

Marpod, Advent 2022

Dear friends,

Catalin must not come home for the next three days. His wife Laura has banned him. Both of them „grew up“ at ELIJAH. Catalin learned to play the drums with great enthusiasm. He became at home in the Social Centre through his music, and he pitched hungrily into the warm midday meals provided for the students. Here he felt secure, found the strength to study and managed to graduate. Laura, for her part, enjoyed the dance group. When she floated across the parquet floor with graceful steps, she could forget the squalor in the clay hut. But lacking a closet at home, she had to leave her colourful costume behind in the Social Centre after every dance class.

When the young girl became pregnant, her friend walked out on her. But Laura and Catalin found each other, started a family and got two children. They have lived in an ELIJAH house in the „Cartier Caroline“ in Nou for two years now. Eleven young families have been accepted here and can now give their children what they themselves lacked. It was still a hard life for Laura and Catalin. At last, he found work, but Laura could barely care properly for the children with his meagre earnings. She thought of a solution: should not the man who had abandoned her with her first child pay his share? But he brushed her off: the child is no longer his business – he even threatened to give her a beating. Even so, she visited her child’s father once more to plead with him. School was to start and she needed shoes for the child. When she returned home, there stood Catalin, jealous and enraged. „Why do you always go to that guy?“ The quarrel escalated until Laura saw only one way out: „Catalin, get out! You can return when you have calmed down.“

This reaction is actually quite unusual. In the patriarchal system in these parts, young women have not much of a say in matters. They are like fair game; the men see them as their property. An adage says: „He who loves his wife, beats her.“ Women cannot just go out and meet with their friends. Even out on the street they will not pause to chat with others, they hurry home right away. Day by day, they must fight for their own and their many children’s survival. If they once dare to resist, they will be beaten.

From where does Laura get the strength to fight for her child? For the last seven years, we have established the „Clubul Mamelor”, the Mothers' Club. Once a week, the mothers from three villages meet in the Casa Martin, Casa Nova and the Casa Susanna. Slowly, they have gained confidence and can discuss their daily worries. More and more mothers take part. How good it feels to listen and pour one's heart out to one another. To weep together. Not to be judged. To see that they are not alone with their problems.

Madalina manages the „Mothers' Club” in the Social Centre Martin; she has encouraged Laura and many other young women to stand up and fight for their rights and for their children. They discuss schooling, education, rearing of children and also family planning. It is as if they would suddenly discover a whole new world.

In case of conflicts, the mothers and children can stay in their homes. The fathers cannot just turn the mothers out on the street with their children as usual, because the residence contracts in „Cartier Caroline” are drawn up with the mothers. Lucky for self-confident Laura and her family.

Mary with the child so small, give thy blessings to us all.
Merry Christmas, Crăciun fericit!

Fr. Georg Sporschill SJ



In the Club of the courageous Mothers, there is also a Father. And Khesha is learning to write.

