possessor may go. Abigail was a wise reprover and counselor. David’s passion died away under the power of her influence and reasoning. He was convinced that he had taken an unwise course and had lost control of his own spirit” (Ibid., p. 667).

c) Abigail was a wife like the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:23: “Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.”


She stood behind her husband, she helped him quietly, without making a big display, a good example of the well-known saying: “Behind every great man there is a great woman.” She did this despite the fact that she knew his faulty character. She was the mistress of the household. She took care of the home folks and she worried about a retributive attack on them that could come as a result of her husband’s bad attitude. She made the

sin of Nabal appear before David as if it were her own sin. 1 Samuel 25:24, 25: “Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be. . . . Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.” It was the job of the wife to run the farmstead and care for the guests. She sought to undo the unfriendly welcome even though it had occurred without her knowledge.

d) Summary

When we read this story maybe it seems negative at first that Abigail did everything “behind her husband’s back.” But the words of the servant explain her action. 1 Samuel 25:17: “Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.” His appeal,

“consider what thou wilt do” shows that it was necessary to do something immediately; it was no time to talk or to try to convince the husband, “for evil is determined”—she needed to do something urgently; surely David was on the way, there was no time to lose. This danger was “against our master, and against all his household”—the whole family, for whom she as the mistress was responsible, was in peril. “He is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him,” therefore there was no point in saying something to him or to try to convince him with nice words, since he would not listen to them.

There is something we can all learn from Abigail’s wisdom and tact. We all know at least one person who behaves at least sometimes as Nabal did. Let us cultivate that gracious fragrance of Spirit that made Abigail God’s peacemaker. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). 



Hungarian group

The Work Behind the Scenes

A word from one of the organizers of the IYC 2003

by Daniel Campodonico

Writing from Italy—37 years old.

The International Youth Conference held in Bobbio Pellice, Italy in July 2003, with the presence of 300 people for the Sabbath, was the biggest conference ever held in Italy and the biggest youth conference held in western Europe by the SDARM in the last 50 years. There were visitors from the following countries: Australia (12); Austria (5); Belgium (4); Canada (4); Croatia (11); France (7); Germany (32); Hungary (17); Italy (105); Moldova (5); Portugal (5); Romania (45); Serbia-Montenegro (6); Spain (19); Ukraine (1) and the USA (22). Among them there were also people living in Europe who were: Brazilian (2); Bulgarian (1); Ecuadorian (14) and Peruvian (6 people). And so in total there were people from 19 countries.

But why did the Italian Field decide to organize this International Youth Congress (IYC)? The Italian Field wanted to give the young people again the chance to meet in the important historical place of the Waldenses and in the mountains amid beautiful nature, where the 1994 IYC was held, and where many young people desired to come again for an IYC. We know that this IYC could be for the young people an important time for interaction, spiritual growth, recreation and sharing of Christian and missionary experi-

ences, etc. It could be an important experience that could give the young people more courage, enthusiasm and determination to follow Jesus and work for the Lord.

The official announcement was first made in January 2003 through the Electronic Sabbath School News (ESSN) (now known as RNN). That set in motion a steady stream of intense, busy work for us for six straight months. Requests for information and registration forms started to arrive. The exchange of e-mails, letters, fax between people and the writer in those six months totaled more than 700. All this work was done during the free time of the writer that it is not an employee of the church, so almost every evening and many, many late night hours were spent working for the preparation of the IYC.


The two leading ideas in the preparation of the IYC were: "Young People for Young People" and "Variety and Unity." It was our desire to involve the young people at all levels. That means not only as participants but also in the presentation of the lectures, worships, and so forth because we think that the good example and good words spoken by a youth has more effect on other youth. And it was our desire to prepare a program varied not only in the type of activities but by

giving opportunities to the brethren coming from different countries, different life experiences, and different environments to share their talents and letting others know that the message of Christ can break the walls of difference that inevitably exist among people in this fallen world.

Our desire was that all the young people that wanted to come could come. But we were aware that young people from countries with financial problems, such as found in the Eastern Europe countries (Hungary, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, Romania, etc.), and from other continents, had no possibility to pay the full price for accommodations and meals. For this reason we started to ask for offerings to be used to help the young people who had money problems. And we got a good response. Brethren from the USA, Italy, Australia and the German Union decided to invest money in these young people. We got US \$6,772 that was used to help 51 young people from Croatia, Hungary,

Moldova, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro and Ukraine. May God bless all who invested their means in these young people, making the best investment for the future.

