

FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

These pages contain the texts published on the focolare.org website before its restyling in November 2018. These texts are divided into sections according to topics, and the greater part of them were inserted on the website in 2011 when the previous update of the Focolare web space was made. They contain news and dossiers that can be useful to those who want to know more about the Movement's different realities.

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“MAY THEY ALL BE ONE!” (GV 17, 21)

A plan of God

As Chiara Lubich recalled the first 30 years of her ‘Yes’ to God she confessed “On the 7th December 1943, the day I ‘married’ God I never imagined all that I can see today”. Marrying God was everything for her. She never gave a thought to founding a movement or setting up an association of some kind. She certainly never envisaged giving life to a project that spread from her town and opened up to other nations out towards a united world.

Chiara described an early inspiration: “From a high viewpoint I looked down on my city and studied the panorama. I felt a strong desire stir in my heart: to see Trent alight with the fire of love, real love, love that links all as brothers, that brotherhood that the charism of unity would be able to accomplish. This idea filled my heart.”

It was in the city of Trent that the ideal of unity took shape, and it was within the various quarters of the city, the villages surrounding it that the community of the Movement was called to work. Chiara’s writing from that time expresses her desire.

*‘The great attraction of modern times:
to penetrate to the highest contemplation
while mingling with everyone,
one person alongside others.
I would say more; to lose oneself in the crowd
in order to fill it with the divine,
like a piece of bread*

dipped in wine.

I would say even more:

Made sharers in God's plans

For humanity,

To embroider patterns of light on the crowd,

And at the same time to share with our neighbour

Shame, hunger, troubles, brief joys.

From this localised start a global effort to work for universal brotherhood has grown. It's no surprise that over the years, driven by the inspiration of the founder, a number of 'urban projects' have developed. These projects are an enacting of a powerful writing of Chiara's in which she describes what cities could be like if they were ablaze with love:

"If a city were set alight at various points – Chiara writes – even by small fires, but they managed to resist being put out, soon the city would be aflame." A fire of spirit, "the continual triumph of God" in souls "unity among them" are "a divine power in the world". This possibility can be brought to everyone, "In every city these souls could spring up in families: father and mother, son and father, mother and mother-in-law. They could meet in parishes, associations, in social bodies, in schools, in offices, everywhere. It is not necessary for them to be saints already, or Jesus would have said so." But "one city is not enough" she wrote later: "he is the one who made the stars, who guides the destiny of ages. Come to an agreement with him, and aim further: at your country, at everyone's country, at the world. Let your every breath be for this; for this your every action; for this your resting and your moving."

A number of cities where the presence of the movement is very strong have given their projects titles. The first was in Trent –Trento Ardente, then Rome – Roma Amor, Prague – Praga d’oro, and Fontem – Fontem Regale. In various other cities around the world Chiara has indicated a sort of ‘vocation’ for a city, such as London, Washington and Geneva. Each project is developed in its own style specific to how that city is called to unity.

In the Mariapolis (Focolare summer gathering) of 1959, at which there were 500 people present from the 5 continents, Chiara said, “If one day all people, not as individuals but as nations, would learn to put themselves aside, to put aside the ideas they have about their own countries, their kingdoms, and offer them as incense to the Lord, the king of a kingdom not of this world, the guide of history, (...) that day would mark the beginning of a new era.”

Chiara Lubich and her Movement continued to work for this growing of humanity becoming universal brotherhood. On a visit to Fontem in the Cameroons in 2000 Chiara explained a ‘dream’ she had. Those who were present recalled how moved she was as she told them: “What is my latest desire for now, today? I would like that at the end of time the Work of Mary (Focolare Movement) ready to meet Jesus Forsaken – Risen, I too could repeat those moving words said by the Belgian theologian Jacques Leclercq; ‘ on your day, my God I want to come to You, ... come to you my God (...) and with my fullest dreams, bring you the world in my arms.’ ‘Father may they all be one!’.

Chiara Lubich: I have a dream

On the threshold of the new millennium the founder of the Focolare Movement spoke about her hope-filled dream for the future. Although we are immersed in the dramatic events that trouble humanity today, we want to make this dream our own.

“Seeing what the Holy Spirit has done with us and with many other spiritual and social “enterprises” that are at work the Church today, I cannot but hope that He will continue to act now and always with the same generosity and magnanimity. And this holds true not only for brand new works that will arise from his love, but also for the development of those that already exist, like our own.

Meanwhile, I dream that the atmosphere in our Church will be more suited to her identity as the Bride of Christ; a Church which can be seen by the world as being more beautiful, more one, more holy, more charismatic, more akin to Christ her Spouse. I dream of her being a beacon for humanity. And I dream of seeing in her a holiness of the people, never seen before.

I dream that the lived siblinghood, that is gaining momentum today in the consciences of millions of people, will be practised more widely across the globe, so that in the third millennium it will be a general, universal reality.

Consequently, I dream of fewer wars and conflicts, less hunger, and the reduction of the thousand other evils in the world.

I dream of an ever more intense dialogue of love among the Churches so that the formation of the one Church is seen to be close at hand.

I dream of a more living and active dialogue among people of the most varied religions linked to one another by love, by “the Golden Rule” present in all their sacred texts.

I dream of greater encounter and mutual enrichment among the various cultures in the world, so that they may give rise to a world culture that highlights those values which have always been the true wealth of individual peoples, and I dream that these values will be seen by all as global wisdom.

I dream that the Holy Spirit will continue to enrich the Churches and strengthen the “seeds of the Word” beyond them, so that the world may continually receive new light, life, and works which He alone can give. So that ever-greater numbers of men and women may set out towards straight paths, converging on their Creator, and putting their hearts and souls at his disposal.

I dream of Gospel-based relationships not only among individuals, but also among groups, movements, religious and lay associations; among peoples and among States, so that it becomes logical to love other people’s countries as our own; and logical to tend towards a universal communion of goods, at least as a goal to reach.

[..] In a word, I dream of already witnessing the new heavens and new earth, as far as this is possible here on earth. I am dreaming of many things, but we have a millennium to see them come true.”

Chiara Lubich

CHIARA LUBICH AND CO-FOUNDERS

Chiara Lubich, the founder

Who is Chiara?

When she consecrated her life to God on December 7, 1943, the young teacher, Silvia Lubich never imagined that a few decades later, four popes would speak so highly of her and her spiritual family.

She didn't have any idea what she would see and experience in her 88 years of life here on earth. She didn't have any idea that she would have millions of followers. She never imagine that she and her friends would reach 182 countries.

Could she ever have thought that she would inaugurate a new season of communion in the Church and open channels of ecumenical dialogue that had never been seen before? Much less could she have imagined that her spiritual family would include the faithful of other religions and people without any religious affiliation. Chiara never thought about starting a movement.

On December 7, 1943, Chiara Lubich only had the feelings of a beautiful young woman who was in love with her God and was about to enter into a marriage pact that would be sealed with three red carnations. Could she have imagined the crowds of people of all ages, races, and backgrounds who would follow her on her trips around the world and know her only as "Chiara"? Could she ever have imagined in the small city of Trent that her mystical intuitions would one day create a culture of unity for a multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious society? Chiara Lubich was a trail-blazer. As a laywoman in the Church she proposed themes and openings

that were much later embraced by the Second Vatican Council. In a global society she pointed to universal brotherhood at a time when no one was talking about encounters among cultures. She honoured life and sought the meaning of suffering. She mapped out a path of religious and civil holiness that could be followed by anyone, not only the privileged few.

At the 1977 Eucharistic Congress in Italy she said: “A pen never knows what it will write, a brush never knows what it will paint and a chisel never knows what it will sculpt. When God takes someone into his hands in order to accomplish a new work in his Church, the person doesn’t know what she will do. I think this might be my case: I’m only the tool.”

She added: “There were such abundant fruits and vast spreading which seemed disproportionate to any human effort or planning. There were many crosses, but also many fruits. The human instruments that God uses often have a thing or two in common: They’re generally small and weak. As he moves them around in his hands, the Lord shapes them through countless joys and sorrows. He makes them more and more pliable to the task until they reach a very deep and certain knowledge of themselves and of God. They can say with confidence: I am nothing; God is everything. When this adventure began in Trent, Italy, I didn’t have any plans, I didn’t have anything in mind. The idea of the Movement was in God’s mind and its design came from Heaven.”

The Focolare Movement began with Chiara Lubich who was born on January 22, 1920 in Trent, Italy and died on March 14, 2008 in Rocca di Papa, Italy, surrounded by the love of her people.

Chiara and the beginnings of the Focolare Movement

Silvia, the baptismal name given to Chiara, was born in Trent on January 22, 1920. She was the second of four children: Gino, Liliana and Carla. Her father, Luigi Lubich, had worked as a wine-seller and typesetter. He was an anti-fascist and socialist. Her mother, Luigia, possessed a strong traditional faith. After studying medicine her older brother, Gino, joined the Resistance in the Garibaldi Brigade. Later, he dedicated himself to journalism at the Communist newspaper, L'Unità.

At the age of 18 Silvia received her teaching certificate with full marks. She wished to continue her studies and applied for admission to a Catholic University but came in last in scholarship lottery. Since there was not enough money in the Lubich family to pay for her education in another city, Silvia was forced to find a job. During the 1940-1941 school year she taught elementary school at the Opera Seraphica in Trent.

The definitive start of her spiritual adventure was her experience at the Marian Shrine of Loreto, Italy, in 1939: "I had been invited to a meeting for Catholic Action students in Loreto," Chiara recounts, "where, according to tradition, the little house of the Holy Family is preserved within the walls of a great fortress-like cathedral. I attended the course with everyone else at the nearby college, but whenever possible I ran to the little house. As I knelt beside a wall blackened by vigil lamps, something new, something divine was enveloping me and nearly crushing me. I contemplated in my mind the virginal life of the three. Each thought pressed down on me and squeezed my heart. I shed uncontrollable tears. During every

break in the conference I felt driven to rush to the little house. Then the last day arrived. The church was filled with young people. A thought came clearly to mind, a thought that was never erased: "I will make you be followed by a host of virgins."

When she returned home from Loreto Chiara went to her students and the parish priest who had been following her so closely. When they saw how radiant and happy she appeared they asked if she had discovered her vocation. Chiara's answer disappointed the priest, because she only told him about the vocations she didn't feel called to: the convent, matrimony and consecration to God in the midst of the world. It was all that she could discern at that moment.

In the years after Loreto – 1939 to 1943 – Silvia continued to work, study and be involved in serving the local Church. When she became a Third Order member she took the name Chiara (Clare).

In 1943, while on her way to fetch some milk at the White Madonna farm, Chiara suddenly felt God's call as she stood frozen in her tracks beneath a railroad overpass: "Give yourself totally to me." She didn't waste any time and immediately asked permission from Capuchin Father Casimiro Bonetti to consecrate herself to God forever. After a long and deep conversation with the priest she finally obtained permission. On December 7, 1943, at six o'clock in the morning she consecrated her to God. Chiara didn't have the slightest intention of founding anything; she was simply "marrying" God and that was everything for her. Only later did this day come to be identified as the symbolic beginning of the Focolare Movement.

During the next few months many young people were drawn to Chiara and a number of them wanted to follow in her footsteps: Natalia Dallapiccola was the first, then Doriana Zamboni and Giosi Guella, Graziella De Luca and the sisters, Gisella and Ginetta Calliari; another pair of sisters were the Ronchettis, Valeria and Angelella, Bruna Tomasi, Marilen Holzhauser and Aletta Salizzoni. This was all taking place while the little house, the focolare (hearth) was still totally undefined – except for Chiara’s “radical manner of living the Gospel.”

In those months there was war in Trent, bringing misery and death. Chiara and her new companions had the custom of meeting in the same air-raid shelter during air attacks. They wished to be together in living the Gospel after their overwhelming discovery that had led them to place God-Love at the centre of their life. “Every event touched us very deeply,” Chiara would later recount. “The lessons that God was giving to us through the circumstances of war were so clear: Everything passes away. But God seemed to place a question in our hearts: ‘Is there an ideal we could live for that no bomb could destroy, which we could wholeheartedly commit ourselves to?’ Yes, God, and He is Love. We decided to make God-Love our ideal in life.”

One day, taking shelter from the bombs in a darkened cellar beneath the home of Natalia Dallapiccola, they were reading the Gospel. They opened it at random to the prayer of Jesus to the Father on the night before he died: “That all may be one, Father” (Jn 17:21). It is a fascinating text that has been studied by scholars and theologians from through the Christian world. But in those days it was neglected because of its

mysterious language. “But to us those words seemed to illumine, one by one,” Chiara writes, “and they planted a certainty in our hearts that we had been somehow born for that specific page of the Gospel.”

A few months earlier, on January 24th, a priest had asked Chiara: ‘When do you think Jesus suffered the most?’ Chiara answered: ‘When he sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane.’ But the priest corrected her: ‘No, Jesus suffered most when he cried out from the Cross: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”(Mt 27:46)’. As soon as the priest left and she was alone with her friend, Doriana, she said: “We only have one life, let’s choose and follow Jesus in this moment of his abandonment.’ From then on Jesus Forsaken would be Chiara’s spouse in life.

Meanwhile, the unrest caused by the war was not letting up. Most of the young women’s families fled to the mountain valleys. But their daughters decided to stay in Trent – some because of work or school, and some like Chiara to stay with the people who had gathered around them whom they did not want to abandon. Chiara stayed with an acquaintance until the following September when she found a flat at 2 Piazza Cappuccini on the outskirts of Trent. This is where some of her new friends – Natalia Dallapiccola and others went to live. It was the first hearth (focolare), a modest two-room apartment in the clearing shaded by trees down the hill from the Capuchin church. At that time they called it the “little house” in honour of the house of Loreto.

The young women living in the little house and those outside noted a qualitative change in their lives during those

months. It seemed that Jesus was fulfilling his words: “Indeed, where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). They never wanted to lose him and avoided anything that might cause them to lose his presence among them. This is the ‘focolare’ whose Fire of Love warms everyone’s heart and whose Light satisfies everyone’s mind. “But to have him among us,” Chiara explained, “we need to give our lives for each other. Jesus is in our midst when we are united in his love. He said: ‘May they be one in us, so that the world may believe.’”

A large number of people had joined Chiara and the young women of the focolare in the project of unity which was just beginning to take shape. There were numerous conversions, vocations that were saved and new ones that blossomed. Almost immediately, children, teenager and adults had joined together in following the young women in the focolare. What remains most in everyone’s memory from those days is the crowded and intense Saturday-afternoon gatherings at three o’clock in Massaia Hall. There, Chiara would share her experiences of living the Gospel and the first discoveries of what would later become her “spirituality of unity.” By 1945, some 500 people – of all ages, vocations and social backgrounds – shared the same ideal as the young women in the focolare. They put their spiritual and material possessions in common, as the first Christians had done.

The Gospel promises: “Give and there will be gifts for you” (Lk 6:38). These words were translated into daily life. The young women from the focolare and their friends were giving and receiving on a daily basis. Once, there was only one egg in

the house. They gave it to a poor man who had knocked at their door. Later that same morning someone left a bag on their doorstep. It was filled with eggs! It is also written: "Ask and it will be given to you" (Mt 7:7). And so they asked, not so much for themselves, but for their needy brothers and sisters. Even in the midst of war they received sacks of flour, cartons of milk, bottles of jam, bundles of firewood and clothing. It was never rare in that focolare to find the table set to welcome not the usual honoured guests, but the often dishonoured poor who sat between focolarine who were there to serve them.

On the feast day of Christ the King, 1945, Chiara and her companions knelt around an altar. They turned to Jesus with the simplicity of children of the Father and prayed: "Jesus, you know how your prayer for unity can be accomplished. Here we are: If you like, use us." The liturgical readings of that day had grabbed their imagination: "Ask me and I will give you all the lands of the earth for your inheritance" (Ps 2:8). In an evangelical spirit of simplicity they asked for the farthest corners of the earth. They believed that God was all-powerful, and their way of life fascinated anyone who met them.

All this did not go unnoticed by the city with its few thousand residents, nor by the Church of Trent. Archbishop Carlo De Ferrari understood Chiara and her new adventure, and gave his blessing. His blessing and approval accompanied the Movement until the day of his death.

From that moment, almost imperceptibly, new frontiers opened in the local region, and there were invitations to Milan, Rome and Sicily.

Chiara died on March 14, 2008 in Rocca di Papa, Italy, surrounded by the love of her people. The news of her death spread quickly among the members of her spiritual family around the world, who were united in prayer.

In the days that followed thousands of people, from plain working men to political and religious leaders, began to arrive in Rocca di Papa to honour her. The funeral was held in the Roman Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls, but it was unable to hold the huge crowd that had arrived (over 40,000 people). The Secretary of State presided at the Eucharistic Celebration that was con-celebrated by 9 cardinals, 40 bishops and hundreds of priests. Cardinal Bertone read the message sent by Benedict XVI in which the Pope described Chiara as a "Woman of intrepid faith, a meek messenger of hope and peace".

Chiara's Cause of Beatification was opened on January 27, 2015. His words always resound: "At the end of time, when the Work of Mary is prepared in its compact unity to appear before the forsaken and risen Jesus, I would like it to be able to say: On your day, my God, I shall come to you. . . . I shall come to you, my God. . . . with my wildest dream fulfilled: to bring you the world in my arms. That all may be one!"

Igino Giordani (1894-1980)

Igino Giordani – "Foco"

Igino Giordani is a singular figure in the history of the Focolare. An antifascist, librarian, husband and father of four children, he was Christian involvement in politics, a journalist and a writer, pioneer of the Ecumenical Movement. He was also a well-known polemicist for the Catholic side.

Although a lover of peace, Igino Giordani became an officer in the First World War where he was wounded and awarded a medal of honour. After the Second World War, as an anti-fascist, he was forced into exile but later became elected to the Italian Constituent Assembly. He was the one credited with bringing lay married people and families into the Focolare as active members, opening the Movement – in a certain sense – to the entire human family. For these and other reasons, Chiara Lubich considered him a co-founder of the Focolare Movement.

His encounter with Chiara took place in his office at the Office of Deputies in Montecitorio, in September 1948. He was going through a particularly difficult moment in his life, both spiritually and politically: ““I studied religious topics with a passion,” he writes in his *Memorie di un cristiano ingenuo*, “but mostly so that I would not have to think about my soul whose appearance wasn’t very edifying. It was burdened with boredom and, in order not to have to admit to its paralysis, I buried myself in books and tired myself with activity. I believed this was all I could do. I had grasped and possessed a bit from all the areas of religious culture: apologetics, ascetics, mysticism, dogmatics and morality.. but I possessed them only as a matter of culture. They weren’t integrated with my life.”

That day quite an assorted group appeared at his desk, whose originality immediately struck someone like Giordani who was rather expert on ecclesial life: a Conventual Franciscan, a Friar Minor, a Cappuchin, a man from the Third Order and a woman from the Third Order (Chiara). He would later write: “To see them united in such harmony already

appeared like a miracle of unity!” Chiara spoke first, while perceiving the courteous skepticism of the deputy: “I was sure I would hear a lot of sentimental dribble about some utopian welfare scheme.” But that wasn’t the case at all! “There was an unusual tone in her voice,” he later commented, “a sense of deep certainty and conviction that seemed to come from something supernatural. Suddenly my curiosity was aroused and a fire began to blaze within me. A half hour later when she had finished speaking, I found myself completely taken by an enchanted atmosphere: enclosed in a halo of happiness and light; and I would have wanted that voice to continue speaking. It was the voice that I, without realizing, was waiting to hear. It placed holiness within the reach of everyone.”

Giordani asked Chiara to write down what she had just said, and she quickly did. But personally, Giordani wanted to know more about his new acquaintances. He gradually came to discover in his experience of the Focolare, the deep desire of St John Chrysostom that the laity might live as the monks but without celibacy. “This desire had always been so strong in me,” he went on to say, “and so I had always the Franciscan style of teaching among the people and the virginal instruction given by St Catherine of Siena to the Dominican Third Order. And I supported all the initiatives to bring down the walls placed between the monastic life and the laity, between the consecrated and the common folk: confines within which the Church suffered like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Something happened in me. Those chunks of culture that had always been standing side by side for comparison began to move and come alive, to become a living body that was

generously flowing with blood. Love had entered in and invested those ideas, and its gravitational pull drew them into an orbital path of gladness.”

Following the death of his wife, Mya, whom he deeply loved, he spent his final years living in a focolare in Rocca di Papa, Italy. Here he would often explain his “discovery” to people with the following words: “I moved away from the library cluttered with books, to the Church filled with Christians.” It was a real and true conversion, a new conversion, which “having plucked me from the doldrums that fenced me in, was now urging me to step onto a new landscape that was endless, somewhere between earth and Heaven, inviting me to walk again.”

The cause for the canonization of Igino Giordani, called Foco, is under way. His body rests in the chapel of the International Centre of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa, where Chiara Lubich’s body also lies. ‘This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you’ (Jn 15:12) is the sentence on his tomb, words from the Gospel that sum up his life.

Brief Biography

Born 1894 into a poor, profoundly Catholic family in Tivoli, Igino Giordani’s parents could not guarantee regular schooling and worked in manual labour. But the young Igino was noted for his intelligence, and a rich gentleman for whom he worked, impressed by his acumen paid for him to study at the seminary, not to become a priest but to be one of the most brilliant diplomats at that time. As he finished his studies the

First World War broke out and he went to the trenches. He never fired a shot against his enemies, because Christianity forbade murder. As a result of this brave choice he was gravely wounded. Whilst he was in the military hospitals he graduated in Literature and Philosophy.

He married in 1920. He and his wife Mya had 4 children, and he began working for the newly formed Italian Christian political party, founded by Luigi Sturzo. The Fascist regime destroyed freedom and rights, and even Iginio was persecuted. From this period there remain some of his famous writings denouncing fascist violence. On returning to Italy from a journey to the United States he became the director of part of the Vatican Library. From there he also directed the journal 'Fides', which was known in Catholic environments throughout the world. It was through them that the re-birth of a post-fascism Catholic political party came about, Christian Democracy. He was elected to Parliament in the first elections after the Second World War.

1948 was the decisive year of his life: he was 54, and a man established in politics and culture. He met Chiara Lubich, a young woman aged 28, in whom he found extraordinary spiritual inspiration. He adhered fully to the Focolare Movement and at Chiara's side he took on an important role building the Movement and deepening its social doctrine, to the point of often being designated by Chiara as co-founder.

Of special note, the deep spiritual relationship with Chiara was the start of the intense mystical period known as "Paradise '49". From then Chiara clearly saw through Giordani's life confirmation that the ideal of unity was made for all, and was a

gift for the whole of humanity. Igino was the first married focolarino of the Focolare Movement.

Due to some courageous political decisions (pacifism and unity in spite of the ideological differences, or because of them), in Parliament, he became considered as a Christian Democrat out of step, and as a result was not re-elected. This was the time to dedicate himself more to the Focolare Movement, to contribute to the debate in the Church taking ahead themes that would be understood in the Second Vatican Council (above all concerning the mission of the laity). He became the director of the newly created 'Citta Nuova' (1959) magazine, and from 1961 became a director of Centro Uno, a body within the Focolare Movement working within ecumenism. In 1965 he was nominated president of the international institute *Mystici Corporis* in Loppiano. After the death of his wife and with the agreement of his children, he lived the last seven years of his life in a "Focolare". He left this earth on 18th April 1980. The process towards his canonisation has begun.

