

Only a shopping list required to “adopt a family”

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Is the crisis still being felt? Certainly! Particularly in the stomach. In one year, the number of people using the “Banco Nonsolopane” (“Not-only-bread counter”) has gone from 1886 to 2295, an increase of 20%; the people are mainly Italians that have fallen below the poverty line. Thus, on the tenth anniversary of its foundation, marking a decade of its praiseworthy work of collecting and distributing staple commodities, the association has decided to become even more effective by creating a “direct relationship” between those in difficulty, and those who want to provide direct help, other than giving money.

The idea that the association has come up with is “Adopt a Family – Share your needs, share your lives” (with the support of the Cariplo Foundation), which does not stop at asking the people of Varese to collect non-perishable foodstuffs, but invites them to take part in a project intended to “create a relationship between ‘adoptive families’, those who collect and donate foods, and ‘adopted families’, those who receive the help,” explains the president of the association, Andrea Benzoni.

The project is like sponsorship, but only in the general sense. Each month, every adoptive family or person can help to provide for all or some of the needs of an adopted family or person, to cover the cost of maintenance and of essentials.

The difference is the method. For example, the “adopters” receive a “shopping list”, precise indications, in terms of type and quantity, of what they have to buy: 2kg of biscuits, 3kg of pasta, 1L of oil, and so on. The organisation also gives a general indication of the cost of the items, which are all strictly non-perishable, that the people should keep to in order not to exceed the budget.

The “shopping basket” supplied by the “Banco Nonsolopane” has quite precise characteristics: on one side, there is the list of products and a summary of the costs, on the other, a barcode that identifies who the adopted and adoptive people are, and the fact that the basket has reached its destination; there is also personalised monitoring of how regularly the goods arrive and of any needs. The basket filled with what is required, is delivered by the adoptive families to the association, which checks the quantities and expiry dates, and delivers it, in turn, to the recipient families; the two families may subsequently decide to meet each other, at which point the basket can be delivered directly.

Between September 2009 and March 2010, the project, an idea entirely from Varese, underwent an initial testing phase, which involved 50 “adopting” families and 10 “adopting” schools, for a dozen “experimental” families. Now, after technical

adjustments, the initiative can be extended to everyone; this is going to happen officially on Saturday 15 May 2010, in Piazza San Vittore, in Varese, where “Nonsolopane” will be present with a gazebo and an exhibition, from 10.30 am to 6.30 pm; some of the 100 volunteers will be there to provide information to anyone that wants to know more, or that wants to join the initiative.

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