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## Caring for the carers

Anna studied nursing and is currently working in the Clinical Directorate of the Campus Bio-Medico University Hospital (Rome): “In a way, my ‘patients’ now include the doctors, nurses, and administrative staff working with me.”

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“Thanks to the people I met at the Campus, I saw the spirit of the Work come to life, drew closer to God, and understood my vocation.”

Anna, a Roman who grew up in the Colli Aniene neighborhood, works in the Clinical Directorate of the Campus Bio-Medico University Hospital. “I learned about the Campus Bio-Medico from my mother,” Anna recalls. “She told me about a nursing open house in 1998-99. I went and met a newly graduated nurse who had already volunteered abroad. I was fascinated. I’ve always wanted to care for people in a very practical way, which is why I decided to become a nurse.

“When I was a child, I was a Scout, and I was especially active in a nautical group. I’ve always been passionate about the mountains. During my first year of university, when I began hospital internships, I left the Scouts but continued receiving formation by participating in a club led by an associate.”

## **Formation and commitment**

“Even in high school, I was searching for my path. From my time in the Scouts, I felt deep in my heart that God was asking something of me, but I didn’t know what. In the Work, I found both Christian formation and spiritual direction, which I had never received in that way before, and also the radical call to live the Gospel in what I already had: my daily life.

“I didn’t think I had a vocation to the Work,” Anna recalls. “I thought I’d need to go on a mission to some remote country in Africa. In a short time, I discovered the beauty of the Work as a family and understood where my place was within the Church, the place where I felt at home. Then, during a three-day spiritual retreat near Rome, in Genzano, I realized that God was calling me to a beautiful, exclusive love within the Work. A few weeks

later, at the end of the novena to the Immaculate Conception in 2001, I asked for admission as an associate.”

## **Caring for the caretakers**

Today, Anna is Head of Quality at the hospital and a researcher in nursing sciences: “On the one hand, I have the opportunity to be with students through lectures, thesis projects, or mentoring, and that’s very fulfilling,” she says. “On the other hand, I work in different areas of the hospital that keep me in contact with many people.

When I miss interacting with patients, I remind myself that I’m working for them, for the quality of their care, and in a way, my ‘patients’ now include the doctors, nurses, and administrative staff working with me.”

Part of Anna’s job is working with hospital staff to promote continuous

quality improvement and to listen and respond to requests for help or feedback on what is going well or poorly: “I spend time listening so I can take care of the people who care for others and help students with their issues, including challenges with patient care, unexpected events during their internships, or difficulty in passing an exam. Sometimes, I wish I could do more for my colleagues, for the patients, and for the people we care for who come through our hospital. At those times, it helps to remember that behind everything I do, there are people, patients, students, and that I can turn my work, whatever it may be, into prayer for everyone and everything, and leave the rest to God.”

## **Transmitting love without many words**

Anna is passionate about international cooperation and a

member of the Bioethics Center at the Campus. She is a professor of Bioethics in the nursing program: “A while ago, I gave a lecture on preventing euthanasia. After the lecture, several students approached me and confided that they had recently lost their mother or father or had loved ones who were ill. From this dialogue with the students, together with other professors, we had the idea to celebrate a Mass for loved ones who were deceased or ill. At that Mass, the priest read out each student’s prayer intentions. They were very happy, and it was a beautiful way for them to experience the fact that we are here for them and that we care about them.

“One of the reasons I am grateful for the Campus is that, over the years, it has also given me the opportunity to care for the people I love, my family in the Work, my parents, siblings, relatives, and friends during times of

need and even during the pandemic, allowing me to practice what our Father said: ‘We will never spare any effort for our sick brothers. If necessary we would steal a piece of heaven for them...’

“I believe that our union with God can be very simple and very real, and it is essential for everything else. Prayer is everything. Whatever the difficulty, in every circumstance, ask for help. Whatever the joy, in every circumstance, give thanks. I try to convey God’s love through my life, work, friendship, and affection, without many words, and when time seems short, it helps to remember that we can be sowers of peace and joy even with small gestures, with a smile. I think this is the first form of apostolate and the first way to care, and it can be done in any way and every context.”

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