Introduction to the Bibliography

Igino Giordani was an intellectual difficult to label: we cannot describe him as a political thinker or journalist, or studier of ancient Christian literature, or a writer about the lives of saints or history, in the hope of being able to sufficiently express his talents. He was driven by a great passion and was spurred into public life through a wide range of interests. It is said that "for him writing was life", therefore an understanding of the figure of Giordani could (almost) easily come through

analysis of his writings. There are about 100 books and more than 4,000 newspaper articles.

Igino Giordani and the perfection of love

by Chiara Lubich

April 18 is the anniversary of Igino Giordani's death. He was the first married focolarino and was considered by Chiara Lubich to be a co-founder of the Focolare.

“It is nearly impossible to put into words what Igino Giordani was for the Focolare Movement. He was a co-founder of the Movement. Being co-founder of a Work that the Church recognises as its own involves a multiple and complex activity of grace, true and varied impulses from the Holy Spirit, as well as actions on the part of the individual that are determining for the Work. These graces often come in the form of penetrating and prolonged suffering, often as light, graces and love that are not ordinary. It is better left to the history of the Church and the spiritual movements that embellish it through the centuries, to speak about such people.

A focolarino prays, works, and suffers in order to reach a goal: the perfection of love. Therefore, we feel it is our duty to confirm that Giordani reached this goal. In our judgement he reached the perfection of love.

He personified the name by which he was known in the Movement: “Fire” (Foco), that is, love towards God and towards neighbour, the supernatural and natural love which lies at the roots and is the summit of Christian life. He contributed in a unique way to keeping alive in our midst the

reality of the Word of Life given to him when he entered the Movement: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Those who knew Igino Giordani well are all in agreement that he had lived the Beatitudes. Exceptionally 'pure of heart,' he offered married people from around the world the possibility of a unique consecration to God while remaining in the matrimonial state, through spiritual virginity, the effect of burning charity. This purity refined and heightened his holiest sentiments.

He was 'poor in spirit' with complete detachment from his possessions, but above all from himself. He was full of mercy. In his company even the most miserable sinner felt forgiven, and the poorest pauper felt like a king. One of the most remarkable characteristics was that of being a 'peacemaker,' especially in his life as a politician.

He came to possess that meekness that leads to possessing the earth. He won over everyone who drew near to him. Everyone felt at ease with him, even the young were able to establish a relationship with him. Especially during his last years he seemed to radiate something supernatural when he spoke.

He "hungered and thirsted for justice" and fought for it all his life. Almost immediately he was persecuted for the sake of God's name. So many sentences of the Gospel make us think of him.

From Giordani one learns the significance of that conversion which Jesus asks for when he says that we must become like little children. He was a fine Christian apologist and apostle. When it seemed to him that he had found a font of

clear water flowing from the Church, he “sold everything’ to follow Jesus and to satisfy his thirst with that water.

He suffered because of the marginalization of the laity, and he aspired with that big heart of his to bring down the dividing walls between the people living in the state of perfection and the others – whom he would jokingly add – were living in the state of imperfection. In other words, he was very sensitive to the signs of the times; indeed, he himself was a sign of the times, of these times in which the Holy Spirit calls the entire People of God to holiness.”

(Taken from: Chiara Lubich, Igino Giordani focolarino, «Città Nuova» n. 9-10 – May 1980)

Igino Giordani: The encounter that made him a new person

Igino Giordani met Chiara Lubich for the first time on September 17, 1948. A description of that historic moment, 68 years ago, was recorded in his personal diary.

The following is recorded in the personal diary of Igino Giordani: “17 September 1948. This morning at Montecitorio I was called upon by angels: a Capuchin, a Friar Minor, a Conventual, a Third Order man and a Third Order woman, Silvia Lubig (sic!), who is beginning a community in Trent. She spoke like a saint inspired by the Holy Spirit.”

Recounting the event: “One day I was urged to listen to an apostle – as they said – of unity. It was in September 1948. I exhibited the usual courtesy of any deputy towards possible electors when some Religious came to Montecitorio, representatives of different branches of the Franciscan family, a young lay woman and a young layman. To see a Conventual,

a Friar Minor, a Capuchin, and a woman and man from the Third Order of Saint Francis all united together already looked like a miracle of unity to me: and I said so.

The young lady spoke: I was sure I'd hear a sentimental propagandist tell me about some utopian welfare. Instead, right from the first words I felt something new. A half hour later when she had finished talking, I was taken by the enchanting atmosphere: I would have liked that voice to continue on. Without realizing it, it was the voice that I had been waiting for. She placed holiness within everyone's reach; she took away the grates that separated the lay world from the mystical life. She made public the treasures of a castle that only a few were admitted to. She brought God near: she made him feel like a Father, brother, friend, present to humankind.

I wanted to look into it: and getting familiar with the life of the Focolare of unity – as they called it – I recognized in their experience the realization of the desire that overwhelmed Saint John Chrysostom: that the laity would live as monks, minus celibacy. I had much cultivated that desire.

What happened was that the idea of God had yielded its place to God's love, the ideal image of the living God. In Chiara I had found someone who didn't talk about God, but someone who spoke with God: a daughter speaking in loving conversation with the Father.

If I did a critical examination of it, I found that I hadn't discovered anything new. In the way of life that was opening to my soul, I found all the same names, characters and doctrines that I had loved. All my study, my ideals, the very events of my life all seemed directed to this goal. Nothing new: yet

everything was new: the elements of my cultural and spiritual formation began to come together in accordance with God's plan. They took their rightful place.

All was old and all was new. The key that unlocked the mystery had been discovered: love was allowed to pass, which had too often been barricaded: and it burst forth spreading like fire and becoming a blaze.

A collective, socialized holiness – to use terms that were later popularized by the Second Vatican Council – drawn out of the individualism that had accustomed everyone to become holy on one's own, meticulously caring for one's own soul, with endless analyses in order not to lose that soul. A piety, an interior life that came from Religious houses, from a certain exclusiveness of the privileged classes was now poured out into the public, into offices and factories, into houses and fields – and into convents – because wherever you find people, you find candidates for the perfection of holiness.

And to live this new life, to be born in God, I didn't have to renounce my doctrines: I only had to place them in the fire of love so that they would come alive. Through my neighbour I began to live God. Life became a total adventure, consciously lived in union with the Creator, which is what life is. Mary was resplendent with a new beauty; the saints entered among the relatives; Heaven became a common home. This was the discovery, this the experience. This made me a new man."

A "socialised" sanctity

The cause for the canonisation of Chiara Lubich is open on 27 January. Igino Giordani, in his inedited writings of 1974,

testified to how the encounter in 1948 with Chiara and her charism had changed his life, stirring up in him a totally new concept of sanctity.

“In reading about the lives of the saints, the idea of sanctity that seemed like a difficult uphill climb reserved only for a rare group of people, became a common heritage, and I began to understand why Jesus invited all his disciples to reach perfection, in the same way as the Father: the perfection of God himself!

It all seemed old but also totally new. It was a new method, a new spirit, like discovering the key to a mystery: one that opened out to love that had been locked up, but which now broke out like a flame and spread until it became a blazing fire.

The ascent towards that remote God now seemed easy and possible for all, since all could now find the way home together, as brothers. Those terrifying acts of penance (hair shirts, chains, dark nights of the soul, renunciation) became effortless since all was done together, with the help of our brothers, with love for Christ.

It was the dawning of a “socialised” sanctity (terms used by the Second Vatican Council and which would become popular) no longer individualistic, where you think of sanctifying yourself and meticulously cultivate your own soul, instead of forgetting yourself. A religiosity, an interior life that issued from the ranks of religious institutes, from a sort of elitism of the privileged classes –at times so distant and even against society, in reality formed by the major part of the living Church. This sanctity now reaches out to the squares, workshops and offices, the houses and fields, as also to the

convents and Catholic Action associations, since in every place, one meets people who are all candidates for perfection. In short, asceticism has turned out to be a universal adventure of divine love – love that generates light.»

«Life is a unique occasion to be lived on earth which is one with eternity. And we can make the earth a foretaste of heaven, and insert it into the life of God, to bring heaven on earth. Do not spoil it with ambition and greed and do not ruin it with wrath and hostility: deify it – extend it within the heart of the Eternal – with Love. And God is where love exists. And where every moment is used for love, giving God to others: which also means absorbing God for oneself and for the others.

This means experiencing the freedom of the sons of God, for whom the spirit is not immobilized by prejudice, divisions, oppositions, and barricades to the spirit of God. Those who live this way do not focus on sanctifying themselves but on sanctifying. They are not self-centered. They sanctify by sanctifying, given that we love through loving, and serve by serving. In this way, sanctification itself takes on a social dimension: a continual giving and giving of oneself brings about the sanctification of souls, which becomes a communitarian reality.

“Be perfect as my Father is perfect,” Jesus exhorted: and we become perfect in God’s will, united as one in order to be one with Him, through Christ.”

Giordani: summer 1949

16 July 1949: a fundamental date for the Focolare. Chiara Lubich and Iginio Giordani made a “pact of unity” that would be

the basis of the movement's birth. That day marked the start of Chiara's mystical experience known as "Paradise 1949." This is Giordani's poetic description.

«While playing games in the shade of the fir trees beneath the rocks, Chiara continued to speak to her companions about God, the Virgin, and supernatural life, the nature of which was supranature. She co-inhabited always with the Lord, an effect of charity which was edified, atom upon atom..

And so when they would go to the countryside, those alpine forests were transformed into cathedrals, treetops seemed like the heights of holy cities, and flowers and grass were coloured by the presence of angels and saints: all were enlivened in God. The material barriers were removed. This was also a form of reconciliation between the sacred and the profane, due to which, once the ugly, the evil, and the deformed were eliminated, everywhere the values of the life of nature were recovered in all its aspects.

Her words, like her works seemed to be an assiduous clearance of mortal debris to reestablish communication. In itself it was simply a merging of nature and the supernatural, of matter with the spirit, and of the earth with heaven. It was a duplication of the values of life on earth, to open a gateway to Paradise.

It was the summer of 1949. That enjoyable holiday was enhanced by the inheritance of a cottage in Tonadico di Primiero from Lia Brunet. In July, Chiara Lubich, Foco (Iginio Giordani) and the focolarine had gone there to bask in the

sunlight and take some personal rest, after the works achieved all year round for the poor.

The cottage consisted of an upper barn which they entered through a winding ladder from the ground floor, and was composed of a room and small kitchen. They set up some cot beds and a cupboard that was hauled up by a winch, and the place acted as their dorm. Foco went to the Orsinger Hotel and had the chance to speak before the hall of Capuchins.

In their Church he felt the desire to bind himself “tightly” with a vow of obedience, which Chiara felt, however, did not conform to Focolare customs. Instead she proposed making a pact of unity, in the sense that at the next Eucharistic communion, on the nothingness of their souls, Jesus in her would seal the pact with Jesus in him. That morning at mass, upon receiving communion the two of them made Jesus seal the pact with Jesus.

It was then that she started to experience a series of enlightening insights».

Igino Giordani, History of the Focolare Movement, an unedited piece.

Where Chiara’s Beauty Lies

By Igino Giordani

The Gospel experience of Chiara Lubich and the first focolarine had fascinated the Italian politician Igino Giordani so much that he joined himself to this small “company” in a new way of holiness. We offer an unpublished talk of Giordani’s in which he presents his own portrait of Chiara Lubich.

“Where does Chiara’s beauty lie? It lies in the simplicity with which she lived the Gospel. She took the Gospel literally and lived it. It’s all here. Because, as St. Paul told to the Greeks, Christianity is not found in a culture, but in life, in a few laws of life that are very simple. I’m always very struck by Chiara’s union with God.

I’ve never seen anything like it. She lives with God in each moment, no matter what she says, no matter what she’s doing, wherever she is. She’s managed to achieve that for which we have all been called, that is, to recuperate our unity with God, unity that has been broken by Original Sin.

She is a human creature in whom, whatever she says, whatever she does is in complete harmony with the will of God. Therefore, I can recall how we used to take hikes in the forests during the first Mariapolises. She would pluck a flower and offer the most beautiful interpretation of the blossom, more sublime than you could ever imagine, because she was able to see the work of God: why had God made that corolla, why God had made those petals, why God had made nature in that way, why God had made human beings in that way. . . She searched everywhere for this presence of God’s love.”

Igino Giordani, Loppiano 3 July 1974

Chiara Lubich: Igino Giordani christian and co-founder

Models of life for today

First of all, I would like to thank His Excellency Giuseppe Matarrese, Bishop of Frascati, also on behalf of the Focolare Movement, for today’s event: the solemn proclamation of the opening of the cause of beatification of Igino Giordani.

My heartfelt greetings to the fortunate sons, daughter and other relatives of the Honorable Igino Giordani, now Servant of God.

We are grateful for the presence of the mayor of Frascati, Dr. Francesco Posa, and the other mayors, as well as all the citizens whose presence here signals their interest in this Christian, so rich with witnesses to give to the “city of man”.

I share the joy of all the members of the Focolare Movement gathered here.

The installation of the ecclesiastical tribunal marks the beginning of the diocesan phase of the canonical proceedings. To each of its members present here I assure my, our prayerful support for your very sensitive work and our active collaboration in any way that could be helpful.

On this very special occasion, I hope that a few words on my part about the Honorable Igino Giordani will be appreciated.

As you know, he was an eminent, versatile Catholic personality who always joined his political commitment to an intense and fruitful cultural activity as journalist, author, apologist, hagiographer and renowned scholar of the Fathers of the Church and Christian social doctrine.

We could and should speak at length about the many different roles which made the Honorable Igino Giordani famous.

But today, in this sacred place and in this particular circumstance, it seems to me that we must speak of him above all as a Christian, as a focolarino and co-founder of the Focolare Movement: roles he diligently carried out for thirty-two years of his life.

Giordani as a Christian

Someone once said that if every Gospel were to disappear from the face of the earth, people should be able to rewrite it by observing how Christians live.

On the day of Iginio Giordani's funeral, the Gospel passage which speaks of the Beatitudes was read. All of those who had known him well, were unanimous in affirming that he had practiced each one of them.

"Blessed are the pure of heart". It was this purity that allowed him to see and describe one's earthly life as a divine adventure, because of the intervention of God's providential love. This purity of heart strengthened his most sacred sentiments and at the same time it potentiated them: towards his wife, towards his most beloved children.

He was "poor in spirit", completely detached not only from all that he possessed, but above all, from all that he was.

He was full of "mercy": even the most wretched sinner felt that he had been forgiven when he was with him and the poorest person felt like a king.

He was always a "peacemaker", as the record of his political career shows.

He was so "meek" as to make one understand why the Gospel says that those who live this virtue will possess the earth. His extraordinary kindness, his way of finding the right word for each person, won over everyone he met. And... we could go on and on....

Giordani as a focolarino

He was an excellent Christian, a scholar, an apologist, and apostle. Yet when he encountered a genuine spring of pure water flowing out from the Church, he “sold everything” in order to follow Jesus who was calling him.

Giordani was a true Christian, but he was also a Christian with a specific vocation. God called him to be a focolarino.

He personified the name by which he was known within the Movement: “Foco”, which means “fire”. He loved God and neighbor with a love that was both natural and supernatural, the kind of love which is the basis and apex of an authentic Christian life.

He had always hoped to find to fulfill his desire to consecrate himself to God even though he was married. In 1948 he came in contact with the Focolare Movement.

And it was through the spirituality of unity, characteristic of this Movement, that he was able to express the Gospel in his life.

So that Christ would live in him, the way to achieve the full communion with our brothers and sisters that Christ asks of us, he really died to himself as a poetic writing of his from 1951 confirms:

*“I have resolved to die
and what happens no longer matters to me;
now I wish to disappear
in the abandoned heart of Jesus.*

*All this toiling
with avarice and for vanity
disappears in love:*

I have recovered my freedom.

*I have resolved to die
by this death which dies no more;
now I wish to enjoy with God his eternal youth."*

Giordani was very familiar with Christian asceticism, and he also experienced the joys of contemplation and the mystical life.

St. Louis Maria Grignon di Montfort, speaking of people whom the Virgin Mary loves in a special way, says that the primary gift that such persons acquire here on earth, is the life of Mary in the soul, so that it is no longer that person who lives but Mary living in him or her. In other words, such persons acquire the hearth and soul of Mary.

Giordani wrote in 1957: "On the evening of October 1st, the month dedicated to Mary, after praying, I felt my soul suddenly free from every attachment to persons and things. Mary entered in their place, with the lifeless Jesus in her arms. My entire soul was filled with her presence, a combination of suffering and love. (...)

"She remained there for twenty-four hours, like an altar bearing its victim: 'Virgo altare Christi'. My soul became her room, a temple. (...) So that I felt like saying: 'It is no longer I who live, but Mary who lives in me'.

"Her presence had, as it were, virginized my soul, marianized my person. My ego seemed dead, and Mary took its place. I no longer felt the need to search for images of Mary along the road. It was enough to fix the eyes of my soul within

to discern, in the place of the usual sordid and grotesque idol of myself, the All Beautiful One, the Mother of the Fair Love. And even this poor, suffering body seemed to me to be a kind of cathedral....

“If I am not the most scoundrel on earth, I must become a saint, in order to be in accord with this reality.”

Giordani co-founder

He was also co-founder of the Focolare Movement. He was the one who opened the doors of the focolare to married people. In this way, something which had at first been only vaguely foreseen, became a reality – single and married people could, insofar as is possible, pursue the same spiritual itinerary.

He was the one who gave an outstanding contribution to the birth of those branches of the Focolare’s mass movements, like the New Families Movement, the Youth for a United World, or the New Humanity Movement, which seeks to animate the worlds of work, art, medicine, education, and politics, to name a few, with a genuine Christian spirit.

He was the one who began with other members of parliament the “St. Catherine Center”, precisely in order to animate politics with the spirit of the Movement.

He was the one who personified one of the most important aims of this Movement: to cooperate towards the unification of the Churches, directing for years the ecumenical center “Centro Uno”.

He was the one, above all, who helped the Movement to be deeply rooted in the Church. During his lifetime, the Movement’s branches extended across the globe bearing much

fruit, given its evangelical spirit which emphasizes universal fraternity, unity among all people.

Giordani was one of the greatest gifts that heaven ever gave our Movement.

And now, to conclude, I would like to tell you about one of his last days.

His physical condition had deteriorated. I brought to his bedside a card that had just arrived for him, with a picture of the Holy Father, a heartfelt blessing, and His signature.

It made him very happy. He brightened and said: "Today is a beautiful feast day! This is something I never expected!"

And while Father Antonio Petrilli – one of the first focolarini priests, who was looking after him during his last years, he too in heaven now – was hanging up the framed blessing on the wall, Giordani added: "I feel like I'm in heaven".

When I asked if it would like him to have Mass said in his room, also so that together we could renew the pact of unity of the focolarino, he exclaimed: "Oh, how beautiful! This is an added gift."

At one point, he said: "I'm always mindful of God, the Giver", and he listed some of the gifts he had received from God.

When I asked him if he would like to go to heaven, he nodded with his head, as if to say: "Oh, if only I could...!" Several times, with a particular smile, he added: "This is heaven! What could be more beautiful?"

Referring once again to the Pope's blessing, he whispered: "I can't find the words to express what that gift

means to me; the more I think about it, the more I find no words ...”

After receiving the Eucharist during a special Mass, he solemnly affirmed: “Everything is complete”.

Giordani is present here today with all of us.

Igino Giordani, politician

From the Italian Parliament to the World

The Director of the Igino Giordani Centre, Alberto Lo Presti, presents the political adventure of Igino Giordani, who was a man with many sides. Lo Presti begins from Giordani’s encounter with Chiara Lubich; then the story behind an intervention by Giordani in the Italian Parliament concerning the North Atlantic Treaty and the futility of war.

From the Italian Parliament to the world. This part of Igino Giordani’s journey began in the late forties when Igino had reached a rather problematic point in life. To the world he was a Christian intellectual, a brilliant expert on the Fathers of the Church, a writer and Catholic apologist who was always in line with the Church. But he began to experience ‘a certain boredom of the soul.’ His encounter with Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, awakened his faith and his love.

Their meeting was extraordinary and so were the circumstances surrounding it. Igino Giordani was a 54 year-old man with 4 grown children. Chiara was a young woman of less than half his age, who was requesting an appointment with him to discuss finding an apartment flat in the city of Rome.

Former member of the Constituent Assembly, Giordani was also a member of the Christian Democratic Party, one of those historical members because he was among the first of the 1920s to work for the nascent People's Party, of Christian inspiration and founded by the priest Luigi Sturzo.

Chiara was a young laywoman and their meeting was taking place well before the Second Vatican Council, at a time when it wasn't common that a laywoman would be recognised as having some sort of role in the Church.

Yet, despite the large differences between them, that meeting with Chiara completely transformed Giordani and from that moment on he strove to bring the Ideal of Unity into politics. Its announcement took place during a parliamentary session in which ideological differences were quite strong. It was March 16, 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty was at stake.

"Just when I had known Chiara for a few months," Giordani recounts, "there was a discussion in the House about the North Atlantic Treaty, and two blocs were formed: one that was headed by America, the United States; and one that was headed by Russia. They were paving the way to make a new war, a massacre, the definitive war. I remember how very angry we were that night in the House; I was afraid someone was going to pull out a gun and begin shooting; there was much hatred between the two groups.

I had asked to speak and, just before I spoke, a Catholic deputy sat beside me, Mr Pacati. So he said to me: 'Let's keep Jesus in our midst, now, as you talk.' I took the floor. Silence began to fall upon the previous noise and shouting. In the end,

the House seemed to have become a church; there was perfect silence as I expressed the ideas that we learn in our Movement; namely, that war serves no good; war is the greatest stupidity; war only serves death. We don't want war, we want life and life lies in love, in seeking agreement. (. . .)

All of us must react, from whatever part of the country, from whatever political party or faith, because beneath all the tears, beneath all the ugliness accumulated from the war and mud-slinging, it all really comes down to rediscovering the human face, which reflects the face of God." The parliamentary stenographer concludes his account of that discussion by describing the applause that reached Giordani from all sides of the Chamber.

Soon, numerous parliamentarians joined Igino, desiring to follow the ideal of unity. We name only a few: Gaetano Ambrico, Palmiro Foresi, Tarcisio Pacati, Enrico Roselli, Angelo Salizzoni e Tommaso Sorgi, who became the main biographer of Giordani. With them, Giordani did things that went against the social and political climate of those days. For example, in 1951, together with 40 other parliamentarians – liberals and republicans, social democrats and Christian democrats – he worked for an "Interparliamentary Understanding for the Defense of Peace"

Always moving against the tide, in the midst of the Cold War, in 1949, he and the Socialist, Mr Calosso, promoted the first law on conscientious objection. Imagine the problems that arose when Giordani presented their proposal to the House! But his convictions were like steel: to kill the human being who is made in the image and likeness of God, is to commit deicide.

A new civic consciousness has been born,” Giordani wrote, “one that undoes the divisions of party and faction, current and privileged caste, race, and class. As it spreads, it surpasses national borders. The communitarian impulse that is aroused by Christian love and pushes to the point of incorporating Jesus is a religious and social awakening that, if successful, and we believe it shall be, will change the history humankind.”

Of course, to proclaim the ideals of love and communion in today’s politics seems extremely reckless, but it was even more reckless in Giordani’s times. Yes, Giordani lived within the prophecy; and while taking on the challenges of his times with deep seriousness and commitment, he never became entrapped by them.

