

PRESS RELEASE - 22 January 2020

CHIARA LUBICH: AN EXTREMELY RELEVANT MESSAGE

100 years ago today Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement was born in Trento, Italy

Current Focolare President Maria Voce reflects on the significance of this centenary.

In a world in which “currents of division and narrow political interests are continually emerging” and “new walls and new frontiers continue to appear”, Chiara Lubich’s message of unity is “extremely relevant”. This is the heart of Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement’s video message to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Focolare founder.

“A woman who lived so that all people in the world could rediscover one another as brothers and sisters. She lived so as to build the family of God’s children, united by mutual love ... establishing relationships with all the people she met, not stopping at differences in culture, religion, sex, ethnicity or age. Chiara was convinced that God is the Father of all and so all people are brothers and sisters”.

Rather than remembering Chiara in a “nostalgic” way, the current President invites all who have met Chiara Lubich’s charism to live the main characteristic of the Focolare: “to be people who can create relationships and welcome others without prejudices, without preconceptions and without agendas, and be bridges for others”.

This invitation reflects the motto chosen by the Movement for the centenary: “Celebrate to meet”.

On 22nd January, and throughout the whole Centenary year, the Focolare around the world will be marking this anniversary in the most varied ways: **conferences** to highlight the impact of Chiara Lubich’s charism in different fields of human endeavour, **social and political initiatives, ecumenical and inter-religious** meetings.

In the **USA**, an interactive event entitled “A hearth for the human family” in San Antonio on 17 January, explored how a spirituality of unity may help to build community within a context of increasing cultural and political polarization. “Journeying in Dialogue” was a British interreligious event on 18 January jointly organized by the youth of Christian and Sikh schools in the English city of Birmingham, including testimonies of building unity inspired by the Focolare’s spirituality. Many the religious celebrations commemorating Chiara Lubich. In the **Philippines**, a Catholic Mass was planned to take place on 19 January in the international Focolare town of “Pace”, in **Tagaytay**. Due to the eruption of the **Taal vulcano**, the population was evacuated, so the Mass was celebrated in **Manila**, with the city’s Archbishop, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

A particularly significant event will be the visit of the **President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella on 25 January to Trento**, the birthplace of the Focolare founder, during a meeting for the city entitled "Trento meets Chiara".

This year dedicated to the Centenary was inaugurated in Trento itself on 7 December 2019 with the opening of the "**Chiara Lubich City World**" exhibition, which will run until 7 December 2020 in the city's "Gallerie" gallery.

Alongside this, similar exhibitions will be held throughout the year in different parts of the world. In the **Holy Land**, from 29 February to 14 March the centenary exhibition will be hosted by the Custodial Curia in St Saviour's Monastery, **Jerusalem**. From there, the exhibition moves to **Algeria**, where it will demonstrate a particular focus on Christian-Islamic dialogue. It will be inaugurated in **Algiers** on 16 May 2020, which has been declared "International Day of Living Together in Peace" by the UN General Assembly, at the suggestion of an Algerian Sufi community. Throughout the month of August "Chiara Lubich City World" will be displayed in **Sao Paulo, Brazil** at the *Circolo Italiano* exhibition hall. Subsequently the exhibition will open in **Mexico City, Nairobi-Kenya, Mumbai-India and Sidney-Australia**.

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