All the major work organizing the IYC rested on the shoulders of people under 40 years of age. They invested a lot of time and some worked very hard, especially during the IYC. We were few and all tried to do their best but we are aware also that we made some mistakes and on some occasions could have done much better. We are sorry for this and we hope that the young people will pardon us for our mistakes and thank our heavenly Saviour for all that was good at the IYC.

But we cannot forget all the other people involved in the program, like speakers, translators that worked hard to translate the messages in six different languages and the musicians with their talents. We thank them all for their precious help and we pray the Lord to bless them to be able again in the future to use their talents for the glory of God. 



Italian group

What Did You Think of the IYC?

Interview with Bro. Etienne Lombard, from France, 18 years old, Wood Worker planning to study to be a Bible worker.

What did you like most about the IYC?

Meeting different people in Christ from different countries is very important for me. I loved speaking English with no help, and with a vocabulary so different than at school.

In your opinion, were the workshops constructive moments to discuss and study in depth some aspects of the lectures presented?

Workshops are not only moments to exchange some opinions about the subjects but we can have some interesting discussion too. It would be good to do it again.

Why did you decide to participate in the IYC?



French group

Because I wanted to be baptized (studies can help me) and I would like to meet young people.

Interview with Bro. Daniel Poropat, from Croatia, 28 years old, Musician, Local Church Secretary, Local Sabbath School Superintendent and Teacher.

What did you like most about the IYC?

Most of all, that so many young people came. This confirms that young people can and want to follow Jesus in order to live a more complete life in Him—a life absolutely better than the life which the world offers. Then I can add that the truth and the youth in the middle of nature is the best way to have a Youth Conference.

In your opinion, what is necessary to do to improve the quality of an IYC?

Each of us should individually avail ourselves of the International Youth Congress to deepen the presented studies to improve our knowledge and ourselves. This way we can improve the overall quality of the whole experience.

In your opinion, were the workshops constructive moments to discuss and to study in depth some aspects of the lectures presented?

Surely the workshops were the moments best used, in which the youth were really ready to open themselves and share their thoughts and ideas. It was very surprising

that they put forward quality projects, which would be a great success among the youth in the world should they be carried out with the help of God.

How did you feel among many young people that you did not know before?

When I find myself in the middle of so many young people I don't know, since they are in the faith, I have a very nice and special feeling, which gives me safety/security. When I see many people I don't know, I always think one thing: "It's very nice to think that these brothers and sisters think as I do, or even better. We believe the same truth although I don't know them." Therefore I always feel at ease.

Interview with Bro. Marcos Solorzano, Ecuadorian living in Italy, 38 years old, Accountant, Local Young People Secretary and Deacon.

What did you like most about the IYC?

In these kinds of congress the topics to be set forth play a very important role. I think that the studies were ideal for me, and left an impression on me. The punctuality in everything was another thing I liked.

In your opinion, what is necessary to do to improve the quality of an IYC?

Without any doubt, it was a very well organized congress, especially in light of the complexity of different languages and cultures. Order and discipline were maintained. . . . Each group should always have its official translator.

Do you think that the time assigned for lectures, worships, studies, workshops, outings and free time was well-balanced?

I think yes, because the methods used made all the participants



Romanian group



Australian group



Spanish group

active. All of us made the most of this opportunity to make friends and to observe nature, the Creator's handiwork.

In your opinion, was the place chosen for the IYC a suitable place for such a conference?


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Yes, I totally agree that it was a suitable place, as it was a place of great events, where our Waldensian brethren took shelter and offered their lives for the Gospel. These events revive our hope of salvation.

Interview with Sister Catherine Thiel, from Australia, 21 years old, Legal Secretary, West Australia Mission Field Secretary and Local Sabbath School Superintendent.

What did you like most about the IYC?

The mountain hike was a real experience. It was wonderful to see for myself the valleys of the Waldenses and know why they loved their valleys so much. The meetings were a special blessing as well and it was good to meet with other young people of like faith around the world. The European youth are not much different from the Australian youth, and for that I was glad. 

MOVING?

Please let us know.