He lived the prophecy of a great Ideal, the Ideal of unity, supported by the modern and compelling spirituality of Chiara Lubich who had brought it into the world; and it became the life of Giordani’s politics.

Alberto Lo Presti (Director of the Igino Giordani Centre)

“We want peace”

Igino Giordani wrote Catholic Revolt in 1925 after living in trenches during World War I and as threatening winds were blowing through Europe. This text is taken from the 2016 edition published by Comitato edizioni Gobettiane.

Just as war is ignorance, instinct and darkness, peace is science, civilization and light. Expecting – as we did – to have a

better society from carnage, good from evil, black from white, is the same as expecting a better education for the heads it severs.

Science, which was meant to devise exciting tools, will make the next war an exquisite case of refined, methodological stupidity.

Fear is the great regulator of human relationships. Stimulated by fear, drained and exhausted lands keep disproportionately large and costly armies standing.

There would be a solution: to substitute fear with mutual trust, indifference with friendship. But the solution would be too . . . easy; that is why it is so difficult. And it would bankrupt various oligarchies. I would have a good solution for the impulsive and powerful youngsters, deputies and public figures, improvised journalists and bank rats, for the tasteless little misses to the spinsters on the committees, for speculators both high and low, for the generals and the professors, for the supporters of war – I would leave them in one of the trenches for ten minutes under a debilitating bombing, as all reason is lost and all nature rebels. When they come out of that, they'll understand what war is – and they'll curse it.

This honoured society of ministers, deputies and journalists who presume to explain the significance of war to the rest of us, should understand once and for all that all their discourse turns our stomachs.

We want peace and serenity, and we want the violence that they would unleash to be gone. Is that asking too much?

Igino Giordani, from Rivolta Cattolica (Rome: Edizioni Gobettiane, 2016), 10-13.

“War is wide-scale murder”

Some thoughts from Iginio Giordani’s book, ‘The Futility of War’

“War is wide-scale murder”.

“Just as the plague spreads the plague, and hunger can lead to starvation, so does war serve to kill”.

“If you want peace, prepare for it”.

“Only crazy people, or the incurable wish for death, and war is death”.

“I believe no head of State has ever admitted he was waging war for motives of plunder; everyone held that it was being fought for the most noble of reasons, for altruistic and idealistic purposes, of course. And – just to show how childish hatred can get – greed is a characteristic of the enemy while a friend shows idealism”.

“Enemies are to be loved: if only the politics of charity were to take root, we would discover that it coincides with the most enlightened rationality and, in the economic and social sense, it would prove to be a real bargain”.

“For Christians to be worthy of being called ‘children of God’ they have to work for peace”.

“We must organize peace as others have organized war”.

“The work of building peace starts from you and from me”.

Igino Giordani, L'inutilità della guerra, published by Città Nuova, Roma 2003

Igino Giordani: Heroes of peace

On November 15th 2016 Chiara Lubich and her commitment to peace have been remembered at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. We offer some thoughts on peace from Igino Giordani.

The preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO declares: "Since wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that defenses of peace must be built." This November 15th, Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement's efforts in favour of peace, will be remembered at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris, France. We offer some thoughts of Igino Giordani about peace. He had first-hand experience of two world wars.

"Social wounds are called wars and disagreements. They tear at the social fabric leaving wounds that are unable to be healed. Ancient souls yearned for peace: "if you want peace, prepare war," said the Romans. But in the spirit of the Gospel, true peace is never obtained by war, but by the sprouting of a peaceful disposition and by a harmony of minds. You don't commit evil to obtain good. "If you want peace, prepare peace."

Here again, you bring about renewal by building peace, not with weapons, but with love that revives life. When love is on the move it generates brotherhood, equality, unity. It vanquishes envy, arrogance and discord. It gathers people together into one family and one mind. Human life is sacred. Do not kill! Do not take revenge! Love your enemy! No retaliating.

The portion of humanity that followed Christ understood the angelic message of the Gospel that was sung on the night of his birth: 'Peace on Earth'. One lover of peace is all that is needed. Jesus opposed the generals and bloody heroes with peaceful ones, victorious over themselves, inspirers of peace within themselves, among citizens and foreigners.... He created a new and more difficult heroism: that of avoiding war in all of its forms, forever breaking the dialectic between pardon and remission.

This peace is the fruit of love which requires us to love even our enemies, even those that bear false witness against us. It prevents fractures, or it heals them. In the regimes of love, discord is an absurdity, a negation, and those that provoke discord certainly place themselves outside the spirit of Christ: and outside they remain until harmony has been restored."

Source: Igino Giordani, Il messaggio sociale del cristianesimo, (Rome: Città Nuova, 1935 and 1966) p 360-368.

Giordani a pioneer of ecumenism

Rediscovering profound fraternal sentiments.

Many people consider Igino Giordani a pioneer of ecumenism. At the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we offer the following considerations by Tommaso Sorgi, who is his principle scholar and biographer.

IginoGiordani_unita_cristiani_bThere is one event in the life of Igino Giordani that urges us to pause and reflect: the first biography written about him in 1985 was not written by a Catholic, but by a Scottish Baptist pastor, Edwin Robertson[1]. We should not see this as an irony of history [. . .] if such a friendly gesture towards Giordani had merit in the eyes of

Heaven and in front of human history. Giordani had already presided at a conference of ecumenists back in the fall of 1967, at the headquarters of the Movement in Rocca di Papa, Italy. The Very Reverend Archimendrite, Eleuterio Fortino was also present. Years later in 2004, he gave the following testimony: “Because of his own interior serenity, Giordani was able to calm the heated tones of the debates at that conference; and he clarified the theological and pastoral aspects of the Second Vatican Council’s *Unitatis redintegratio* (1965), bringing down the last resistance of the Italian opposition to common prayer among all Christians during the Week of Prayer for the Unity of Churches[2].

Giordani had already been following the Week of Prayer, which was actually an Octave, beginning on January 18 (feast of the Chair of St. Peter in Rome) to January 25 (feast of the Conversion of St. Paul). In 1940 Giordani writes: “During the preparations of the Octave, news spread that was at first uncertain, that at a certain monastery of Trappist nuns in Rome, they were praying intensely for an end to the divisions among Christians. I came to learn that a young nun of that monastery had offered her life for the unity of the Church and that her sacrificial death had deeply touched a community of separated brothers in England.

The news, even though it was so vague, greatly expanded – at least in my eyes – the horizon of the unitary movement and opened new prospects that appeared as patches of blue breaking through the gray and stormy heavens over a brawling humanity. It placed the Octave and its goals in their true light. Those nuns probably didn’t know anything about all the

debates and commissions and committees that were held on the topic. Placed in front of the problem of the secession, they had contemplated it in simplicity, in the light of the Rule that never changes: they saw that unity is to be sought where it is found, that is, at its source, at the matrix. In other words it has to be asked of the Father in whom – and only in whom – brothers unite. This means that those humble women whom you'll never meet at any conference, knew immediately what had to be done, and they placed the unity movement on the most direct path. Some might be tempted to ask it from Hegel, Loisy or even Marx; and in the news and in the conferences the names of such people came up, who had not and can not provide anything but partial solutions. Unity is not the work of men, but of God: not of study, but of grace. Even so, Father, accept this too, above all for your Church, that you might deign to purify her, preserve her, and unify her ..."[3].

Chiara Lubich called the ecumenism that has come from her, an "ecumenism of life". It is still practiced by the Focolare and has well developed experiences of its own experiences, developing in the light of great men like John XXIII, Paul VI, and in the light of the Second Vatican Council. It became one of the main priorities of Igino Giordani during the final years of his life. For Giordani, all Christians were already long-lost brothers and sisters. He lived and spread an ecumenical spirit that was composed of love and aimed at communion, in the certainty that "from the unity of hearts comes unity of minds".[4].

It is rather touching to see how his article on ecumenism, *The Journey Towards Unity*, was written by in December 1979, four months before his departure for Heaven. In that gesture

he continued to tenaciously cultivate a prophetic vision, in which he set the unity of Christians as the basis and the leaven that would “give an impetus to the ideal of universal unity among all peoples [5].

(Compiled by: Tommaso Sorgi, Il percorso ecumenico di Igino Giordani, “Nuova Umanità” No.199).

Pasquale Foresi, Co-founder of the Focolare Movement (1929 - 2015)

Biography

Pasquale Foresi, who was born in Livorno in 1929, came from a Christian family. (His father Palmiro, was elected to the Constituent Assembly of Christian Democrats in 1946 and kept his seat during the first two parliamentary terms.) When he was just fourteen years old he ran away from home during the night to join one of the Resistance groups that were fighting for a new Italy. It was during that time that he started to consider the idea of priesthood. When he returned home, he entered the diocesan seminary in Pistoia, the city where his family then lived. Later, he attended the Gregorian University in Rome, but he did not feel fully satisfied with that life.

Meanwhile his father got to know Igino Giordani, a member of the Italian Parliament who introduced him to Chiara Lubich. The Hon. Foresi was so impressed by the young Lubich’s radical way of living the Gospel that he hoped his son, who was searching for authentic Christianity, would also have the opportunity of meeting her. He organized an encounter and invited Chiara to meet his Catholic colleagues of Pistoia; but as

she could not attend this meeting, she sent Graziella De Luca, one of her first companions, in her place. Owing to a misunderstanding, Graziella arrived at Pistoia a day late; and it was Pasquale who welcomed her to the Foresi home. Sheer courtesy made him ask questions about her spiritual experience, but he was so struck by her answers that he expressed the desire to meet Chiara.

It was Christmas 1949 when he met Chiara in Trent, and shortly after he decided to join the first men's Focolare community in Rome. There, he understood that this was his vocation, and his call to priesthood also resurfaced. Pasquale said: "It did not feel like entering a religious institute that was more beautiful and more holy than others, but I felt I was becoming part of a religious and civil Christian revolution that would renew the Church and humanity". In 1954 he became the first focolarino priest.

Chiara Lubich felt a special affinity with Pasquale and she asked him to share with her the leadership of the Movement.

His deep knowledge of theology made him aware of the theological and doctrinal significance of Chiara's intuitions, and he became a skilled spokesperson in the Movement's relationship with the Church, especially at the time when the newly born Movement was being studied by the Ecclesiastic Authorities.

Fr. Foresi's main role was helping Chiara in the incarnation of the charism of unity through concrete projects; such as the small town of Loppiano near Florence - a witness to gospel love, the publishing house Città Nuova; the University Institute Sophia, set up in Loppiano in 2007.

He recalled: “At a certain point I had the impression that my life was one big mistake, and that the positive things that maybe I had managed to accomplish were mine and not God’s” .He lived this spiritual turmoil as a purification that came from God. And it was precisely during this period of spiritual trial that seemed to have an impact on his physical health too, that Chiara with Fr. Foresi at her side as co-president could see the realization of so many works being accomplished in the Movement

His volumes *Teologia della socialità* (Theology of Social Man) and *Conversazioni con i focolarini* (God among men) are sources of inspiration for other authors of the Movement.

He left us for Heaven on June 14, 2015.

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ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The early years

To the furthest corners of the earth

It was in Trent, Northern Italy, 1944 that Chiara Lubich and her first few companions attended the Mass on the Feast of Christ the King. At the end of the Mass she and her friends remained recollected and reflected on a phrase they had heard during the Mass: from the book of Psalms: "Ask me and I shall give you all the peoples and lands of the earth." (Ps 2,8). They asked God to help them put this phrase into action by saying to

God, 'You know how to bring about unity. Here we are. Use us
'.

For an ideal as vast as unity, the request from Jesus to his Father "May they all be one" (Jn 17, 21), the boundaries could be nothing other than the furthest corners of the earth. Right from the outset the embryonic Movement was far sighted. No-one at that time could have imagined that the dream of reaching the ends of the earth would be accomplished so quickly. There was no specific plan or blueprint for spreading the Movement but they followed the way lead by 'Someone'.

Chiara explained what this meant during the XIX National Eucharistic Conference in Pescara 1977, "The Movement grew and unfolded in line with the precise plan God has for us. It was always there unseen and then it was revealed little by little... just as a pen does not know what it will write, a brush doesn't know what it will paint, the chisel what it will sculpt. So it was when God takes someone by the hand to found his work, that person does not know what they should do. The person is only and instrument for God's work. So it was in Trent. I had no plan, I knew nothing. The idea for the Opera (the Movement) was in God, the plan was in heaven. It was like that at the start and has been during all these years as the Focolare Movement has developed."

The first group of girls were clearly destined to never remain a closed group. After a few months of living their Ideal of unity they had a following of some 500 people around them in Trent. It wasn't long before the Ideal spread further afield. When, after the end of the Second World War, the first focolarine (women) moved to various cities in Italy to study or

work, they were never short of invitations from people who wanted to hear their experiences.

Rome was reached in 1948 followed by Florence, Milan, Siracuse... In 1956 it spread into Europe, in 1958 South America and in 1961 North America. In 1963 it was the turn of Africa, in 1966 Asia and 1967 Australia.

Today the Movement is present in 182 countries. It has approximately 2 million adherents and people who are sympathetic to its goals – the majority being Roman Catholic. There is a growing number of non-Catholics from 350 churches and ecclesial communities. The Movement also includes many from other world Faiths for example Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. Then there are also those in the Movement who do not adhere to any particular religious faith.

The core of the Movement consists of more than 140 thousand animators across all the expressions of the Movement.

This is the story so far of a people born through the Gospel.

In 2000 Chiara wrote, “Right at the beginning we asked with faith. The Movement really has reached the furthest corners of the earth. Within these people are representatives of all the people of the whole earth.”

Not just best friends

Here are some extracts from an article by Florence Gillet for the Roman Observer, dated April 3, 2018. Chiara and her first companions: “A home atmosphere flows among us.”

“We’ll never be able to quantify the help that we receive from our brothers and sisters. How much courage their faith inspires in us, how much warmth their love, how much their example draws us!” Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), who wrote these words, was known as someone who drew after her hundreds and thousands of people and constructed relationships with Buddhists, Muslims. She is still being followed by people with no religious affiliation and breathing new life into politics and economy.

The friendship with the first companions of Silvia Lubich whom they knew simply as “Chiara” or Clare, played no small role. It all began with a choice of God and her consecration to Him in 1943, Trent, Italy. However, quite soon it was no longer a single “I”, but a collective subject that began to move, to act, to pray and to love: Chiara and her first companions could have ended becoming anyone, but they became beacons of light on all five continents.

This story has many incredible elements, but yet it’s simple. You understand it if you open and read in chapter 13 of John’s Gospel: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another” (13:34). This is a commandment that can only be lived out in the company of others. When Chiara and her companions read this Gospel passage in a bomb shelter, they looked at one another very intensely as they thought about the commitment it would be. They didn’t hesitate, but said to each other: “I’m ready to love you to the point of giving my life for you.” Chiara would later consider this the cornerstone on which the entire Focolare Movement would rest. It’s certainly not something

unheard of in the history of the Church, but there might be one thing new about it. Chiara immediately conveyed to her companions whatever she was living and all that the Holy Spirit was inspiring in her. The bond among them was stronger than cement, and I would like to illustrate the quality of their relationship that valued and freed potentials, edifying a work that was of God.

Ten years went by and it was 1954. Chiara was living with Giosi, Graziella, Natalia, Aletta, Marilen, Bruna and Eli. One day, as Chiara paused to look at them, she recalled the sentence from the book of Proverbs: “Wisdom has built her a house and set up her seven columns” (Proverbs 9:1). She was looking at the seven young women in front of her, each with her own talent, all of them united and rooted in God. These were Wisdom’s seven columns, the seven colours of the spectrum that emerge from the one light of Love. Seven interdependent aspects of love, each flowing from and into the other.

Chiara entrusted Giosi with the communion of goods and the paychecks, not only the care of the poor: the red of love. To Graziella she entrusted “witness and spreading,” the orange. Natalia had been her first companion: she personified the heart of this ideal, the cry of Jesus Forsaken of love. She would carry this secret beyond the Iron Curtain. She was the spirituality and prayer life, the yellow of the spectrum. Aletta would be remembered as the one who encouraged the members to be mindful of their health, and to form a community united in love. Chiara entrusted her with the green, Creation and physical life. To Marilen, who lived for fifteen years in the midst of a Cameroon forest, Chiara entrusted the blue: harmony and the

home. Bruna was a bit of an intellectual and Chiara saw her as the one who could develop the aspect of studies: the indigo. Eli was always at Chiara's side and helped to make sure that all the members around the world were living as one. She was entrusted with the aspect of unity and the means of communication, the violet. Some other of her first companions would also have special tasks: Dori, Ginetta, Gis, Valeria, Lia, Silvana and Palmira.

Chiara would explain: "Brotherly love (philadelphia) is more than real among us. This is where I draw strength to face the crosses, besides direct union with Jesus. Here, we each take care of the other, in accordance with the need. Here, we pass from the Wisdom that is shared [...] to the practical advice concerning health, clothing, the house, eating and constant little helps. Here, you know that you'll never be judged but only loved, forgiven, helped... A home atmosphere flows among us here, which is from Heaven. When I want to verify if my idea is an inspiration, if an article needs to be corrected, I read to someone asking them to be completely empty in judging it. They do it and I feel the voice of Jesus magnified within me: 'This is good, do this over, explain this better.' I read the text over with them and we find it just as we desire." It's no surprise that Chiara wrote the following words as her testament: "Always be a family."

Openness.

Dialogue, an instrument of unity

The Focolare Movement's dialogue was not the result of planning, but of an inspiration of the Spirit through the charism

that He bestowed on a young woman from Trent, Italy. Right from the start there were many large and small incidents that instilled in Chiara Lubich and her companions an attitude of total acceptance towards others, and acceptance is the first step in dialogue.

The rapid spreading of the Movement around the world cannot be attributed solely to words that were shared between small groups of people, or even over a microphone or radio. Rather, it was due to the love that Chiara had always proposed as the only “method” of evangelization: “making yourself one” like Saint Paul: “I have become all things to all people” (1 Cor 9:22). For the Focolare Movement this has always been the only way.

The spirituality of unity has been embraced by people of every social category because of its uncompromising openness to people and their needs and this openness becomes dialogue.

Therefore, in the Focolare dialogue is to be understood in its evangelical sense. It never requires us to give up our identity or compromise our faith, but precisely because of our faith to reach out in a spirit of openness to others who are “different from us”.

On January 24, 2002 when she and Andrea Riccardi (founder of the Community of Sant’Egidio) were invited to Assisi to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church in front of Saint John Paul II and the other religious leaders of the world, Chiara strongly emphasized the fact that “dialogue” is the Catholic Church’s only attitude towards the world. She listed the Church’s four dialogues: ecumenical dialogue within the Church; dialogue with the faithful of other religions; and

dialogue with religiously unaffiliated people. These dialogues were identified by the Church during the Second Vatican Council in Ecclesiam Suam as the means for being in relationship with the contemporary world.

In 1991 Chiara states: “Jesus considers anyone who fights against evil and works for the coming of God’s Reign His allies and friends. Jesus wants a love from us that is capable of dialogue, a love that far from enclosing us proudly in our own little worlds, opens us up to the whole world, to everyone so that we can work together with all people of good will for the building of peace and unity in our world. So, let’s open our eyes and see the neighbours in front of us to honour the good that they do no matter what their beliefs may be, to support them and to encourage each other along the path of justice and love.”

Awaiting approval

As we continue to cover the history of the Focolare we focus this time on the years in which the Catholic Church was studying the nascent Movement, which anticipated several key points that were later expressed in the Second Vatican Council.

In the late 1940’s, almost imperceptibly, the spirit of the Movement began to spread beyond the borders of Trent, northern Italy. In the space of a few months in that first city about 500 people had begun striving to live the Gospel in the spirit of the early Christians. Now, the focolarini were invited to Milan, Rome, Florence, Sicily and elsewhere and, quietly, Christian communities like the one in Trent began to develop.

But precisely during those years of extraordinary growth, the Church began a careful study of the Movement. It was a

long period of intense examination, of suspension and doubts. The 50's and early 60's were years lived in uncertainty of ever receiving approval, which seemed to never arrive.

The nascent spirituality, which was rooted in Scripture, highlighted words that were not often heard before the Second Vatican Council, words like: "unity," "Jesus in the midst" of the community, "Jesus Forsaken," etc. Moreover the first focolarine were young and they were lay people who were trying to live the words of the Gospel, not only to read and meditate on them. This appeared "protestant". And their practice of the communion of goods in order to offer an orderly and organized assistance to the poor appeared "Communist." But for them it meant living like the first Christians and they felt a particular affinity with the Church in the years before it was divided.

Thus, in the 40's and 50's, without knowing it, invisible threads were woven that linked the Focolare to the main currents of thought spreading throughout the Christian world and later taken up by the Second Vatican Council. Their attention to the Gospel was in perfect agreement with the biblical movement; their desire to live for unity drew the focolarini into the ecumenical movement (from 1960). They found themselves ready, when religious and social conditions demanded it, to embrace dialogue with the followers of different religions and with people who had no specific religious reference point. Moreover, the fact of having been started by a laywoman, for laypeople, placed the Focolare in perfect harmony with the emergence of the laity in the Roman Catholic Church.

This new passion for unity would be fully recognised and welcomed into the heart of the Catholic Church on the eve of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, when it approved the central nucleus of the Focolare Movement-Work of Mary.

The focolare Movement, Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council

Second Vatican Council: ecumenical openings

A broad overview of the Focolare's ecumenical journey beginning from the Second Vatican Council.

On 11 October 1962 John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council. Fifty years later the same date was chosen for a solemn commemoration of this event and for the opening of a Year of Faith that has been launched by Benedict XVI with Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* "for a rediscovery of the faith" (4) and "to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ" (2).

In the Focolare the years of the Council coincided with a particular welcoming of its spirituality among Christians of different Churches. Already in 1961 Chiara Lubich had been invited to Germany five times to share the Focolare's life of living the Gospel with brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Churches. It was the same year that she founded Centro Uno, the Focolare's secretariat for ecumenism which, in 1962, promoted its first ecumenical meeting in Rome, Italy. Many other meetings followed and for the first time, on 9 June 1965, a group of Evangelical Lutherans were officially recognized at a public audience in St. Peter's Square. Among other things, Paul

IV said to them: "You visit honours us and brings us joy." The Evangelicals spoke of a "deep encounter in Christ".

Chiara had always been encouraged in her ecumenical action by Cardinal Agostino Bea, then president of the Secretariat for the Union of Christians in the Vatican.

Some of the "observers" sent to the Second Vatican Council by the different Churches wanted to meet and deepen their knowledge of the spirituality of unity. Among them was Anglican Canon Bernard Pawley, who was struck by the renewing force of the spirituality of Chiara, which he described as a "spring of living water flowing from the Gospel". He was convinced that the role of the Movement was that of being a "Gospel bridge" upon which Anglicans and Catholics could meet, and he devoted himself to make it known. During the second session of the Council (1963), he organized a luncheon with the other "observers" during which Chiara met the Reformed theologian Lukas Vischer from the Ecumenical Council of the Churches, and with whom a long friendship began. She accepted from him one of the first invitations to the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Geneva, Switzerland (1967). Relationships were also begun with other representatives, among them Father Vitalj Borovoj from the Russian Orthodox Church.

During those same years, Father Angelo Beghetto, Provincial Minister of the Conventual Friars of the Orient and the Holy Land, spoke to Patriarch Athenagoras I about the spirituality of unity that was spreading among the Churches. This led to 25 meetings between Chiara Lubich and this great

ecumenical prophet, Athenagoras I, during the years 1967-1972.

In 2004, on the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of Second Vatican Council document *Unitatis redintegratio*, Chiara Lubich was invited to the Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians to speak about the spirituality of unity where she underlined: “Having always placed mutual and constant charity at the base of our life and of all our fraternal meetings, Jesus was so present among us that we felt urged, like Saint Paul, to say: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:35). “No one can separate us”, because it is Christ who unites us”. She continued: “The ‘dialogue of the people’ is not a base or grassroots dialogue that sets itself against or alongside that of the Church leaders or directors, but a dialogue in which all Christians can participate. This people is like a leaven in the ecumenical movement which enlivens among all the understanding that because we are baptized Christians capable of loving one another, we can all contribute towards realizing the Testament of Jesus.”

Many are the fruits that have been gathered fifty years after the beginning of the Council. At the Synod on the New Evangelization and at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council “fraternal delegates” representing fifteen Churches were among the guests. The festivities were honoured by the presence of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams. The latter was invited to address some words to the Synod Assembly. During his intervention on 10 October 2012, he affirmed speaking in the context of spiritual ecumenism:

“the basic imperative in the spirituality of Chiara Lubich was ‘to make yourself one’ – one with the crucified and abandoned Christ, one through him with the Father, one with all those called to this unity and so one with the deepest needs of the world”.

At the end of the opening Mass of the Year of Faith, 11 October 2012 in St. Peter’s Square, Patriarch Bartholomew I strongly emphasised: “As we move forward together, we offer thanks and glory to the living God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – that the same assembly of bishops has recognised the importance of reflection and sincere dialogue between our “sister churches”. We join in the “. . . hope that the barrier dividing the Eastern Church and the Western Church will be removed, and that – at last – there may be but the one dwelling, firmly established on Christ Jesus, the cornerstone, who will make both one” (Unitatis Redintegratio – 18)

They were testimonies that in order for a proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be credible in today’s world, the world needs to see Christians united in the name of Jesus, “so that the world may believe” (Jn. 17).

Compiled by Centro Uno, the Focolare’s international secretariat for ecumenical dialogue

Paul VI and Chiara Lubich. Encounter between two charisms

Fifty years from the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, a book illustrates that period which marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Catholic Church and its relationship with the world. Caterina Ruggiu of the Chiara Lubich Centre presents an outline.

«Along the years, there have been studies and in-depth reflections on the Foundress of the Focolare Movement and Paul VI, the “helmsman of Vatican II.” But the time was not ripe for the deepening of the providential weft of relationships established between Giovanni Battista Montini and Chiara Lubich traced precisely to that period. A Pope and a lay woman: what could they have had in common?

History never fails to surprise us, and the works carried out by the Paolo VI Institute and the Chiara Lubich Centre resulted in the two study days of 7/8 November 2014, centered on Paul VI, Chiara Lubich and the prophecy of a Church that impersonates dialogue. All these activities have contributed to this long-awaited publication.

The book, published in July 2015, traces those events that had revealed under a historical, social, ecclesial, ecumenical and theological profile, the relationship that began in 1952 between Chiara Lubich and Montini, then the special deputy of the Secretary of State, and which continued up to the death of Paul VI in 1978.

The path highlighted important moments for both the Church and the Focolare Movement, with the charismatic drive which distinguished it from the very beginning when it made its first steps in the city of Trent. As seen in the studies of the 1950s, the ecclesiastical authorities nurtured strong doubts with regard to the novelty the Movement represented, and the overcoming of this stance towards the start of the 1960s with the first approvals. At this stage, Paul VI played a fundamental role through his personal commitment in the progressive, juridical and institutional configuration of the Movement.

Still quite an unknown but a highly interesting topic, it related to the presence of the Focolare in the Eastern European countries from the start of the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, along with the intensification of contacts in the ecumenical field that came about in the same period. This account is extensively documented by an intense exchange of letters between Chiara and Paul VI, and of what Lubich wrote in her diary after the audiences with Pope Montini.

The events also highlighted, alongside these two figures, the role of Iginio Giordani. He was a personal friend of Paul VI who, when still a young bishop in Rome, used to frequent his home. In those times Giordani was the Vatican librarian, and future member of the Constituent assembly and Cofounder of the Focolare Movement with Chiara Lubich.

Maria Voce, President of the Focolare, stressed that «there is a profound consonance which particularly reveals Pope Paul's extreme sensitivity and capacity to see in the charism God endowed to Chiara Lubich, the work of the Holy Spirit at the crucial moment of the celebration of the Second Vatican Council that opened out to dialogue beyond frontiers. Upon meeting Chiara, he listened, appreciated, and encouraged. In 1964, struck by the ecumenical feature of the Movement, he exhorted: "In the same way as you have started a dialogue with the non-Catholic Christians, do the same also with those who do not profess a faith."»

«This was underlined by Don Angelo Maffei, president of the Paul VI Institute: "the beginnings of this story traces back to long before the Second Vatican Council and deserves to be reconstructed so as to highlight the background of personal

contacts and ecclesial experiences that gradually led to the full development of the orientations set by Paul VI in the course of his pontificate.»

The other works by Andrea Riccardi, Alberto Monticone, Lucia Abignente, Paolo Siniscalco, Joan Patricia Back, Alberto Lo Presti, Adriana Cosseddu and Piero Coda – have focused under various aspects, «the grandeur of the prophecy of a Church that became the personification of dialogue.»

Two charisms met, recognised one another, and worked together to make the Church a “house of communion,” which sets itself in dialogue with the world. The volume on Paul VI and Chiara Lubich, the prophecy of a Church that personifies dialogue, was curated by Paolo Siniscalco and Xenio Toscani, and edited by ‘Studium.’»

Paul VI, the Pope of the Council

By Iginio Giordani

We remember Giovanni Battista Montini, on the occasion of his beatification on 19 October, through an article which Iginio Giordani, a long-time friend and confidante of Montini, wrote in 1978 with the typical language of those times, when ecumenism was making inroads.

“At 80 years of age and in the 15th year of his pontificate, Paul VI may look back on his pontifical work, amid social and intellectual turmoil, as a rejuvenation process of the Catholic Church. [...]

Pope Montini has received the Second Vatican Council’s message to ‘update’ itself in order to act against the frenzy of the “death of God,” “irreligious Christianity,” and archaic

conservatism, a work that entails patience, foresight, courage, updating of the main pontifical institutes and the creation of new dicasteries and services, among which are the “Iustitia et Pax” and “Pontifical council for the laity.”

These and other universal organisations trigger a growing cooperation of bishops and clergy, religious monks and nuns, and laymen and laywomen, in a sense of ecclesiastic renewal: which sprouts from a new communitarian spirit, and fruit of evangelical love which puts an end to individualism and religious classism, and unites the people in the parishes, and local and world institutions at the level of the Church and society in order to fulfill God’s will on earth as in heaven. All of these remind us that the Christian follows God’s will whether in prayer or at work.

The Fathers of the Church considered the faithful in prayer, also when they carry out God’s will in all their undertakings. This is why social action – service for the common good – if performed with one’s mind turned towards our Father in heaven, acquires a characteristic and outcome of authentic religiosity. Because of this, when speaking to a group of bishops from Cuba, Paul VI reminded them that the Church continually invites the faithful to be “new men” in justice, truth, and charity, so that it can educate the social conscience of the faithful, favour active cooperation towards the good, teach them to overcome their own egoism and never resign themselves to being “inferior citizens.”

This is the inspiration to stimulate a social reform, the dawning of a “new world,” that the young G. B. Montini had foreseen ever since those years when he worked for the

Catholic paper of Brescia, “La Fionda,” where he advocated a free school of thought to counter the newborn fascism.

With such perspectives, broadness of mind and modernity which explain the development of Christian social movements, and which even non-religious sociologists acknowledge, the Pope reminded the Diplomatic Corps of the most audacious principles of equality regardless of origin or race, in the exercise of religious and civil rights and in condemning racism, torture and all violence towards political opponents. The Pope’s interventions manifest that truth which even we, Catholics, forget: that is, that religion is life, that God is life [...].

Love: central theme of the Holy Father’s life and work; the central themes of Christianity are the creation and redemption. He has with love, brought closer to the church, individuals and multitudes, separated churches and hostile states. And in the field of ecumenism, his activities in silence rather than acclaimed, have in fact led to the return of churches, for which we comprehend why Athenagoras in a prophetic and familiar way, called him: Paul the second.”

(Excerpt of: Paul VI the Pope of the Council by Iginio Giordani, “Città Nuova,” 10.7.1978, p. 26.)

Maria Voce on the Second Vatican Council

“Encountering God through love of neighbour,” is the path of evangelization indicated in order to live the teachings of the Council.

The Focolare Movement welcomes the invitation launched by Pope Benedict XVI at the solemn celebration that opened the Year of faith and that celebrates the 50th

anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council: make the beauty of the faith shine out in our time with that same “emotional tension” of the Council Fathers.

Church-communion, application of the Gospel in daily life, dialogues, communion between laity and priests, the role of women and the importance of society are some of the principles developed by Vatican II, already in some way present in the life of the Focolare Movement from its inception.

“The challenges that remain open – affirms Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement – are the ones to implement what the Council wanted to point out and to propagate more the knowledge of the contents and the novelties present in the council documents. ... The maturity of the laity should contribute significantly ... to the precious work of handing over the principles of Vatican II to the believing community.”

Maria Voce is participating as an auditor in the session of the Synod of Bishops on “The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith.”

“Humanity – affirms Maria Voce – needs to encounter God through love of neighbour. This is the way to evangelize perceived by Chiara Lubich and appropriated by the members of the Focolare: a commitment lived out daily, alongside people, intended to fulfil always and everywhere Jesus’ prayer to the Father, ‘That all may be one,’ to make humanity one family, even now.”

Press Release October 11, 2012

ORGANIZATION

Centre of the Work of Mary and General Council

“Continual mutual love which makes unity possible and generates the presence of Jesus among those gathered in his name, is for the members of the Work of Mary, the basis of their life in all of its aspects; it is the norm of norms, the premise to every other rule.” *Chiara Lubich*

This premise appears on the first page of the Statutes and of the Regulations which describe the life of the Movement as a whole and in each of its branches. The style and idea of government in the Focolare Movement lies, therefore, in living and nourishing “continual mutual love.” Spread throughout the world, the Movement is divided in a territory according to “zones”.

Centre of the Work of Mary includes the President, the Co-President, and the counsellors elected by the General Assembly. It has the responsibility of ensuring and increasing unity in the whole Work of Mary, keeping it directed towards the realization of its goals and coordinating its various components.

President: As written in the General Statutes, the president will always be a woman. This underscores the marian profile and its prevalently lay connotation, and also “preserve(s) the design of God in having entrusted the birth and development of the Movement to a woman.” As stated in the General Statutes: “Her presidency will above all be a presidency of love, because she will have to be the first to love, that is, to serve her brothers and sisters, recalling the words of Jesus: “. . . and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mk 10:44).

Co-President: The General Statutes state that the Co-President is to be chosen from among the priests who are members of the men's branch of the focolarini. It falls upon him to "ensure that the internal life and activities of the Work of Mary are in conformity with the faith, morals and discipline of the Church." He follows with particular attention the branches of the diocesan priests and deacons, the youth who are preparing for priesthood, and the clergy of the institutes of consecrated life.

General Council. Members of the General Council include the members of the Centre of the Work of Mary, those responsible for the secretariats of the specific goals, and those who have the central roles of responsibility for the branches and mass movements. The General Council has an advisory and deliberating function governed by the General Statutes, but its main task is aimed at keeping and increasing the spirit of unity in and among all the components of the Movement.

Territory. The Movement spread in the world has its own territorial structures, called "zones". Each "zone" has two delegates – one focolarina (woman) and one focolarino (man) – who are nominated by the President. They are responsible, with a zone council, for the life and activities within that territory. Each zone is comprised of men's and women's focolares who, with their local councils, promote the spreading of the Movement at a local level, with all its structures and activities. Connected to these focolares and spread throughout each territory, there is also a network of local communities composed of people of all ages who live and work

in various social environments to give a local witness of unity and Gospel values.

Structure

Focolarini

The focolarini have given the name to the Focolare Movement. They are single men and women who live in separate communities called focolares (hearths), which are at the core of the Movement. They strive to keep alive the “fire” from which the name “focolare” derives.

They put their goods in common. They feel drawn by God, and have given their lives to Him, firmly convinced of His love. They have left father, mother, family, and lands, to contribute to the realization of Jesus’ prayer: “That all be one” (Jn 17:21).

They can be found in the United Nations, beside the sick and the poor on the fringes of the great metropolises and in frontier territories, in skyscrapers and in slums, in villages and capitals. They wish to make Jesus present according to the words of Scripture: “For where two or more gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). This experience of unity with God is the force that leads them to build bridges of peace, to enkindle the light of hope in the midst of darkness, to respond with love to violence. Every split, every division is like a magnet for them, because there is where unity is wanting, and it is for this that they have given their lives.

At present the focolarini number 7,160, living in 742 focolare centres in 83 countries.

Focolarini bring to mind something Chiara Lubich once wrote: “This is the great attraction of the modern world: To

enter into the highest contemplation while remaining immersed in the crowd. . . I'd go even further: to lose oneself in the crowd in order to imbue everything with divine life. . . made participators in God's plans for the human race, to mark the crowd with tints of light as you share each neighbour's shame and hunger, hardship and the brief joys."

Some men focolarini are ordained to the priesthood at service of the Movement.

There are also married people who, faithful to their state in life, are members of focolares with a radical choice of the Gospel. The first married focolarino was Igino Giordani. When both spouses are focolarini, they form a family focolare, married couples who are ready, when family conditions allow it, to move to other parts of the world where their presence could help contribute to unity.

The life of the focolarini is a demanding one not lacking difficulties or failures, but they see this as their primary way of telling God that in this commitment to unity, He is Everything and they are nothing, and that with Him all things are possible.

Everything began with Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement who described the focolare as a community "in the image of the Family of Nazareth, composed of consecrated and married people in the midst of the world, all of them given totally to God, though in different ways."

Volunteers

The Volunteers of God is a branch of the Focolare Movement comprised of men and women from all social categories and professions who freely and radically follow God.

This is the reason for the name “volunteer”. They live out the Gospel spirituality of unity in their daily lives

Since the beginnings of the Movement, Chiara Lubich felt urged to run out to humankind. Recalling those early days she stated: “I believe that our experience of when Jesus in our midst multiplied the loaves to help solve the social problems of Trent, it was an early manifestation of the vocation of the Volunteers, like a first seed.”

The seed took on life and form in 1956 when, under the pressure of the tragic events unfolding in Hungary, Pius XII pronounced his heartfelt plea: “God, God, God. . .” to make “the name of God resound in the public streets, in homes, and in offices. . .”

Chiara accepted that plea and seemed to echo it when she stated: “There is a need for true followers of Jesus in the world. Disciples who will follow him voluntarily. An army of volunteers, for love is free (. . .). A society that bears witness to one only name: God”.

The response was immediate: workers, doctors, nurses, politicians, educators, businessmen and employees – all wanting to be these “Volunteers of God”. It is a typically lay calling, since the Volunteers feel “the special vocation to permeate the things of this earth with the spirit of God.” This way of life is fascinating to many who are now engaged on this path of holiness, a way that the Movement is spreading in five continents.

In the late 60’s, as she saw the social projects that were coming to life through the Volunteers, Chiara entrusted to them

the New Humanity Movement, the Focolare's expression in civic life.

In 1983, during a large event entitled "Towards a New Humanity" involving John Paul II, Chiara gave a presentation of the Volunteers of God and of their vocation: "total donation to God, without any particular consecration. Immersed in the midst of the world, the privileged place for their spreading, they practice the Gospel following the example of the early Christian communities, whom they try to emulate in this century, being one heart and one soul, with the consequent spiritual and material 'communion of goods'. Within our world (. . .) they strive to bring the fire, the light, the strength, and the richness of the Risen Lord by generating his presence through their unity, in homes, hospitals, schools, parliaments, offices and everywhere."

In 2006, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Volunteers, in the presence of the 11,000 persons present in Budapest, Hungary for the occasion, Chiara Lubich re-ignited their vocation, calling on them to respond to the challenges of today because, "the world is in need of credible persons who are builders of a new humanity in the different areas of society." She concluded by saying: "Aim at accomplishing God's plan for humankind: universal fraternity."

At present, the men and women Volunteers are around 20, 000 with another 4,000 in the process of becoming Volunteers. They include Catholics, Christians belonging to different churches, and faithful of other religions.

New Families

The New Families Movement, one of the movements within the Focolare Movement, developed in 1967. It is made up of families who try to live the Spirituality of Unity and spread to other families values which work towards universal brotherhood.

New Families provides a range of activities: formation activities for both established families and engaged couples, special care for: couples in crisis, widows, separated couples and unmarried couples. We are committed to supporting the culture of family life as well as political policies to support families. To this end we engage in meetings, publications and work together with a range of agencies.

Our style of life is rooted in the Gospel lived out in all aspects of family life and commitment on a local level: the relationship within the couple, upbringing of children, building a constructive rapport with other families and involvement with cultural, ecclesial and civil realities.

Since the beginning Chiara Lubich – with the precious contribution of Igino Giordani, Italian writer, politician and first married focolarino – spoke strongly of the beauty of the design of God on marriage, underlining the importance of the educational role parents have and the social action of the family itself. 'I believe that the charism of unity, grafted onto the institution of marriage, will accomplish a greater masterpiece than we realise.' Chiara Lubich confided in a talk in 1974.

To attain this she always implored couples to love one another and yet to always look out to families in difficulty,

divided or widowed as well as to children who have been abandoned and all situations of marginalisation.

In her historic talk founding New Families on July 19th 1967 she set a task for the families present: 'In front of you, I see the face of Jesus who looks at the world and seeing the crowds has pity on them. I say this because this portion of the world which rests on your shoulders is the most broken, it is most like Christ in his abandonment. However it is the same Jesus that must, through your eyes, look at the crowds and act, because pity should not remain a feeling but should become action'.

With the passing of time some associations and action groups have been set up in a number of countries working for the good of families through activities which are not only spiritual but also cultural and practical, for example:

– 'Azione per Famiglie Nuove onlus' (AFN) set up in Italy in 1988 with three aims:

Cultural and formative initiatives for families on the family.

Co-operation for development: through support at a distance for families and children in grave economic difficulties
– active in 53 countries.

International adoptions: Since 2001 AFN has been recognised within Italian law as an international adoption agency collaborating with 6 nations.

– Loreto School: Established in 1982, in Loppiano (near Florence, Italy) the Loretto School provides residential courses on themes relating to all aspects of family life seen in the light of the spirituality of unity. Those taking part in the course reside

as complete nuclear families at Loppiano. At the end of their course these families return to their home countries and become a reference point for other families of the movement. So far 1,500 families from the 5 continents have passed through the Loretto School.

One of the important developments of the New Families Movement has been the Familyfests which are large scale international meetings held periodically in Rome to which tens of thousands of families come and share their experiences of the projects they are involved in.

‘Today the family needs a strong injection of love’ Chiara told the 22 thousand present at the first Familyfest held in 1981, and she added: ‘Our Movement wants to revitalise the love which is innate within every family with that love which is a pure gift from God.’

During the Familyfest of 1993, Chiara spoke of the family as the ‘seed of communion for the world of the third millennium’ she hoped that ‘the values that are natural within a family – gratitude, spirit of service, mutual support – could be transferred into the human family’.

Her message to the Familyfest in 2005 to live and give witness to mutual love in the family ‘so that we will grow closer to the time when all will be one’, was given in the square in front of the Italian Parliament and broadcast live to 7 other events as part of the 145 Familyfest events held throughout the world on the same day.

40 years from its foundation, seeing the development and the fruits born from the New Families Movement, Chiara underlined ‘the design on the family as the primary cell in

society is real bold and daring, beautiful and demanding'. In fact 'It is extremely important for building peace in the world.' (...) 'You exist to give witness to unity, to lasting love, the Gospel lived. Not only will you live in joy, but you will continue to attract many hearts to love so that the goal of reaching, together with the whole Focolare Movement, universal brotherhood.' (3rd November 2007)

Globally there are 800,000 people involved in the New Families Movement.

Gen

1966 – Foundation of Movement Gen.

Chiara Lubich said, July 6, at the meeting of the little girls of Movement: "This is a historic date, a day that will make history, because it is the first time that the Holy Father is meeting with the young girls of the Focolare Movement. (...) On this very day, I had planned to do something, that is, to officially give life to the branch of the young girls, and the teens (...). All of this also applies to the young boys and the teen boys".

1967 – "Youth of the world, unite!" This was the appeal Chiara made addressing the young adults and children who were part of the Movement at that time; she invited them to "Get together the biggest number possible of youth around the world and begin a large scale revolution with the cry 'Let's unite!'. She clarified that this was to be "A revolution of love", and its goal was to fulfil Jesus' prayer: "That all may be one". From the response of thousands of young people throughout the world to this invitation the "new generation" of the Focolare Movement was born. 1968 – Its identity was made

clearer through a symbolic gesture: the Gen were presented with a statuette which showed them handing on a flag from the first to the second generation, on this model was the inscription: "That all may be one" (jn 17,21) and "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mt 27,46). The first quote set out the programme for the movement and the second gave the secret that would make it happen.

Gen 2

The Gen 2 are scattered throughout the world and are from every culture, social strata, religion or none: they represent the second generation of the Focolare Movement and share its charism completely.

They have discovered that living the Gospel demands a real revolution in their lives, a revolution which is able to change the world: they are committed to living this revolution with courage and determination. They know that their strength and perseverance come from the presence of Jesus, who promised "Where two or three are united in my name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt 18,20).

They meet occasionally in little groups known as "Gen 2 units", where they try and keep that presence of Christ alive among them; whilst together they share the experiences they have had when trying to live the Word of God. They give each other help and encouragement.

The Gen 2 are the main animators for Youth for a United World movement which is active in society promoting universal brotherhood.

Gen 3

The Gen 3 are the third generation of the Focolare Movement, their ages range from 9 to 17. Their presence within the Movement was highlighted particularly in 1970 when Chiara noticed that their lively characteristic was very different from the older age group, so she suggested a specific style of formation for them, distinct from the others.

Chiara herself outlined the Gen 3 programme:

“The Gen 3 aim very high (...) They recognise that the ones who have had the greatest impact in the world are the saints; they drew crowds, have brought many people to God, they have changed the world socially (...) [the Gen 3] Want to be – and don’t be surprised – a generation of Saints.”

Around the Gen 3 there are many other boys and girls who want to share the same style of life without such a level of commitment and they are known as the Movement Children for Unity. Together they work on common themes called ‘pathways’ carrying out initiatives on a local and international level to help build a united world.

Gen 4 and Gen 5

As within all families there is a special place for the youngest members: for us these are the Gen 4 aged between 4 and 8 and the Gen 5 up to age 4.

These age groups are especially sensitive to love, learning to live it out practically through the example of others living the spirituality of unity; they discover that this love, when it is mutual, brings the presence of Jesus which they learn to

recognise and with whom they have a simple, straightforward relationship.

Through their international congresses they come into contact with children and adults from other countries and religions, and they experience from an early age that they are all children of the same Father, and so are open to the whole of humanity.

Each morning they start the day by rolling the “dice of love” (an idea Chiara gave them). Each face on the dice shows a point of the art of loving: love everyone, be the first to love, ‘make yourself one with the other’, see Jesus in the other, love your enemy and love each other. The motto that comes up when the dice is thrown is the one that they try to put into practise during the day, and then they share their joys and experiences that they have found when trying to love people all day.

They spread the idea of this “dice of love” within their school, with friends and relatives. The dice is now used in many classes, and in some cases whole schools as well as within parish groups and as part of education projects.

In a special way love encourages these children to live the culture of giving in lots of ways: by giving a smile, a helping hand, friendship, sharing a snack, giving consolation, joy, helping the poor, giving forgiveness.... They make the discovery “When we love we are happy, and if we love always, we will always be happy!”.

Gens

A brief history

After the Second Vatican Council, when there was a crisis of vocations to the priesthood, Chiara Lubich felt the urge to take particular care of the seminarians from various nations in touch with the Focolare Movement.

At Easter 1968, in the Mariapolis Centre in Rocca di Papa, Italy, 70 of them had their first meeting. 'It would be wonderful,' Chiara said, 'if the Lord were to raise up a host of seminarians who, with the spirit of unity, would not only protect their own vocations, but during their time in seminary could also give rise to a current of unity that would attract many other young people.'

This was the birth of a new expression of the Focolare Movement, one that reached out to young people called to the priesthood: the Gens. After that an increasing number of seminarians made the Movement's spirituality of communion their own.

They remain united with their formators and fully part of the life of their seminaries. They find in the Ideal of unity the key to responding to their calling with joy and enthusiasm. Communion with other people in the Movement, who have the widest range of vocations, gives them a deeper understanding of their role within the 'communion of the Church'.

In particular the spirituality of unity helps them make God the core choice in their lives, before and more important than priesthood. This leads them to live the Word of God intensely which helps them to proclaim it as credible witnesses; to conform their lives to Jesus crucified and forsaken as the pattern of the priest; to be builders of unity in the seminary and

in the diocese; and to be open to all as they put into practice of the art of loving that emerges from the Gospel.

On 29 November 1994 Pope John Paul II said to a meeting of the Gens, 'It is good that you are here in Castel Gandolfo, because "focolare" means something extremely simple and extremely deep. It says that there is a "togetherness".'

So, the vocation of the seminarian is not a solitary vocation, like a hermit's, but it is a vocation to live together with others: to live for the others, in a wider family. And I think that Focolare spirituality will prepare you very well for this vocation.'

The Gens 3 Movement

Seminarians in middle and in secondary schools, and other young people exploring the priestly vocation, also found that this way of living a light for their own lives. In 1980, therefore, the Gens3 Movement came into being. This was the third generation of the Priest's Movement.

Initiatives

The Gens Movement has engaged in initiatives to foster a communitarian and family-like way of living in seminaries. They meet in small groups wherever they are to share what they have experienced and they hold regional meetings, work camps, holidays, study courses, and so on. At a world level they periodically hold international congresses and they share news and exchange experiences by means of their church-focused magazine, called Gen's in Italian and Being One in English, which comes in both printed and online form.

Priests

Since the 50s a number of diocesan priests have been attracted by the spirit of unity which characterises the Focolare Movement, hinged on the commandment of reciprocal love. Through it they have found a response to the Spirit in the 'current' of renewal that was passing through the Church and found a central point in the Second Vatican Council.

Their involvement with the Movement does not detract from the life of their diocese, but stimulates it, in the midst of their normal active life, trying to make the spirit of unity grow among all, starting with the presbytery, in full agreement with the Bishop and open to a universal dialogue.

In Jesus crucified and abandoned, the cardinal point of the spirituality of unity, they find the way and the measure of living their ministry as pure service; giving their life for all. He in fact is 'the priest' par excellence, with Him the Church is generated, making it 'the home and the school of communion', as a leaven of fraternity within humanity.

The first Focolare of 'priests and deacon focolarini' was in Rome, in 1964. Today there are more than 200 in the world, made up of diocesan priests and permanent deacons, and they commit themselves to live the unity asked by Jesus of the Father (cf Jn 17), in a spirit of poverty, chastity and obedience. Where the situation allows they live together. Whether they live together or not they live to develop between them an intense fraternity which witnesses to their ministry.

Another style of commitment within the Movement are the 'priest and deacon Volunteers' who meet regularly in groups called 'nuclei' and through the spirituality of unity

animate the different parts of the church and the various pastoral fields; from evangelisation to the witness of charity, from the liturgy to the worlds of youth and family.

In 1968 Chiara Lubich launched the Gens Movement (New Priestly Generation) during a congress with 400 seminarians from all 5 continents. The commitment to put God in the first place has saved many vocations and brought about others. Mutual love enables celibacy to be seen in a new light: to live as Jesus did so as to make a family of humanity.

Around the Priests and the Gens there is the Priests Movement which reaches about 20,000 priests and also involves ministers from other Christian churches who share the spirit and life of the Movement. They organise meetings, opportunities to share, communion and formation with other priests, deacons and seminarians: together they want spread the 'light' of evangelical love in every aspect of ecclesial life.

As a result some communities have sprung up which reflect the style of life of the first Christians. Chiara, as a consequence, founded the Parish Movement and the Diocesan Movement.

The International Centre of Spirituality for Priests, Permanent Deacons and Seminarians, sited in Loppiano (Florence), welcomes for a year or 6 months those who, with the permission of their own Bishop, would like to experience a 'school of life', with times for work interlaced with moments dedicated to getting to know better the spirituality of unity and understanding how to put it into practise on a personal, ecclesial and social level.

There are similar opportunities offered in the other Centres of the spirituality of Unity, within the little towns of the Movement in Asia, Africa, South America and also Europe.

Bishops

Ever since the beginning of the Focolare Movement, the members have always looked to their bishops with an attitude of trust and willingness to adhere to his words.

Paolo VI e Klaus Hemmerle Quite early on the bishops themselves realized that the spirituality of unity wasn't only for lay people, religious and priests, but it also had something to say to them.

In 1977, upon the invitation of the theologian Klaus Hemmerle, Bishop of Aquisgrana in Germany, the first meeting for Bishop Friends of the Focolare Movement was held. These were bishops who were desirous to live the spirituality of communion deeply. They were twelve at first, when they attended the general audience in the Vatican, and they came from every continent. Pope Paul VI greeted them and encouraged them to go forward. The following year, when he met them for the first time, he said: "As head of the apostolic college, I encourage you, I urge you, I exhort you, to continue on with this endeavor."

A few years later, in February 1982, John Paul II addressed them saying: "Your longing for unity will bring you to take upon yourselves, with ever new momentum, the ecumenical problem, pushing you to try new initiatives."

And this is what happened. Bishops from other Christian Churches also took the Spirituality of unity as their own and

they began to meet annually in places with ecumenical significance: Istanbul, London, Amman, Beirut, Geneva, Bucharest, Augsburg, Trent, Prague, Lutherstadt Eisleben/Wittenberg and, obviously, Rome. They are joined by their common belonging to Christ.

At present the Bishop Friends of the Movement are around a few hundred and they hold meetings at international and regional levels.

“Contribute to giving a soul to collegiality:” this is what Chiara Lubich indicated to the first bishop friends. “Your communion will bring an advantage for each diocese,” she assured them, “because if the bishops are like this, if they are always joyful, always available, then everyone will be drawn to them.”

The relationship of the bishops with the Focolare Movement is of a purely spiritual nature and it illuminates the many fields of action of their ministry: from pastoral activity to relations with their collaborators, from dialogue within and outside the church to evangelization.

They recognized that the Spirituality of unity is “in very deep harmony with the episcopal charism, that it strengthens effective and affective collegiality and unity with the Holy Father and among bishops, and it leads them to actualize the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the Church-Communion.” Thus it is written in the Regulation for the Branch of Bishop Friends of the Work of Mary, where they are recognized as such by the Pope and approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in a letter of 14 February 1998.

The leaders of various Christian Churches such as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartolomaios I, and the Primate of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Rowan Williams, expressed their appreciation for these initiatives.

Men and Women in Religious Life

Jesus is the Word incarnate. The Church is the Gospel incarnate: that is why it is the spouse of Christ. Every religious family, or order is the incarnation, so to speak, of an expression of Jesus, of one of his attitudes, a fact from his life, one of his sufferings, one of his words.... the Church is a majestic Christ unfolding through the centuries.... Love has taken on various expressions, which are the religious orders and communities in the Church... We only need to circulate Love between these orders. They should learn how to love (one another) as the members of the Holy Trinity love.' (Chiara Lubich)

Members of religious Institutes of Consecrated life, Societies for Apostolate and New Communities who know and are involved with the Focolare Movement have found some common spiritual effects: they have seen the Church enlivened by the fraternity and communion between charisms, greater unity in their own religious family or community, the rediscovery of their own founder, renewed commitment to living the Rule and Constitution in today's society and the modern Church implementing their own charism.

The first to show an interest in the new spirituality being born in Trent (Northern Italy) were the Cappuchins. Their monastery, in Piazza Cappuccini, was opposite the flat where

the first group of young women who had consecrated themselves to God in virginity, Chiara and her companions lived, this group was soon to take up the name Focolare.

In 1947, thanks to a trip by Chiara Lubich to Assisi and Rome, other religious came into contact with the Ideal of unity and began meeting together to share the Gospel experiences they had lived.

In 1967 an important step was taken. In the summer of that year, 25 consecrated men religious from across Europe spent 15 days together close to Trent in order to deepen their understanding of the charism of unity. That was the moment which saw the beginning of the branch of the Religious within the Movement and to whom Chiara explained: 'Your unity should not have anything to do with organisation.... Religious are united in the spirituality.'

The same thing happened for the consecrated women religious. Their historic step was during an audience with Paul VI on 14th April 1971 at which there were present 400 sisters from 20 nations and 80 congregations. On that occasion the Pope indicated the road they could take: "Get to know and deepen your unity with your respective founders, in the climate of fraternal charity, of the Focolare Movement."

Around these men and women religious the gen-re have blossomed (new generation of religious). Early in their formation to the consecrated life within the religious orders intend to live the spirituality of unity.

In the General Statutes of the Work of Mary (official name for the Focolare Movement) approved by John Paul II in 1990, through the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the members of

Institutes of Consecrated Life and Apostolic Societies can be full members of the Movement. The link is 'essentially a commitment which is spiritual in nature' article 5 of the Regulation, and their involvement must be with the permission of their superior.

To offer opportunities for members Institutes of Consecrated Life, Apostolic societies and New Communities to deepen their understanding of the spirituality of unity, some International Centres have opened situated in the little towns of the Focolare Movement, in which the religious and consecrated give witness to their charism whilst sharing together.

On 25th October 2004 the Lateran Pontifical University, Institute 'Laretianum', conferred on Chiara Lubich an honorary doctorate in the Theology of Consecrated Life.

The magazine called 'Charisms in Unity', available in 8 languages, contributes to the spreading of the thoughts and the communion between charisms.

Teens for Unity

There are some 150,000 teens for unity spread over 182 countries in all the continents of the world. Their aim is to build a united world; they know this is not just a dream; it is the future they want to build. Each one makes it a commitment and tries to bring it about in their daily life, at school, with their family, their friends and in their home town.

This mass movement called Teens for Unity started in 1984 with the Gen 3 (a branch of the Focolare Movement); they share the ideal of fraternity and try to make it happen by

following all the possible 'pathways', aiming to knock down all barriers of hate and indifference.

They believe in Evangelical Love as the only power capable of changing the world and they try to live out that love, involving their friends and all those around them in the challenge. They are committed to living the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would like them to do to you", a phrase found in the Bible and in many sacred writings of the world religions. It is a principal shared by many. Living the Golden Rule, in fact ,creates new relationships capable of building peace and universal brotherhood while allowing each one to remain faithful to his or her own faith.

They give witness to their ideal of a united world through meetings and special days they organize, assemblies at school, games, sports events, actions for ecology, all types of demonstrations, etc., using all the means possible, (music, words, art, concrete actions...) to reach out to all their peers.

They are committed to bringing unity where they live by building bridges of unity with those who are different from them because of culture, age, religion, etc. They meet with refugees and immigrants, try to dialogue with all types of people and find a common point of interest with each one, discovering that universal brotherhood starts with getting to know each other on a personal basis and building true relationships.

And that's how the activity LET'S COLOUR OUR CITY came about. Through concrete actions, the teens for unity commit themselves to coloring the "gray" areas of their towns; places with high levels of poverty, loneliness and social exclusion.

Their desire is to make their city a place where everyone can feel 'at home'. Not only do they get their peers involved, but adults, families and other organizations, as well.

They are builders of peace, on both a personal and collective level, they take part in peace marches, they meet daily in the 'Time-out' (every day, all the teens for unity of the world stop whatever they're doing at 12 noon and observe one minute of silence or prayer for peace), they are protagonists in a whole range of local and global initiatives for peace.

They live the culture of giving: they share what they have (material goods, talents, time) with the other teens for unity around the world, just like in a family where those who have more share with those in need. They have lots of ways of doing this but one particular event is the Spring Fair, where they sell goods and products to raise money to support the "Giving Projects," micro-realizations in various parts of the world supporting children in need.

With their Schoolmates project, they've created a network of schools; classrooms around the globe are in touch and learn about each other's cultures and how each one is already working to build a united world. They've set up a solidarity fund to provide scholarships for peers in countries at war or with great social and economic disadvantage.

How Teens4unity Developed

· 1984 Easter Sunday during a school of formation for gen3 Chiara Lubich sent a message inviting them to involve as many other teenagers as possible to help build a united world: this was the start of Teens4unity.

- 1985 Chiara launched the ‘pathways for unity’ for all the teens of the world so they could travel together towards a united world. The first one was the red pathway: a planetary communion of goods among all the teens for unity to help those in greatest need and to fill the economic gaps among them.

- 1987 in Castelgandolfo (Rome), the first Supercongress (world-wide meeting of the teens for unity).

- 1987 at the Summit of Leaders of the Great Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan Teens4unity presented a pledge with 147,000 signatures of boys and girls from all over the world, as their commitment to building peace. This was the start of the yellow pathway.

- 1988 the European Year of Cinema and Television. Teens for Unity launched ‘TV for a United World’. A message asking that mass media be used to contribute to the building of a united world and signed by 750,000 people was hand-delivered to the European Commission for Cinema and TV, the European Council and the United Nations in New York. Thus the launch of the violet pathway.

- 1990 the first Gulf War was raging when the Time-out was proposed to the whole Focolare Movement. Ever since then, it has been a daily appointment with a moment of silence or prayer asking for the end to all wars.

- 1992 a great growth in the numbers of teens for unity; the second Supercongress saw the participation of 9,000 boys and girls coming from all over the world, showing just how far-reaching this movement had become.

- 1997 the third Supercongress saw the launch of the activity called “Let’s bring our joy to everyone, now!”

- 2000 on the tenth anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, boys and girls from 40 nations took part in the first Conference of Children for the Coming Generation to dialogue on peace and unity in the new millennium. The final document, addressed to the Heads of State of the world, and signed by 200,000 people from around the world was hand-delivered to the United Nations in New York by a small representation of Teens4unity.

- 2002 the fourth Supercongress brought thousands of young people flooding into the streets of Rome, and during the event at the Colosseum, the 10,000 participants showed their commitment to universal brotherhood. There the, Schoolmates project began with the indigo pathway.

- 2005 the green pathway began with the first Run4unity, a relay of sports events across the globe for peace.

- 2008 the second Run4unity involved more than 100,000 young people from many cultures, races and religions. Passing the baton from one time-zone to the next, they showed their commitment to building unity and they spread a symbolic rainbow of peace over the world. 300 cities in 87 countries were involved in the event.

- 2009 the Supercongress took place in India.

Youth for a United World

Young people were always present and actively involved in the Focolare Movement ever since its beginnings.

But their specific place in the Movement began to emerge in 1967 when Chiara Lubich launched her motto: “Youths of the world, unite!” that laid the groundwork for the youth

movements of the Focolare: the Gen Movement in 1968 and Youth for a United World in 1985.

Young people between the ages of 17 and 30, scattered across five continents, of different ethnicities, nationalities and cultures have been responding to her call up to the present day. They belong to various Christian denominations, different religions, or do not profess a religious belief, but they all are united by the desire to build a more united world: to make humankind more and more into a single family, where the personal identity of every individual is honored.

They strive in many ways to build universal brotherhood, to heal the divisions that exist within families, between generations, between different social groups, etc.

They are engaged in international campaigns in support of peace and fraternity in local and global public events, such as Genfest, which give testimony, that it is possible to live as brothers and sisters. They are also engaged in simple gestures of solidarity and dialogue with those close to them on a daily basis: the needy and marginalized, acquaintances and family. In each of these neighbors they try to see a brother or a sister to welcome.

Their way of living has given rise to many types of activities – from small projects in response to emergency situations, such as helping people in nations that have been affected by natural disaster or war, to the numerous seeds of brotherhood, wherein young people are engaged in on-going local projects in favour of the most needy, like street children and the homeless, the elderly and the abandoned, prisoners and immigrants – everything that their imaginations can come

up with to help in healing the wounds of the society in which they live.

They also involve other institutions in their work, especially during United World Week, a week during which all the Youth for a United World intensify their activity in order to make an impact on public opinion in their countries and to give witness that you can live to build a united world, making humanity more and more into a family. The United World Week takes place annually since 1996. It proposes to cities and institutions the promotion of peace and unity at every level. Though promoted by young people, it is open to any person animated by the same principles and objectives.

This cultural trend gradually penetrates into the world of youth, who are called to face the numerous challenges brought by relativism and individualism.

The Youth for a United World do not live for brotherhood only through social projects, but also in their own personal lives.

Those who are Christian among them find, in their daily lives, an opportunity to consolidate the choice of Jesus as their model and the Gospel as their code of life. Those who belong to other religions welcome the ideal of a united world, finding continual encouragement by faithfully reflecting the doctrines of their faiths in their personal lives. Those young people with non-religious convictions follow the golden rule, which invites them to do to others as we would like done to us, and they highlight the absolute value of the human person.

They are aware that the unity they believe in and live for is not a mere human project, but the plan of God for humanity: “That all may be one” (John 17:21).

The Genfest

A significant milestone in the story of the Youth for a United World is the Genfest, a major international gathering that has accompanied the birth and development of this movement and shown to the world the existence of thousands of young people from many places, who are living for universal brotherhood.

1973 – Loppiano (Florence) 8,000 youths gather for the first Genfest.

1975 – In Rome, Italy, the entire Palaeur Stadium, is welcomed and blessed by Paolo VI.

Since then the Genfest becomes a regular event for youths, every 5 years.

1980 – In the midst of the Cold War, 40, 000 youths gather at Flaminio Stadium in Rome, Italy to bear witness that a united world is possible.

1985 – The Youth for a United World Movement, which had been foreseen by Chiara Lubich already in 1983, is officially born at the Palaeur Stadium in Rome, Italy.

1990 – At long last, youths from Eastern Europe are also present, following the crumbling of the Berlin Wall. And they are welcomed by the one who contributed so much to its falling: John Paul II.

1995 – The Genfest can be watched worldwide through satellite links and the internet.

2000 – The Genfest becomes an event of the World Youth Day in Rome and the occasion for sharing the witness of holiness given by many Youth for Unity who have already departed for Heaven, first among them, Chiara “Luce” Badano, who was proclaimed Blessed on 25 September 2010.

2012 – Budapest, the “city of bridges” has become the ideal theatre for today’s long awaited event, the 2012 edition of Genfest. A hundred and four nations from five continents were represented including a group of 250 young people from the Middle East. There were many Christians from different Churches and around 100 from other religions together with a constant presence of youths with no religious affiliation.

The main animators of Youth for a United World are the ‘Gen’ (new generation) that is, young people who are radically committed to the spirituality of unity.

New Humanity

The awareness that living the Gospel in the light of the collective spirituality proposed by Chiara Lubich can provide answers to the concrete social challenges of every time and place, has urged men and women of good will to face with foresight and competence the problems of modern society, to heal wounds and highlight the potential of individual communities. The spiritual dimension has never been disconnected from the social dimension in the life of the Focolare Movement. Ever since 1943 Chiara herself dreamed of “resolving Trent’s social problem” and with her first

companions they went around the city to heal both the spiritual and material wounds of those who had survived the bomb attacks, to comfort the ones who had been left all alone, to distribute food and clothing to those who were in need of them. There are countless such experiences and extraordinary examples of the intervention of Providence.

The goal of the New Humanity Movement is to be a social expression of the Focolare Movement, to help people, in their daily lives, to live out that Gospel revolution that enters into the structures of society, bringing renewal and generating hope and trust and what is positive.

The New Humanity Movement was begun in 1968, animated and supported by the men and women Volunteers of God, to actualize the words of the Gospel in various social, cultural, economic, and political environments, and to offer concrete answers to the challenges of modern society.

New Humanity entered into public life, already quite developed and widespread, in 1983 with a large gathering at the Palaeur Sport Stadium in Rome, Italy, in which 15 thousand people from around the world had gathered. As she presented to John Paul II the fruits of the social action brought about through the spirituality of unity, Chiara described those gathered as persons who desire to “give witness with their lives to the world around them, and to show with clear facts, the formidable impact that the Gospel has also on the most earthly aspects of life, both for the individual and for society as a whole; that is, the contribution that the Word of God, put into practice, is able to give toward the construction of the earthly city.”

People of all faiths and social backgrounds belong to New Humanity. They would like to give a soul to modern society by contributing towards the renewal of people as well as social structures. Precisely because of this contribution that the Gospel gives “to the construction of civil society, renewing and transforming it with the spirit of unity in every environment,” as we read in Article 4 of the Regulations, the people who belong to New Humanity, recognize in all the wounds and divisions of society Jesus’ cry of abandonment and, trusting in his promise: ‘Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them’ they strive to be united in their work in order to respond to his cry with love. They try to induce reciprocity which brings unity, offering their ideas and their activities for the renewal of relationships, environments, and structures, even influencing politicians and legislators. They take the song of the Magnificat as their “Magna Carta” and entrust all that they do to Mary Queen of All Peoples.”

Article 3 of the Regulations states that New Humanity is divided into “worlds” which represent the various environments of social life, with all of the people involved, and with the different categories that operate within them. For example, doctors, nurses, and patients belong to the world of health; teachers, students, and parents belong to the world of education. The same is true for the worlds of politics, economy, art, and law, etc.

A recent developments concerning urban society has been “City Project” in which an extensive dialogue has begun within civil society, in associations, in different forms of

volunteering and in institutions, through various social, cultural and political initiatives.

It is a laboratory of fraternity, then, from within society in which one can rediscover the beauty of thinking and working together for a common project, with the courage to face humanity's great questions regarding respect for the human person with everything this involves, respect for life, for the environment, and also for peace and justice in order to render the world community more beautiful and livable.

<http://www.umanitanuova.org/>

Parish Movement

To make the parish a «home and school of communion». This direction given by John Paul II in 2001 in his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, could summarise the significance of the Parish Movement's activity.

We are in the 60's. Many parish priests who encountered the Focolare Movement realised that its characteristic communitarian spirituality had an impact on their lives and began to give a new look even to parish activities and their parish communities.

Many of them attended the 13th July 1966 audience in which pope Paul VI encouraged them to bring the spirit of unity to their dioceses and parishes.

In response to this desire, Chiara Lubich launched the Parish Movement, inviting the Focolare members who offered their services at the parish level to animate this "Church cell" with the spirit of unity, paving the way for the first meetings of parish communities.

Thus began the Parish Movement with an agenda that would turn out to be profoundly in tune with pope John Paul II's direction in the above mentioned apostolic letter as well as with what Benedict XVI wished for: «The first and most important requirement is that the parish should constitute an "ecclesial community" and an "ecclesial family"».

In fact, when the evangelical spirituality of unity is lived in a parish by the priests and the laity, with full and joint responsibility, the feeling of family in the community is tangible. The ensuing effects of the Spirit are typical of one who lives a communitarian dimension: the need for a greater communion is felt and one freely shares money, time, talents as well as needs; the community opens up to the various forms of poverties and social urgencies in the area; evangelization primarily aims at witnessing reciprocal love and the lived Gospel, and the atmosphere of joy and unity sensed in the community increases recourse to the sacraments and particularly to the Eucharist.

In this way, the parish become the home for all. Attention is paid to the harmony and beauty of the church and parish premises so that they may worthily to welcome Jesus present in every person and in the united community.

The contribution of associations and movements is valorised, each according to its proper charism a the service of the common good.

Catecheses and homilies are directed towards embodying the Word of Jesus in everyday life.

It brings about an openness to dialogue that knows how to listen and communicate with detachment, which tends to foster friendly relationships and aims at universal brotherhood.

At present members of the Focolare Movement offer their services in parishes as catechists, Eucharistic ministers, in the councils or commissions, in the Caritas association, in the recreational centres, in courses for engaged couples and families, or collaborating in the various parish initiatives and activities.

The parishes are principally located in Italy, many European and Latin American countries, but also in North America, various Asian and African countries, and Australia.

Diocesan Movement

The purpose of the Diocesan Movement is to bring the charism of unity to inside the diocese.

This Movement is composed of persons who belong to the Work of Mary and try to contribute to the renewal of the life of the structures of the diocese, promoting and nourishing an every deeper unity of the faithful around their Bishop, raising relationships of brotherhood and communion among everyone and promoting dialogue between the different entities that already exist within the diocese.

Like everything other expression of the Focolare Movement, this movement emerged from life. The Diocesan Movement began in Ascoli, Italy in 1973, with the youth school camps that were animated by a priest focolarino, who was involved in the pastoral care of the youth in his diocese. The positive feedback of the days spent in an atmosphere of great

joy reached the ears of the bishop of Ascoli, Bishop Morgante, who, impressed by the life he found there, encouraged them to go forward with it.

The experience then repeated itself in the diocese of Teramo in April of 1976 where the first school camp also received the official approval of the Bishop of the locality, Bishop Conigli.

The most important work of the Diocesan Movement is the formation of persons who live and are able to transmit the spirituality of communion to the parish and diocesan communities, looking forward to the realization of the Church-communion of which the Second Vatican Council and more recent Church documents have spoken.

During the next years it spread to another four Italian diocese. At present, the Diocesan Movement is present in six Italian diocese: Ascoli, Teramo, Fermo, Macerata, Pesaro, and Perugia.

Priests Movement

The Priest's Movement is one of the expressions of the outreach of the Focolare Movement and shares all the same nature, spirit and aims. It spreads within the diocesan presbyteries, seminaries and the various ecclesial environments a spirit of communion, to contribute to their renewal in the light of the Testament of Jesus: "That all may be one" (Jn 17:21). The priests Movement is made up of: diocesan priests, permanent deacons and Catholic seminarians and also, in line with their own churches, ministers from other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

Making the spirituality of unity their own, priests rediscover the importance of being first and foremost authentic Christians. As a priority before any priestly function they try to witness to: “By this all shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

The evangelical style of life that has arisen, has been confirmed “*Presbyterorum ordinis*” (Decree on Life of Priests, 1965) from the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium emphasis ever since.

In fact, making mutual charity the basis, it becomes spontaneous to put into common material goods and spiritual gifts; give witness to unity and pastoral charity; to live with joy the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience; to have as much care of self as for confreres, make of the house and parish harmonious places which can help communion; continued formation in order to be men of dialogue; to live as a members of the one body by keeping up contact with confreres and all the people of God.

Being alert to the most urgent needs of the Church within the various pastoral fields or ‘ecclesial worlds’, the priests Movement organises meetings and courses on an international and local level, based on the charism and the experience of the Focolare Movement in different pastoral environments, like evangelisation, catecheses, formation etc. These meetings are a real life school, giving the opportunity to know significant experiences from the lay side of the Movement with young people, families, economy, health etc.

In recent years there have been some particularly noteworthy events:

Collaboration with other Movements and Communities and with the diocesan representatives for clergy for a renewal of priestly life and pastoral care

The running of spiritual exercises for priests, deacons and seminarians, inspired by the spirituality of communion

International congresses:

– 2006: “Church Today” with the presence of a thousand priests and seminarians

– 2009: “There is a Way” with 500 seminarians, January 2009

– 2010: “Priests Today”, at the conclusion of the Year of the Priest, in the Paul VI Hall within the Vatican. 4,000 priests took part. With the support of the Congregation for the Clergy and organised together with the Schoenstatt Movement in collaboration with the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal and other ecclesial groups

Among other initiatives:

– Annual course for teachers in seminaries, during the month of July, which inspires participants towards a style of communitarian formation

– A range of publications, such as “365 Thoughts on the life of priests” (Citta Nuova, Rome 2009),

– “Priests in a changing world” – a book published and translated into 17 languages came out during the Year of the Priest (P.Coda, and B. Leahy, Citta Nuova Rome 2010), the result of an international study Seminar;

– Other publications: magazine about ecclesial life “Gen’s”, the Italian edition of which has a circulation of

3,000 copies and offers a deepening of the spirituality of unity and current ecclesial topics. This magazine is also published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Polish.

Movement of Religious Men and Women

Every now and then," wrote Chiara Lubich, "through a person or a book, through their writings, God makes us meet a saint. Little by little, it seems that the saints have approached our Work to encourage it, illuminate it, help it".

And: "If on the one hand we are aware that the charism of our Movement is useful to the whole Church, on the other hand we are also convinced that all the charisms of the Church are useful to us, children of the Church.

It is proper to our spirituality to learn from the saints, to become their children, to participate in their charism".

It is a relationship of reciprocity between the Focolare Movement and the ancient charisms, as can be seen from the above statements, and an experience of communion that is increasingly shared. This is also encouraged by the recent Pontifical Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life in "Starting Afresh from Christ", which expresses itself in this way: "A new richness can spring from an encounter and communion with the charisms of ecclesial movements. Movements can often offer the example of evangelical and charismatic freshness such as the generous, creative initiatives in evangelization. On the other hand, movements as well as new forms of evangelical life can learn a great deal from the faithful, joyful and charismatic witness of consecrated life which bears a

very rich spiritual patrimony, the many treasures of experience and wisdom and a great variety of apostolate and missionary commitments." (nr. 30).

It is thus clear that the Movements of Religious are an integral part of the Work of Mary, that they share its aims and spirit to contribute to the realization of the prayer of Jesus, "That all may be one".

Religious men and women, consecrated members of secular Institutes, nuns and monks and young people in their first formation, who in various ways are sensitive and willing to share the spirit and the purpose of the Work of Mary. They participate in some of her activities or even just show her esteem, love and help. Their bond with the Work is essentially of a spiritual nature.

Those who participate in it deepen the Spirituality of communion, which they feel is suitable for their vocation to be in the Church today. They live it first of all by fostering communion within their own community or Institute, between the old and new charisms and by establishing relationships of unity with all the people of God. They feel they can implement the recommendation that John Paul II made in 1996 to a large group of religious, members of the Focolare movement, gathered from all continents: "The Spirituality of communion that the Work of Mary promotes and fosters is an essential dimension of Christian life. I encourage you to grow in it, to live it in your communities, in the different environments in which you work".

The religious men and women of these Movements promote every initiative to increase the spirit and culture of

communion, days of study, discussion and witness; they organize conferences, weeks of spirituality, formation-courses that are inspired by the Spirituality of unity, the ecclesiology of communion. One of the most recent events was "Charisms in Communion", held in Assisi on 23 October 2010.

The religious men and women, called "experts in communion" (Plenary SCRIS 1978, Religious and Human Promotion, n. 24), seek the dialogue of life with all people and they are sensitive to the ecumenical dialogue, the interreligious dialogue and the dialogue with people of different convictions and with people of different cultures.

Mariapolis and Focolare Towns

Mariapolis

What is the Mariapolis? The word literally means City of Mary and refers to a gathering of several days for Focolare members and friends, young and old, people of all backgrounds who strive to live in a spirit of brotherhood in light of the universal values of the Gospel.

This rather unique experience that is repeated in many countries around the world is shaped by the Golden Rule which invites us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. At a Mariapolis it is possible to see what it would be like in daily life if our relationships were based on being gifts for one another.

History of the Mariapolis

In the difficult post-war period while struggling to heal from the wounds inflicted on all the nations of Europe by the

Second World War, a growing number of young people, families, workers, professionals and politicians joined members of the nascent Movement for summer holidays in the mountains of Trentino, Italy.

Right from the start the Mariapolis was a small chunk of society renewed by the love of the Gospel. South Tyroleans and Italians, French and Germans all participated as the hatred of the war quickly melted away. An old Mariapolis song describes the spirit of fraternity at those first cities of Mary: “Train operators, students, doctors, chemists and parliamentarians go to the Mariapolis and discover that they are brothers and sisters. What matter then our posts or positions, when we’ve been made brothers and sisters here?” That unique atmosphere of brotherhood which was the hallmark of the first city of Mary is still experienced in Mariapolises throughout the world.

From early on, a note of internationality characterized the Movement which was spreading rapidly, first in Italy and then, in 1952, in the other countries of Europe and to the other continents in 1958. In 1959, more than 10,000 people attended the Mariapolis at Fiera di Primiero in Trentino, Italy. Twenty seven countries from different continents were represented. At that Mariapolis – and later in 1960 at Freiburg, Germany – while speaking to an international gathering about unity among the peoples of the world, Chiara Lubich proposed the Gospel commandment of love as the relationship that could exist between nations: “Love your neighbour’s country as your

The Mariapolis continues today on all 5 continents and now there are also twenty permanent Mariapolises around the world, the first and most developed in Loppiano, Italy.

Focolare Towns

The development of the Focolare little towns can be traced through a series of events and intuitions experienced by Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement.

There is a note in one of Chiara Lubich's diaries which recalls a visit to a Swiss abbey in 1962 where she experienced the first intuitions of the idea of having 'little towns' inhabited by the people of the Focolare Movement. She wrote: "It was at Einsiedeln that I understood, from looking at the abbey church below and all that was surrounding it, that a town of the Movement should develop, which wouldn't be made up of an abbey or hotels, but rather of simple houses, work places, schools – just like an ordinary town." These developments grew and are known today as little towns or permanent Mariapolis.

Even earlier in the summer of 1949 due to unforeseen circumstances the men and women focolarini had withdrawn to the Dolomite Mountains for a period of rest. During this time many understandings developed which in turn became very significant for the future of the Movement. Over the following years they withdrew in the summer to the Dolomites and each year the number of those that came with them increased significantly. The people came from all age groups and walks of life. It was in 1951 that these summer gatherings were attributed the title 'temporary town'. The only law within the 'town' was evangelical charity which roused within the

participants a rich sharing of material, cultural and spiritual goods.

1952 saw a number of priests and religious from a variety of orders joining the summer retreat. The presence of people from different spiritualities brought another depth and harmony to the gathering. It was from 1955 that the town took on the name “Mariapolis” (City of Mary), and from then on it has developed to become an expression of that Mariapolis that the Movement wanted to help build in the world.

Those who lived through those summer gatherings in the Dolomites during the ‘50s shared in extraordinary times which could only be last as the holiday period or at the most a few months.

However, during one of these Mariapolis events a young man called Vincenzo Folonari got to know the Movement and was drawn to its genuine evangelical spirit. He donated all his wealth to the Movement, including a large tract of land in the hills near Florence which he had inherited.

Vincezo died prematurely in 1964 which was the same year that building began on the land he had donated. This was the first little town of the Movement coming to life, as Chiara has envisaged it 2 years earlier in Switzerland: Loppiano became the first permanent Mariapolis.

Loppiano has, currently, a population of 900 of whom 70 come from the 5 continents: there are men and women focolarini, families, young people, lay people involved in working for society, priests, religious and occasionally a bishop. The citizens live, work and study there and through their daily actions give witness to the phrase from the Bible: ‘Love one

another as I have loved you'. Each year an average of 40 thousand visitors pass through Loppiano.

Other little towns have sprung up since the first in Loppiano. They are scattered around the world and are at various points of development. Each town has its own characteristic in harmony with its own environment.

Montet is in Switzerland and, like Loppiano, it too has an international population and provides formation courses for members of the Movement. Ottmaring in Germany has more involvement in ecumenism as does Welwyn Garden City in Great Britain. Rotselar in Belgium, has a focus on ecology. There are other little towns in other European countries: Poland, Spain, France, Ireland and Portugal. The little towns in Brazil engage in social action, whilst O'Higgins in Argentina has many young people who play a real part in the activities. Tagatay in the Philippines centres on interreligious dialogue, whilst the building of unity in a multi-ethnic society is typical both of Luminosa in New York and the little town of Krizeyeci in Croatia.

In Africa the emphasis is on inculturation based on the Gospel. The first of the African little towns was established in the heart of virgin forest in Fontem, Cameroon. Some focolarini doctors were invited to help the Bangwa tribes people of the region who were suffering due to a range of illnesses and a very high infant mortality rate. Many Bangwa and others in the surrounding areas moved by the way the focolarini gave real practical love and support, through their medical assistance and care, were drawn to follow the same path of faith and fraternity. This impact can be seen in the other two little towns, one in Kenya and the other in Ivory Coast.

There are little towns developing in Mexico (known as El Diamante), Venezuela and Chile. In Australia there is a Centre for Unity outside Melbourne.

These little towns are very modern within their context with shops, arts centres, workshops, schools, churches, meeting places and relaxation areas. They are cosmopolitan centres where the distinctions between religion, culture and tradition are not erased, but are valued as a means for meeting one another united in the commitment to see Jesus' dream fulfilled: 'Father, may they all be one, as you and I are one'.

RECOGNITIONS

The Focolare Movement in the Catholic Church. The approval of the Holy See

In the late 1940's, almost imperceptibly, the spirit of the Movement began to spread beyond the borders of Trent, northern Italy. In the space of a few months in that first city about 500 people had begun striving to live the Gospel in the spirit of the early Christians. Now, the focolarini were invited to Milan, Rome, Florence, Sicily and elsewhere and, quietly, Christian communities like the one in Trent began to develop.

But precisely during those years of extraordinary growth, the Church began a careful study of the Movement. It was a long period of intense examination, of suspension and doubts. The 50's and early 60's were years lived in uncertainty of ever receiving approval, which seemed to never arrive.

The nascent spirituality, which was rooted in Scripture, highlighted words that were not often heard before the Second Vatican Council, words like: “unity,” “Jesus in the midst” of the community, “Jesus Forsaken,” etc. Moreover the first focolarine were young and they were lay people who were trying to live the words of the Gospel, not only to read and meditate on them. This appeared “protestant”. And their practice of the communion of goods in order to offer an orderly and organized assistance to the poor appeared “Communist.” But for them it meant living like the first Christians and they felt a particular affinity with the Church in the years before it was divided.

Thus, in the 40’s and 50’s, without knowing it, the Focolare was becoming interwoven with invisible threads with the main currents of thought that were spreading through the Christian world and later taken up by the Second Vatican Council. The attention they paid to the Gospel was in perfect agreement with the biblical movement; their desire to live for unity bound the focolarini to the ecumenical movement (from 1960).

Then they were prepared, when religious and social conditions arrived which required it, to embrace dialogue with the followers of different religions and with people with no religious reference. Moreover, having been started by a laywoman, for laypeople, placed the Focolare in perfect harmony with the emergence of the laity in the Church.

This new passion for unity would be fully recognised and welcomed into the heart of the Catholic Church on the eve of the Council in 1962, when it approved the central nucleus of the

Focolare Movement-Work of Mary. It was a first approval *ad experimentum*.

The definitive approval for the Statutes come in June 1990.

In the decree of approval by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, it says: 'The Movement has developed in faithfulness to its charism and it has spread and grown in maturity. It has thus brought to the Church abundant spiritual fruits and given the world a credible witness of unity.'

Everyone can be part of the Focolare Movement. Indeed among those who belong to it are Christians of various Churches, the faithful of various religions and persons who have no reference point in any religious belief.

Recognitions in life from the world of culture and civil society

Since 1995 there has been a growing number of recognitions awarded to Chiara Lubich on behalf of international organisations, universities and public offices. These motivations highlight in a particular way the contribution towards peace and unity among peoples, religions and cultures. In Chiara Lubich's addresses on such public ceremonies, she presents in different ways a careful study of the various aspects of the charism entrusted to her by the Holy Spirit, thus attributing the fruit of unity and peace that are thereby recognised.

International Organisations

- UNESCO – Unesco Prize for Peace Education 1996 (Paris 1996)
- EUROPEAN COUNCIL – Human Rights Prize 1998 (Strasburg 1998)

Government leaders

- Brazil – Southern Cross award from the President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Rome 1998)
- Federal Republic of Germany – The Great Cross of Merit from the President of Germany Johannes Rau (Rome 2000)
- Italian Republic – Knights of the Great Cross from the President of Italy Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (Rome 2003)

Ecumenism

- From the Anglican Church – Cross of the Order of St. Augustine of Canterbury from the Anglican Primates Archbishop Robert Runcie (London 1981) and Archbishop George Carey (London 1996)
- From the Orthodox Church: The Byzantine Cross from Patriarch Dimitrios I (Istanbul 1984) and Bartholomew I (Istanbul 1995)
- From the City of Augsburg (Germany) – Augustan Peace Prize (between Lutherans and Catholics) (Augsburg 1988)

Interreligious dialogue

- Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (London, 1977)
- From the Jewish Community of Rome -An Olive Tree for Peace (Rocca di Papa 1995)
- From Hindu Movements of Gandhian inspiration Shanti Ashram and Sarvodaya: Defender of Peace Prize (Coimbatore India 2001)

Honorary doctoral Degrees

- Poland – Social Sciences from the Catholic University of Lublin (1996)
- Thailand – Social Communications from St. John’s University in Bangkok (1997)
- Philippines – Theology from the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas in Manila (1997)
- Taiwan – Theology from Fu Jen University of Taipei (1997)
- Usa – Humane Letters from Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut (1997)
- Mexico – Philosophy from the University of San Juan Bautista de la Salle, Mexico City (1997)
- Argentina – Jointly, all 13 Academic Faculties of the State University of Buenos Aires (1998)

- Brazil – Humanities and the Science of Religion from the Catholic University of Sao Paolo (1998)
- Brazil – Economics from the Catholic University of Pernambuco (1998)
- Italy – Economics from the Catholic University of Milan in Piacenza (1999)
- Malta – Psychology from the University of Malta (1999)
- Usa – Education from The Catholic University of America (Washington D.C. 2000)
- Slovakia – Theology from the University of Trnava (2003)
- Italy – Theology of Consecrated Life from Claretianum Institute of the Lateran Pontifical University, (Rome 2004)

Honorary citizenships

- Palermo – 1998
- Buenos Aires (Argentina) – 1998
- Rome – 2000
- Florence – 2000
- Genoa (Italy) – 2001
- Turin – 2002

- Milan – 2004
- La Spezia – 2006
- Rocca di Papa (Rome) – 1995
- Pompei (Naples) – 1996
- Tagaytay (Philippines) – 1997
- Rimini (Bologna – Italy)- 1997
- Chacabuco (Argentina) – 1998
- Incisa Valdarno (Italy) – 2000
- Rovigo (Italy) – 2000
- Bra (Cuneo – Italy) – 2002
- Todi (Perugia – Italy) – 2005
- La Spezia (Italy) – 2006

Awards from civic administrations

- Peace and solidarity Prize – Regione Liguria (Italy) – 2001
- Camune Rose Prize – Regione Lombardia – 2003
- Ardent Eagle of St. Wenceslas – Trent (Italy) – 1995
- Turrita d’argento – Bologna (Italy) – 1997

- Brazao Medal d'Armas de Belem – Belém (Brazil) – 1998
- Grosso d'oro – Brescia (Italy) – 1999
- City of Alba Prize – Alba, Italy – 2000
- City of Castelgandolfo, City of Peace Prize – Castelgandolfo (Italy) – 2003
- S.M . Capua Vetere City of Peace Prize – S.M Capua Vetere (CE, Italy) – 2003
- Civis Tusculanus – Frascati (Rome) – September 2004

Honors from local churches

- Trent (Italy) – The Gold Medal of San Vigilio – January 1995
- Slovenia – The Saints Cyril and Methodius Medal from the Slovenian Church – April 1999
- Brescia (Italy) – Goodheartedness Price Paul VI – September 2005

Cultural boards

- Medal of Honor – State University of San Paolo (Brazil 1998)
- The St. Catherine Silver Plaque – St. Catherine Center of Siena (1987)

- Casentino Prize – Michelangelo Cultural Center – City of Florence, in Arts and Letters (Arezzo 1987)
- First International Prize for Dialogue among Peoples – Franciscan International Study Center (Massa Carrara 1993)
- UELCI Prize: Author of the year 1995 – Union of Italian Catholic Editors (Milan 1995)
- Civilization of Love Prize for interreligious dialogue – International Forum, Civilization of Love (Rieti 1996)
- International Telamone Prize for Peace 1999 – Socialprogramming Center (Agrigento 1999)
- Friendly Heart Prize 1999 – (Brescia 1999)
- Trentino of the Year Award – (Trent 2001)
- 6th Rotary Club Award – (Trent 2001)
- Stefano Borgia Prize for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue – International Center for Borgia Studies – (Velletri 2001)
- Lifetime Achievement Award – Family Theater Productions (FTP) di Hollywood (Montet, Svizzera, 16 July 2006)
- Thomas Moro Award – Catholic University of Paraguay (Asunción, 27 December 2006)

SPIRITUALITY OF UNITY

Chiara Lubich's spirituality soon came to be known as a collective or communitarian spirituality, which focused on Jesus's prayer to the Father "that all might be one" (see Jn 17:21). This spirituality has 12 main points that are interconnected:

1. God-Love
2. God's Will
3. The Word
4. The Neighbour
5. Mutual Love
6. Eucharist
7. The Gift of Unity
8. Jesus Forsaken
9. Mary
10. The Church-Communion

11. The Holy Spirit

12. Jesus in the Midst

These points were not the result of theological reflection or planning and. Like most things in Chiara Lubich's spirituality they invite a response, a decision that brings life.

Throughout the history of the Church there have been saints, holy people and entire communities that have a primarily individualistic spirituality on their journey to God. In the spirituality of unity the individual's experience of God certainly remains unique and unrepeatable, but the charism of unity which the Holy Spirit bestowed on Chiara Lubich has brought forth a spirituality that has given an equally indispensable communitarian dimension to the Christian life. It is not totally without precedent: the Gospel itself is eminently communitarian. Also, there have also been communitarian elements in past experiences and spiritualities that placed love at the basis of the spiritual life.

But Chiara Lubich brings a spirituality that is unique among communitarian approaches to God. Her charism invites us to be one in Christ according to Jesus's words in John's Gospel: "as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they may be one in us" (Jn 17:21). In Chiara Lubich these words of Jesus become a lifestyle.

A communitarian spirituality had already been foretold by contemporary theologians and was mentioned by the Second Vatican Council. Karl Rhaner talked about the spirituality of the future Church as being a fraternal communion in which the

same basic experience of the Spirit is had by all. The Second Vatican Council described the Church as the Body of Christ, and the People of God assembled in the bond of love in the Holy Trinity.

Teresa of Avila, saint and doctor of the Church, describes an “interior castle.” The spirituality of unity helps to build up what Chiara Lubich describes as an “exterior castle” in which Christ dwells in the midst and illuminates its every part.

MEANS FOR UNITY

Prayer

Spirituality and prayer

Natalia Dallapiccola, the first woman to follow Chiara Lubich in the focolare, once shared: “One night, sitting around a table, which was the only piece of furniture that had survived, seeing with the light of a candle, because a blackout had prevented us from using the electricity, Chiara read: ‘As I have loved you, so must you love each other. Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love each other.’”

Those words,” continued Natalia, “fell like oil on fire. We were anxious to know Jesus’ deepest desire. We were looking for a word that could tell us at once, precisely what he wanted from us. And here it was, the word that synthesized it, our eureka moment. And so, before going to school or to work or to the shop, before going out to bring something to the poor, even before praying, we said that there had to be the very love of Jesus between us, because this is what he wanted. And when

we left each other that night, we felt that our lives were changed, they had acquired a different flavour, they had discovered their reason.”

The personal life of prayer is the lifeblood for those who adhere to the spirituality of unity. The relationship with God is the basis of every action. But this life of prayer is also profoundly communitarian: from the songs they sang while holidaying in Dolomites in the 50’s, to the more contemporary songs of Gen Verde and Gen Rosso, from heartfelt participation in the daily liturgy to evening prayer together in the community that embraces the world. The men and women focolarini live their spirituality of communion in every action. This communion isn’t limited to just moments of intimate prayer, but also has reflections in their personal and social lives. A deeper sense of justice is born, for example, the need for legality in society, which the “Communion and Law” section of the Movement strives to promote through different projects.

Chiara Lubich once wrote: “We have an interior life and an external life. Each one blossoms from the other; each is rooted in the other; each is the foliage of the other on the tree of our life”. The interior life is nourished by the external life. Insofar as I enter into the soul of my neighbour, so far do I enter into God who is within me. Insofar as I enter into God who is within me, so far do I enter into the other. God-me-other is an entire world, an entire kingdom. . .”.

In another place she writes: “The greater our love for others, the greater our love for God”.

God is not some distant person out there

Some reflections of the German theologian, Klaus Hemmerle (1992-1994) for the holiday season: God is close to those who suffer and “waste” their time in prayer, knowing how to “remain in silence”.

God is not a distant person who can be approached only by queuing up. He listens with particular attention to those who are particularly poor, and particularly humble.

From the volume *Scelto per gli uomini* (“Chosen for mankind”), p. 113.

The busier I am, the more I need time for prayer. It is then that I discover one thing. When I use, or “waste” my time to remain in God, a sort of “miraculous multiplication of time” comes about. Thanks to the time given to God, I end up having more time at my disposal, or at least, quality time, more available and denser with love to donate to the others. Time becomes like a pearl necklace composed of many precious moments which I am able to live, and bring to fulfilment in meditation and commitment to others.

From the volume *Scelto per gli uomini* (“Chosen for mankind”), pp. 109-110.

We could define the “grain of salt” of Christian prayer as the point in which the distinctive characteristic of the Christian appears clearer and more evident: the fact, that in praying to God the other, our neighbour, is always included; and the fact that the praying person’s “I” always intrinsically includes a “we.”

From the volume *Scelto per gli uomini* (“Chosen for mankind”), p. 114

At times it would be good not to say anything but remain in silence. It is only then, in fact, that we denote how many flows of thoughts, impressions and ideas cross our minds. It is as if we are immersed in a tide that intensifies and unceasingly distances us from ourselves, not allowing us to reach ourselves.

In prayer it is not decisive for us to reach this absolute silence. It may even seem “right” if despite every effort, we are unable to reach it. In fact, somehow we understand that also in that indistinct, confused flow, so devoid of perfection and integrity, I am however myself, I who have been given and abandoned to myself, and I, the one who constantly slips away from myself. And so we can say: I have no power over me, and it is not I who knows and possesses myself but you in the innermost of me, and you who knows and scrutinizes me. You know who I am and what is good for me, and you answer with your “yes” and address me with the word: You.

From the book *Das Wort für uns* (“The Word for Us”), p. 91.

Source: Klaus Hemmerle, “La luce dentro le cose, meditazioni per ogni giorno” (“The Light within things: Daily Meditations”), Città Nuova, 1998.

Living the Word

Hemmerle: The Word and the Spirit

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we offer some thoughts from the Catholic theologian Klaus Hemmerle (1929-1994), who sees in the reciprocal aspect of the Christian

life a common path for all Christians who are in search of unity in the one Spirit.

“There’s only one way to be able to have the most unity and communion possible among us right here and now, and I for one can see no other. This way coincides with [...] us, you and me, all of you and me and all of us together, day by day, in all the situations of our life and in every situation that comes between us, staying anchored in His Word.” (266)

“The Word of God goes beyond the barriers between us and creates communion. [...] Nobody can take this away from us. Nobody can prohibit us from doing it. We can never turn back now. This is the essential point where the road opens for us to move on. [...] If we live the Word to the extreme and in a spirit of reciprocity so that what you live and what I live are the same Word, both of them His Word, then the unity between us grows [...]

We can ask ourselves: But how are we to live in the one Spirit which is the deepest and most intimate reality of God, and the deepest and most intimate reality of me? It’s because of the Spirit whom I seek in you with patient endurance, the gifts of the Spirit that lie in you, a believer and a Christian like me. I question you at great length until I find the Spirit in you. I’m never content myself with compromises saying: ‘Deep down you’re not bad, nor am I. I’m able to find a halfway point where we can meet!’

I don’t even say: ‘I take something of yours and something of mine to come up with a formula that we can both agree on without having to change any fundamentals.’ Rather, I ask myself: ‘Where is the Spirit in you?’ The insistence in my

questioning never constrains you, limits you, but it frees you, so that you can offer me the gifts of the Spirit in you. I'm prepared to let myself be interrogated by you to extreme, so that, trusting in the Spirit, I can also offer and give to you my gifts as gifts from God. Giving our gifts to one another, discovering in reciprocity the gifts of the Spirit in one another – this is the only path for the one Spirit.” (265, 266)

Anyone who has been living the spirituality of unity for a long time can never stop and say: Is what the other saying to me appropriate? What isn't appropriate? In what way is what they are saying compatible with my thinking? And with regard to what isn't compatible? I try to make myself one with the other person, I try to have the other person as my starting point, not as a way to deny what I affirm with certainty based on Christ, but in the sense that in front of the person, I ask: What light are they trying to convey to me? So, I look at myself from the perspective of that other person. I make myself one with the other, trying to re-read my truth through the light of the other.” (268)

(Extracts from dialogue session during the Ecumenical School in Ottmaring, Germany)

Winfried Hagemann: KLAUS HEMMERLE, innamorato della Parola di Dio (Città Nuova 2013).

Dialogue

The Focolare spirituality has spread throughout the world and has given rise to various forms of dialogue. The Movement is engaged in dialogue among movements and new communities within the Catholic Church and is also in dialogue

with members of other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. Relationships with the faithful of the world's religions have paved the way to a broader dialogue among the major world religions. Collaboration between believers and those who profess no specific religious faith has given rise to a fruitful dialogue and concrete projects for peace and justice in the world. A dialogue has also developed among people involved in various professions with the goal of permeating these areas with the values of unity, mutual respect and brotherhood.

Catholic Church

Communion between Ecclesial Movements and new Communities is something new in the history of the Church, but it has spread rapidly in all parts of the world.

History: Pentecost '98

On the Vigil of Pentecost, May 30, 1998, John Paul II invited the Movements and New Ecclesial Communities to Saint Peter's Square, to give a united witness. It was an historic event that brought together members and founders of a variety of Movements, each one the fruit of charism that the Holy Spirit had bestowed on the Church and the world as a response to the needs of our time.

John Paul II showed them their place in the Church, describing them as significant expressions of the Church's charismatic nature, constitutive of the Church herself and co-essential to the Church's institutional aspect.

Four founders spoke at that event: Luigi Giussani, Jean Vanier, Kiko Arguello and Chiara Lubich. Aware of the Pope's

wish that the movements be in communion with one another, Chiara Lubich promised John Paul II that she would do all in her power to promote fraternity among the movements, since her charism was unity.

The Focolare Movement and the other Movements

Since the beginning of the Focolare Movement, Chiara Lubich had opportunities to meet several people who were the bearers of charisms: Fr Leone Veuthey from the Charity Crusade; Father Patrick Peyton, founder of the Family Rosary Crusade; Fr Pedro Richards from the Christian Family Movement; Fr Werenfried van Straaten, the Norbertine priest who founded “Aid to the Church in Need”. She also met the Catholic Charismatic Movement, the Oasis Movement of Father Virginio Rotondi, and the Better World Movement with Fr Richard Lombardi.

Communion in action

Many are the fruits that have matured over the years, thanks especially to the hundreds of Day Meetings that have been held in many countries and attended by over 500 Movements and New Communities, and increased recognition and appreciation by many bishops.

This communion is also built in other ways. Movements gather together for moments of prayer; they take part in common projects also at social and political levels; they practice mutual hospitality; they attend one another’s meetings and celebrations; they reserve space for this dialogue in their press.

The mutual love grows – which is meant to be the main mark of the relationship among the Movements and New Communities – a love that uncovers and values the gift that every ecclesial community contains to the point of loving it as one’s own; a love that gives an effective witness in this day just as it did in the first days of Christianity: “See how they love each other and how each of them is ready to die for the other.”

Benedict XVI and Pope Francis

Eight years from the 1998 Meeting, Benedict XVI invited the Movements and New Communities to Saint Peter’s Square again, this time to encourage them to find ways of addressing the challenges of our time. On Pentecost 2013, Pope Francis reiterated support for the numerous members of Ecclesial Movements that had gathered in the Vatican, pointing them towards the existential peripheries and the evangelising mission of the Church.

At the 3rd World Meeting of Movements in November 2014, which was promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, another goal was set: ecclesial maturity. How? By preserving the freshness of the charism, respecting people’s freedom and striving constantly for communion.

When Pope Francis met the members of the General Assembly of the Work of Mary in September 2014, he said: “Today the Focolare Movement finds itself in front of the same task as that of the whole Church: to responsibly and creatively offer its own particular contribution to this new season of evangelisation.”

New Developments

Over the years, the dialogue among Movements has opened new horizons..

Communion with Religious Families with age-old charisms really began from a meeting between Chiara Lubich and the Franciscan Family in Assisi, October 2000, followed by a meeting with Benedictines in Montserrat, Spain, November 2001. Ecclesial Movements and Religious Families had another meeting in Assisi on October 23, 2010.

There have also been contacts with movements from other Christian churches. In the autumn of 1999 contacts were begun at two large-scale events that led to the “Together for Europe” first held in Stuttgart, Germany in 2004 for the building of a “new Europe of the spirit” with the light of the Gospel.

New paths for the Ecclesial Movements

Here is a comment of Maria Voce at the conclusion of the meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity for the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities. She participated together with a delegation of the Focolare Movement.

«Any spontaneous impression on what you have lived these days? It was a meeting of real, profound communion. This was emphasized even more if we think of our beginnings. In 1998 at St. Peter’s square, Pope John Paul II almost had to ask the Movements to agree amongst themselves, to love each other, to get to know and esteem each other and to collaborate. Now we have reached the point that we no longer really notice to which Movement we belong. There was so much fraternity among all.

It was wonderful to see the recently born Movements going to the older Movements, not to be examined but to ask for their help, their thought and even their judgement on their works, to see together how to bring things ahead. The older Movements going to the newer Movements, the last born, not so much to see whether they are functioning, if all was going well and so on, but to rejoice that a new life had been born. Thus it was a full celebration of all their fruits and experiencing this being united in the Church. I thought it was really a very important step, a real communion and fraternity, where we were all brothers and sisters, older and younger but all brothers and sisters.

When we then went together to the Pope, he understood this aspect and he even expressed it in his talk; we felt his joy of having been able to participate and experience this communion that there had been among us.

After all, this was the gift we wanted to bring to him: this communion, and he strongly highlighted it in his talk, inviting us to bring it ahead and defining communion itself as the seal of the Holy Spirit. Thus it was a confirmation and a strong encouragement to go ahead in this direction. Then the Pope returned to the topic of going outwards, not to remain in our own circle. This is a fundamental idea that is in all his talks.

So I asked myself: what could this mean for us as Movements? We have to discover how to take this new step. Certainly, there should always be more communion with the Church. However, precisely because we have reached this profound unity among Movements, perhaps God is now asking us to expand more this going out towards the Movements of

other non-Catholic Churches. They also have very strong experiences of people who live the Gospel like us and who bear witness to this life. We should get to know them too, and opening ourselves more could contribute to a vaster communion (why not?) as well as drawing closer to the moment of unity among all Christians.

This could perhaps be a path that should still be opened.

Another thing I would like to emphasize is this: going out towards a more vital unity between the “shepherd” and the “flock”, as much as possible. There were, in fact, many pastors, bishops and priests present, belonging to Movements and not. I think that the going outwards that God is asking of us now is to bring about a much deeper communion between laity and clergy, with the clergy that belongs to the Movements, who therefore are already strongly united to their own Movement, but perhaps not yet among all the clergy of all the Movements. I think God is also asking us to look for more suitable forms, thus we shouldn't separate the ecclesial part from the lay part in various Movements and not even in the Movements as a whole.»

(Sala Clementina, 22 novembre 2014)

Christian churches

The Focolare has a particular ecumenical lifestyle. Within the Movement there are Christians from approximately 350 churches and ecclesial communities who whilst being rooted in their own church are at the same time able to create links between Christians in a variety of other churches.

Our goal: The Movement aims to make a real contribution to breaking down the walls that separate the Churches removing prejudices and providing the space where the different types of ecumenical dialogue can bear fruit. This 'dialogue of life' enables Christians to give witness to the possibility of living together.

The foundation is the Gospel lived under the light of the spirituality of unity, the specific spirituality of the Focolare. Christians from the various Churches, living this spirituality, feel the need to recognise and deepen common patrimony and to also value the sources of spiritual life that are found within the different Churches. The novelty lies in that all feel they are part of a family and are linked by the commandment of Jesus: "I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples." (Jn13,34)

Being united in the love of Christ is a requisite to have the presence of Christ amongst his friends (cf. Mt 18,20) and has become the characteristic of the ecumenical life of the Focolare Movement.

A new route to ecumenism: 50 years after the commitment by the Movement to work for the unity of Christians, a new form of ecumenism took shape: the 'dialogue of life' which describes-how the whole people of God (which includes bishops, priests, lay people) can participate in the process of bringing the Churches closer and in this way contribute towards the full visible communion between them. Chiara commented: 'Over the centuries every Church, in some way, has turned rigid through waves of indifference and

misunderstanding, if not of mutual hatred. What is needed in each church is a supplement of love. Indeed, the Christian world needs to be overwhelmed by a torrent of love' (Graz – Austria 1997).

The fruits have developed across the world and over time. The dialogue of life has gradually become the dialogue of a people. Today in the Focolare Movement there are Christians from more than 350 Churches and ecclesial communities. Among them there are also some bishops who take the opportunity to meet every year to share together their life of living the Gospel and so deepen their communion in Christ.

Some 'Ecumenical Schools' have been established providing formation courses in Europe, the Middle East and in the Americas.

An ecumenical little town was set up in Ottmaring, near Augsburg Germany, back in 1968 by the Focolare and the 'Brotherhood of Common Life' which is a Lutheran fraternity founded on Jesus' prayer for unity (cf. Jn:17). Today there are about 120 residents. The aim of this place is to show that it is possible for Christians of different Churches to live in unity.

'Together for Europe'. In 1999 a new way opened up for Movements and ecclesial communities to share: 'Together for Europe'. International meetings held on 8th May 2004 and 12th May 2007 both in Stuttgart, Germany. The final statement of the meeting set out how they could work together as an alliance based on mutual love, to collaborate in favour of the common good, commitment to life, for the family, peace, the poor and for a fair economy as well as safeguarding the environment.

Historical background: Our ecumenical dialogue began in 1961 when in Darmstadt, Germany a group of evangelical Lutherans listened to a talk given by Chiara Lubich. They were greatly moved by her simple but radical proposal of a life based on the Word of God. In the same year after many contacts and informal meetings a secretariat for ecumenism was set up in Rome and known as Centro “Uno” for the unity of Christians. Igino Giordani was the first director and remained so until his death in 1980.

In 1955, initially through a Swiss architect, the Movement reached the Swiss Reformed Church.

The first contacts with the Anglican Church were made before the Second Vatican Council. In 1966 Chiara Lubich met Archbishop Michael Ramsey the then Primate of the Church of England. Following him all the subsequent Archbishops of Canterbury including the present, Rowan Williams, have encouraged the spread of the spirituality of the Focolare within the Anglican Church.

In 1967 Chiara met some prominent ecumenists of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The history of the fraternal relationships between the Focolare Movement and the Orthodox is rooted in the extraordinary meeting between Chiara Lubich and Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople. ‘It was 13th June in 1967’ Chiara recounts, ‘he welcomed me as if we had always known one another. “I was waiting for you” he exclaimed and asked me to tell him about the contacts between the Movement and Lutherans and Anglicans.’ In total Chiara met Athenagoras I 25 times. The relationship continued with Patriarch Demetrios I.

Today contact with the current Patriarch Bartolomew I continues in the same spirit of respect and friendship. Afterwards the spirituality of the Movement has been welcomed by the Ancient Churches of the East and so dialogue has developed with the Syrian- Orthodox, Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian and Assyrian Churches.

Fifty Years for the Unity of Christians

The Centre “Uno” (One) celebrates its’ 50th anniversary. Chiara Lubich founded the international secretariat for the ecumenical dialogue of the Focolare Movement in 1961 and appointed Igino Giordani as its first director.

On 14th January 1961 Chiara Lubich met with a group of Lutherans in Germany and this encounter led her to realize that the spirituality of unity, which is based on living the Gospel, was not for Catholics only but for all Christians. In May, Chiara met Anglican Canon Bernard Pawley, in Rome who afterwards was an observer at the Second Vatican Council. On 24th May Chiara made a note in her diary: “God’s will is mutual love. Therefore, to mend this break, it is necessary to love each other.”

These were the antecedents that led Chiara to found the Centre “Uno” for the unity of Christians in Rome. She appointed Igino Giordani as its director, since he had been working as one of the pioneers of ecumenism ever since 1920.

The year 1961 had been a year charged with intuitions. It marked the beginning of a promising ecumenical dialogue based on living the Gospel together.

As the years went by, the spirituality of unity drew the interest of Anglicans in Great Britain, and members of the

Reformed Church in Switzerland, Holland and Hungary. It was received by members of various Christian churches in Europe and by Eastern Churches in the Middle East, and then by Christians in other continents. Patriarch Athenagoras I became interested in the spirituality of unity and invited Chiara to Istanbul in 1967 and encouraged its spreading in the Orthodox Churches.

After 30 years of Focolare's ecumenical involvement in 1996 another historic step was made in London. While meeting with about a thousand of Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists and Baptists who lived this spirituality of unity, Chiara sensed that a particular style of ecumenical commitment was emerging that was specific to the Movement and born from its' spirituality: a "dialogue of life" or a "dialogue of the people", which was not in opposition to other forms of dialogue but in support of them. There are now Christians from over 350 Churches in five continents who promote this type of dialogue and witness that it is possible to live in unity with Christ among us.

The 50th anniversary of Centre "Uno" was celebrated in Trent, Italy at the Social Theatre on 12th March with an international ecumenical day entitled: "Chiara Lubich: a charism, a life for the unity of Christians", which was part of an "Ecumenical Week" (11th – 16th March) in Cadine (Trent). It included eyewitness accounts of the early involvement of Chiara and the Movement and of successive developments in Focolare's ecumenical commitment.

Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity said in his message: "The service and the witness given by Chiara Lubich to the promotion of Christian

unity are priceless and precious gifts” because “she has traced trails of light and deeply touched the life paths of many Christians of different generations and of many ecclesial traditions.” The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I invited the Focolare spread throughout the world “to foster the ‘dialogue of life’ among the Christian people, the leaven in the ecumenical Movement,” in the knowledge that “only intense spirituality can accelerate the march toward full visible communion through the acceptance of the progress being made in the official dialogues, on the part of an ecumenically prepared populace. A message also arrived from Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches: “We remember her as a gift of God’s gracious love, inspiring, so many of us with her charisma and her spirituality of unity.” Then he recalled her first visit in 1967 in which she laid “the ground for decades of close collaboration which has benefited the fellowship of WCC member Churches in many ways.”

The Centre “Uno” follows Focolare’s ecumenical commitment worldwide through a network of collaborators, promotes “ecumenical weeks” and ecumenical formation courses.

Ecumenism: the dialogue of life

Chiara Lubich visited the United Kingdom 8 times, from 1965 to 2004. These visits marked a great development in ecumenical dialogue. Now we will go back to 1996, in London, where Chiara vigorously explained the meaning of the “dialogue of life.”

“Coming in this zone, something has exploded. This idea has exploded: truly God has given us a new ecumenism. There was already the ecumenism of charity, that is, the dialogue of charity, as when Athenagoras brought gifts to the Pope, the Pope brought gifts to Istanbul, to Athenagoras; as when Ramsey brought gifts to the Pope, the Pope brought gifts... in order to indicate a drawing closer to one another.

There was already the dialogue of prayer, in which we all pray together, especially during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. And there was already the theological dialogue, which has been blocked in many parts, also here in England a little... held back a little.

We realized, especially in coming here, that we have a fourth dialogue, a fourth line. Our dialogue is the dialogue of life, the dialogue of a people which is already Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed... of a people who are already all united and who are a people... they are the Christian people of the year 2000, of our times. We realized that this is our way of being involved in ecumenism, that is, of awakening the Christian instinct of Christians, joining everyone together because the bottle is almost full, joining everyone together and bringing ahead this people. Years ago, the Pope said: “You are a people,” but he intended to say “because of your number.” Now we are four times as many as we were then, when the Pope told us that.... But what people do we intend? The Christian people. The people... we are this people, we are this people.

When I spoke with the focolarini the other day – there was Lesley and Callan * – I said: “Who will ever separate me from Lesley and from Callan? No one, because Christ has united

us! Jesus in our midst has united us. No one can separate us!” Now, who says anything like this in the ordinary Christian world among Orthodox and Catholics and Lutherans? Everyone goes off on their own. Everyone follows their own Churches, of course; in the meantime this must be done, looking after the people entrusted to them, following their own current, their own denomination; but who says: “No one can separate me, because Christ has united us!”?

The fact is that Christ has united us and He has made us one people, and this is the small “bomb” that has exploded here in England. Dearest all, thank you also for this applause. I never thank people for applause, but it means that you are with me, it means that we are together in living this way!”.

World Religions

With people of different religions

In view of the current world scene which is profoundly transforming itself into an increasingly multicultural and multi-religious society, the Focolare Movement is committed to promoting dialogue between religions, because the religious pluralism of the world should not be a cause of division and war, but contribute to the building of brotherhood and world peace.

Various thousands of faithful from different religions share, in as much as possible, in the spirit of the Movement, and collaborate for its goals.

The spreading of the Focolare Movement has, in fact, contributed to opening a dialogue with all the main religions of the world through its contacts with the followers of these religions, but also in contact with their leaders and members of

vast movements. For some years now, there has been fraternal collaboration between the Focolare Movement and the Buddhist movement, Rissho Kosei-kai and its 6 million adherents in Japan; with an African American Muslim movement in the United States; and with various movements inspired by Ghandi in the south of India.

The origin

In 1977, in London, Chiara Lubich was awarded the Templeton Prize for progress in religion. She presented her experience before leaders of different religions and had the deep sensation that everyone present, although from different faiths, were like a single family. As she left, it was precisely the people from other religious traditions (Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindu, etc.) who were the first to step up and offer their warm congratulations. This appeared to be evidence that the spirituality of the Movement could be shared not only by Christians, but, to some measure, even with persons of other faiths. For Chiara, these events were a sign from God, showing that the Movement had to open itself to this dialogue with the people of all religious traditions.

The foundation

The dialogue that the Movement promotes is founded on the spirituality and, in particular, on the central importance of love. Love has an immediate echo in the other religions and cultures, because of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It is precisely by implementing the Golden Rule that fruitful dialogue is able to be established.

The effects of dialogue

There is a rediscovery of one's own religious roots, of what unites us, a living experience of fraternity. These are just a few of the effects of dialogue lived in this spirit of communion which contributes to the unity of the human family. We strengthen our common commitment to be builders of unity and of peace especially where there is violence, such as racial and religious intolerance, that would cause a rift between members of society.

Training in dialogue.

There is a school for dialogue in the Focolare town at Tagaytay, Manila, Philippines.

Judaism

Dialogue with the Jews is especially important to Christians. John Paul II spoke of them as our "elder brothers", and Benedict XVI's "fathers in the faith" further highlighted the deep bond between Christians and Jews.

Contact between the Focolare and members of the Jewish community in various countries began in 1970's.

In 1995 representatives from the Jewish community in Rome, Italy gave Chiara Lubich a symbolic olive tree in recognition of her efforts for peace between Christians and Jews. The tree was planted in the garden of the Focolare Movement's headquarters in Rocca di Papa, Italy.

In 1996 the first international convention between Christians and Jews, promoted by the Movement was held in

Castel Gandolfo, Italy. The convention focused on the topic, love of God and neighbour. It was a great surprise to discover the consonance between authentic rabbinic tradition and the spirituality of the Movement. The highpoint of the meeting was the pact of mercy, which had been proposed by Norma Lebitt, a Jew from New York, for reconciliation between Christians and Jews of different traditions.

But a more important event took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when Chiara Lubich visited the country in 1998. She presented the spirituality of unity highlighting common points with the spiritual patrimony of Judaism. One highpoint was when she referred to the Holocaust: “That unspeakable pain of the Holocaust as well as more recent bloody persecutions cannot but bear fruit. We would like to share them with you so that they will no longer be an abyss that separates us, but a bridge that unites us; that they might become a seed of unity.” From then on a Day of Peace has been celebrated at Mariapolis Lia in the province of Buenos Aires.

Another meaningful moment was the meeting with Jewish friends in Jerusalem, 1999. Chiara could not attend the event, but asked Natalia Dallapiccola and Enzo Fondi to go in her place and read the presentation she had prepared. At that time Natalia and Enzo were overseeing the interreligious dialogue of the Movement. The audience, which included rabbis, greatly appreciated her answer to a question regarding the reason for suffering. Chiara quoted a passage from the Talmud: “Whoever does not experience the hiding of God’s face, is not one of the Hebrew people” (see Talmud: Mas Chagigah 5,b).

Four international symposiums were held between 2005 and 2011: two in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, and the third in Jerusalem, 2009. The words that were used most often by Christians, Jews and members of the local Arab Focolare community to describe this event were: a miracle and hope. Everyone was eager to embrace the challenge of unity; the gathering was entitled Walking Together Towards Jerusalem. Particularly moving was the Pact of Mutual Love that was solemnly recited at the Steps on Mount Zion which, according to a tradition Jesus walked as he prayed for unity. The Pact was recited again at the Eastern Wall, known as the Wailing Wall.

In 2011 the symposium moved to Buenos Aires. Christians and Jews from various currents – orthodox, conservative and reformed – met at Mariapolis Lia to discuss Identity and Dialogue, a Continuing Journey. The programme was enriching with presentations in several academic fields including philosophy, anthropology, psychology, pedagogy, law and communications. These days together were important not only for the rich content, but also for the mutual listening and sharing of several experiences. One Jewish person commented: “During these days of respectful dialogue different currents in Judaism were able to come together in harmony.”

Further progress was made in 2013, in Castelgandolfo, Italy, at an international gathering where everyone tried to more deeply understand the tradition of the other.

However, the main characteristic of this fruitful dialogue is not the many meetings, but life together and the ongoing exchange of vision and experience, which has been unfolding in many cities across Europe, Israel and the Americas.

Buddhism

The rapport with the Buddhist faithful has been a significant part of the Focolare Movement's history in dialogue. Although Focolare foundress Chiara Lubich intuited as early as the 1960's that it would be possible to construct genuine fraternal relationships with persons of different religions and cultures, it was not until 1979 that she personally met a leader from another religion, the Rev. Nikkyo Niwano founder of the Rissho Kosei kai. The friendship that developed between them was based on deep mutual respect. In 1981 Niwano invited Chiara to speak of her Christian experience before 12 thousand Buddhists in Tokyo. This marked the historical beginnings of a genuine experience of fraternity. This relationship has gone on for many years now and was recently reinforced by Maria Voce's visit to Tokyo in 2010.

Paths of cooperation and understanding were later opened with other Mahayan currents in Japan and Taiwan. The meetings with Venerable Etai Yamada of the Tendai School remains an unforgettable moment. Chiara loved to quote the motto of the Grand Master Saicho: "Forgetting yourself and serving others is the apex of compassion-love," words that were also cited by John Paul II during the meeting with representatives of other religions in Tokyo in 1981. Currently there are very fruitful relationships with the Nichiren School.

And there have been contacts with the Chinese Buddhist Monastery of Fo Guan Shan and with the Monastery of Dharma Drum Mountain.

Over the years, paths of knowledge and encounter have also opened with the world of Theravada Buddhism. During an extended visit at the international town of Loppiano two Thai monks – Grand Master Ajhan Thong and Phramaha Thongratana – came into living contact with Christianity. When they returned to their land, they shared their discovery and invited Chiara Lubich to offer her experience at a Buddhist university and in a temple in Chiang Mai. The Great Master Ajhan Thong presented the founder of the Focolare saying: “The sage is neither man nor woman. When a light is lit in the darkness no one asks whether it was a man or a woman to light it. Chiara is here to give us her light.”

From 2004 until the present several symposiums have been held. The fifth was held on 28-31 May 2012, following those held in 2004 and 2008 at the Mariapolis Centre in Castelgandolfo, Italy; and in 2006 and 2010 in Osaka, Japan and Chian Mai, Thailand that included people from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, England, USA, Switzerland, Austria and Italy. The variety was not only to be found in geographical origins, but also in the traditions that were represented. Among the Buddhists there were representatives – both monks and laity – from the Theravada and Mahayana traditions and, among the Christians, representatives from the Anglican Communion and from the Reformed Church.

Over the years, a deep mutual trust has developed among the participants of these gatherings which has allowed for an open discussion of the Scriptures without misunderstanding. The Castelgandolfo meeting was attended by His Eminence Cardinal Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for

Interreligious Dialogue and by the president of the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce.

Islam

The Focolare began to establish contact with Muslims in the 1960's.

In Algeria a deep friendship was begun among Christians and Muslims in the 1970's, which then spread in the city of Tlemcen. This gave rise to a Focolare community that was almost entirely made up of Muslims. This not only overcame barriers between Islam and Christianity, but also the cruelty of the civil war.

This friendship was the basis of eight international gatherings for "Muslim Friends of the Focolare" from 1992 to 2008. Now there are several thousand Muslims who are in contact with the Movement around the world.

At the end of the 1990's in the United States a new page was begun in relations between Christians and Muslims. Chiara Lubich, a white Catholic woman was invited by Imam W. D. Mohammed, charismatic leader of African-American Muslims, to present her message to the faithful gathered at the Malcolm X Mosque in Harlem, N. Y.

At the conclusion of that day in May 1997, the Imam stated: "Today, here in Harlem, New York, a new page of history has been written." The two leaders made a pact of brotherhood which extended to their respective Movements. Since then there have been regular encounters between Muslim and Christian communities, blacks and whites, who look toward universal brotherhood and are having an impact on their local

environments. More than forty mosques and local Focolare communities are involved in this experience in several U.S. cities.

This path of discovery between the spirituality of unity and Islam has had some noteworthy moments: the meeting for Muslim friends held in 2008 in Rome, Italy which was entitled “Love and Mercy in the Bible and in the Holy Koran”. The presentation by Muslim Professor Adnane Morkrani, entitled “Reading the Koran with the Eye of Mercy” was very much appreciated by the Imam and Muslims who were present.

In 2010, 600 Christians and Muslims met in Loppiano, Italy. Many of them were presidents and Imams of Islamic communities in Italy. As Imam Layachi said, the meeting was both an arrival point and point of departure for many experiences begun and carried forward in several parts of Italy.

In Tlemcen, Algeria, which was one of the capital cities of Muslim culture for 2011, a meeting was held for Muslim members of the Focolare Movement, with the title “Living Unity”. The eighty participants came from ten countries. The presence of Muslim professors also proved valuable because they were able to develop themes and topics of spirituality from a Muslim perspective that were based on an experience of a common life.

The presence of Muslims has grown in recent decades in Italy, because of immigrations. In many cities in the north and south of the peninsula a real and true friendship has begun between the faithful of Christian and Muslim communities. On November 25, 2012 in Brescia, Italy, some 1,300 Christians and Muslims joined together for a day entitled Common Paths for

the Family, which was promoted by the Focolare Movement and several Islamic communities. In Catania, Italy, on April 23, 2013 there was the meeting celebration The Muslim Family, the Christian Family: challenges and hopes, in which 500 people gathered in the name of dialogue.

Traditional Religions

The Focolare Movement's first encounter with a cultural group that had a connection with traditional religions occurred when a group of focolarinos, doctors, moved to Cameroon.

In 1966 some doctors and nurses from the Focolare entered into contact with the Bangwa tribe of Fontem, a village immersed in the vast palm tree forests of west Cameroon. The aim was humanitarian: to help a population that was stricken with malaria and other tropical diseases with a mortality rate of 90%. Together with the Bangwa and many others, a hospital, school, church and a number of houses were constructed and the first Focolare town in Africa was begun.

Chiara Lubich visited Fontem in 1969. Many years later she would recall that visit while speaking to 8,000 members of the Movement who had gathered in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1998:

«I was in Fontem when the little town didn't exist yet; now it's very big – I don't know how many houses there are... At that time, there wasn't anything, there was the bush where this tribe lived. Well, I can still see this tribe in front of me on a large clearing of land celebrating my presence. ... Of course, they celebrated in their own typical way; also present were the many wives of the Fon, the king, who performed a number of

dances for me, and so on. There in that valley, with all those people who had come to celebrate my presence because I had sent the first focolarini doctors, I had the impression that God was embracing this large crowd of people, who were not Christians – the great majority were Animists. I thought: “Here, God is embracing everyone, he’s embracing everyone. It reminds me of what happened in the Cova da Iria in Portugal [the miracle of Fatima], the time that the sun came down and embraced everyone. God is here and is embracing everyone».

Upon returning from the first trip, Chiara responded in this way to the focolarini at the school of formation in Loppiano, Italy: “We westerners are completely backward and unable live in today’s times if we don’t strip ourselves of the western mentality, because it’s half a mentality, a third or fourth a mentality with respect to the rest of the world. In Africa, for example, there is such a unique culture, so splendid and deep! We have to reach and encounter of cultures. We won’t be complete unless we “are humankind”. We will be humankind if “we have all the cultures inside.”

During another visit to Africa in 1992, talking about inculturation Chiara stated: “First of all, the most powerful weapon is “making yourself one”. This means approaching people being completely empty of ourselves, in order to enter into their cultures and understand them and allow them to be expressed, so that you can embrace them within you, and have them within you. And once you have embraced them, then you can begin a dialogue with someone and maybe even pass on the Gospel message, through the riches he already possesses. Making yourself one demands inculturation, entering into the

soul and the culture, into the mentality, the traditions, the customs of others – to understand them and allow the seeds of the Word to emerge.”

Another moment that marked an important step for the Movement in its push towards dialogue with people of other belief systems was in 1977 when Chiara was awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion: “We were in the Guildhall of London ... I was speaking ... in that large hall, and present there were people of many different religions.... I had the same impression there; it was as if God was embracing everyone”.

In 2000 Chiara visited Fontem for the last time. She was enthroned by the people, through the Fon, as Mafua Ndem (Queen in the Name of God). It was the first time that a foreigner, woman and white ever became part of the Bangwa tribe in such a way. At her death in 2008, she was given a royal funeral in Fontem. During the course on traditional religions, which preceded the funeral celebration and organized by the first Bangwa focolarino, the focolarini were admitted to the “sacred forest” (Lefem”), which is a strong sign of belonging to this people. During that week, Focolare president Maria Voce was also recognized as “successor to the throne”.

In Africa courses on inculturation continue to promote deeper understanding of different cultures.

In Latin America at Escuela Aurora, in north Argentina, an effort to educate and recuperate traditional cultural and religious traditions of the people of the Andes, in the Calchaqui Valleys: In Bolivia and Peru at the Mariapolises with the Aymara

people, and in Ecuador with the Afro people of Esmeralda. In New Zealand, with the Maori people.

A spirituality, in short, aims not only to Christian unity but, through dialogue, to that of the human family.

Hinduism

The Focolare Movement's first contacts with Hinduism were marked by warm friendship that led to sharing life and dreams and ideals.

The main protagonists of this friendship were Natalia Dallapiccola who was one of the first witnesses to the beginnings of the Focolare in Trent, Italy, and Dr Aram, a Hindu who now stands among the presidents of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) of which the Focolare is also a member.

Following the death of Dr Aram, the Shanti Ashram and representatives from several Gandhian groups in the State of Tamil Nadu, invited Chiara Lubich to India in January 2001, to receive the 2000 Defender of Peace Award. The explanatory statement affirmed: Chiara was tireless in her role of spreading peace and love among all, continually strengthening the fragile vision of peace, for the wellbeing, prosperity and spiritual life of the world." At the award ceremony, which was attended by over 500 Hindus and members of other religions, Chiara spoke of her Christian spiritual experience, highlighting common elements between the Gospel and the Hindu Scriptures.

"I came here today to see, to be silent as much as possible," she wrote in his diary that day, "Above all I

discovered the rules: tolerance, love! Perhaps our dialogue has a place here.”

On the same occasion, Professor Kala Acharya from the Somaiya Sanskriti Peetham Institute, was deeply impressed by Chiara. In a matter of days she decided to organize a gathering at Somaiya College of Mumbai. Six-hundred people attended. These events marked the beginning of a dialogue with Hinduism both in Mumbai and in Coimbatore.

A deep dialogue was begun with university professors in Mumbai. In order to continue along this path it was decided to hold an academic symposium. The first was held in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, in 2002. The title was: “The Bhakti and Agape as a way of love towards God and neighbor.” Professor Kala Acharya from Somaya College of Mumbai called the meeting: “a deep spiritual experience.”

In the name of this common journey, Chiara Lubich visited India again in 2003. At the Centre of Indian culture Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Natalia Dallapiccola touches one of the aspects of the art of finding love in the Gospel: “becoming one” with each other as the key to the box: unity and of universal brotherhood. And she shows what Chiara said about an aspect of the art of loving which she discovered in the Gospel – making yourself one with others – as the key to dialogue: “In the moment that we meet someone, we need to place our self on their level like a partner, no matter who they are. And this calls for detachment from everything, even from the richness of our own religion. And at the same time we need to become empty within ourselves, in order to allow our brother or sister the freedom to express their thoughts and for us to be able to

understand them. This is such an important attitude, even indispensable, which has two leading effects: It helps us to enter into the world of our brother and sister, to know the language and culture, the belief system, and so on. And then it predisposes our neighbour to listen to us. Then you move on to a “respectful proclamation” where – because of your loyalty to God and sincerity toward your neighbour, always respecting what your neighbour thinks – you can say what you think and believe about a particular topic, without imposing anything, without desiring to win anyone over to your own way of thinking.”

“This marks the beginning of a journey that will take us far,” commented Professor Dave, honorary president of the institute. “There is something in her words that goes to the very roots of human thought, the very roots of our santhana dharma, the universal religion.”

“This experience of dialogue highlights what was said by John Paul II when he was in India: “Through dialogue we allow God to be present in our midst, because as each of us opens in dialogue, we also open to God. And the fruit is union among men and union of men with God.” (John Paul II, Discorso ai rappresentatni delle varie religioni dell’India, Madras, February 5, 1986.)”

Dialogue with Gandhian movements characterized this experience from the beginning, and it continues in Coimbatore where each year since August 2001, roundtable discussions are held to examine and discuss spiritual and human aspects of the Gandhian outlook and the spirituality of unity.

Persons of no religious affiliation

“Let’s unite our strengths, both those who are not particularly interested in faith and those who believe, because the Ideal of a humanity that is free and equal hastened by fraternal respect and mutual love’ is too beautiful and really necessary.” Chiara Lubich

In Italy, other parts of Europe and South America there are dialogue groups made up of a mix of people of those who have a faith and others with no particular religious affiliation. The members of these groups all have the desire to work together to create fraternity within the family of humanity. The dialogue serves to develop and deepen the promotion of human values shared through life and reflection referring to such themes as ‘secularism and faith’ or other contemporary topics. Some people from the groups are involved in initiatives that are cultural or provide solidarity in some way for those in need.

History

By the end of the 70s the Movement spread beyond the confines of church and a natural dialogue opened up with agnostics, atheists and people indifferent towards religion. The rapport between all was such that each felt free to express their thoughts certain that unity also means having profound respect for the person, his dignity, identity, culture and needs as well as what he believes in. To this end in 1978 an ‘International Centre for Dialogue with People who hold no Religious Affiliation’ was set up. In 1992 at the Mariapolis Centre in Rome the first international congress was organised, others have followed

since. In 1995 in Loppiano (near Florence) the first meeting with Chiara took place, the second meeting with Chiara happened in 1998 in Castel Gandolfo (Rome).

In December 2003 Chiara suggested running courses which would strengthen the values each one holds. Some of the points of the spirituality of unity were covered (for example God-Love, doing the Will of God, the art of loving and mutual love) and the corresponding non religious themes (the choice of values and listening to conscience, the culture of giving, reciprocity and solidarity).

The foundation

This is a dialogue that is all encompassing, it isn't sectarian or restricted to specific times and places as it comes from an openness to one another that is rooted within the heart of thought and action.

It is possible to hold open dialogue if both parties have:

- An awareness of their own identity
- Total respect for the other and their culture
- The ability to give a great deal and also receive from others
- Inexhaustible patience in listening to understand the reasoning of the other, as enrichment
- The awareness that the beliefs and values of the other are as dignified as our own

Newsletter

“Dialogue between friends” is a newsletter which is translated into 5 languages and favours the exchange of experiences and reflections.

FOR A CULTURE OF UNITY

Culture

In reply to the cultural crisis, which is global , and involves major changes leading to new cultural paradigms, the spirituality of unity is formulating ideas as a contribution to opening pathways towards a renewed culture.

One development of the charism of unity has been the beginning of a dialogue marked by reciprocity, with the world of culture and all of its various disciplines and expressions: politics, economy, art, media, education, psychology, sociology, medicine, law, architecture, environmental science, and sport. It is promoted by international secretariats and by small nuclei of people which are emerging in different lands through meetings, seminars, convention, forums, and workshops. Their purpose is to offer a set of ideas, of cultural contributions, but also existential and constructive experiences.

Purpose. This dialogue is open to all who feel the urgency of the challenges that we are facing today, in order to elaborate a line of thought and a doctrine in each of the various fields, inspired by the paradigm of unity. And this does not mean uniqueness, but, rather, a discourse with a plurality of thoughts, perspectives, and ideas from yesterday and today; and not only for the sake of comparison, but in order to generate an innovative result for the culture.

History. Its roots go back to the first years of the Focolare Movement and its history is marked by three stages that are interrelated with each other, three phases that Chiara Lubich connects with three emblematic cities of the social-cultural journey of our times.

1. Assisi. The choice of God in his paternity. In the first period, which lasted for decades, God led the members of the Movement to incarnate this love in their lives.

2. Paris. In search of Truth. In the second moment, after this lifestyle had been formed and well-defined, the members of the Movement felt urged to draw from their life and from the spirituality which is both personal and communitarian, the doctrine that lay beneath it. It was “Paris”, the city of study, combined with “Assisi”, the city of the life. But there was never a fear that Paris would destroy Assisi. On the contrary, decades of experience has shown that the light of truth is a highly important help to life, to the life of love.

3. Hollywood. Sharing the positive aspects of life. In the third period, the one we are now living in, we feel the need to manifest not only God’s goodness in life, not only the truth of the Gospel in the culture, but also God’s beauty in all forms of human knowledge. This period has been named after another city which is the emblem for making known and experienced the existence of cultural research: Hollywood. This phase does not erase Assisi and Paris, but includes them, for it would not exist without them.

Recognitions. The influence of the spirituality of unity in various cultural fields has been acknowledged recently by

numerous Catholic and secular universities, with honorary degrees in various disciplines being awarded to Chiara Lubich..

Study & Formation

“The people who belong to the Focolare Movement strive to possess Christian wisdom (. . .) Moreover they strive to be united so that Christ, present through mutual love, can influence their thinking with his light.” These first and last sentences of article 64 of the Movement’s Statutes express the root of Chiara Lubich’s thought.

Every great current of spirituality has within itself an intrinsic ability to bring about a cultural revolution, enabling the intuitions and truths contained within it to be translated into a body of doctrine that contributes to the formation of thought and criticism in every field of knowledge. And so it is for the charism of unity, whose doctrinal study is bringing to light an original cultural synthesis in which the branches of knowledge also find harmony and cohesion.

Once again, we must look back to history, to those “first days” in the city of Trent. Already in 1944 Chiara Lubich, passionate for philosophy and theology, and enrolled in the University of Venice, realized that there was a precise requirement of God hiding behind the development of the nascent Movement: that of putting the books in the attic. Chiara described this event in 1980: “Athirst for truth, I had lived the absurd, by searching for it through the study of philosophy, when I could have found it in Jesus the Truth Incarnate. And I left my studies to follow Jesus (. . .) following

that choice which God asked of me, the light came really abundantly.”

God, therefore, given first place, became the Teacher who made Chiara and the ever-growing community of the Movement, to see all of created reality, including human intelligence, as a manifestation of the Love of God.

The intellectual experience then became one of the expressions and effects of the love for God and neighbour.

And they took up their books again. Already in 1950 Chiara felt the need to begin studying: “I felt a need to base all the intuitions of that period upon a solid foundation” she said. And she did it with the help of many scholars, in particular with the help of Father Pasquale Foresi.

In the years that followed many members of the Movement began their studies in various scientific and academic fields. In November 2000, when she received an honorary doctorate, her twelfth, at Catholic University in Washington DC, Chiara stresses: “If those who study, live the spirituality of Unity, then from the presence of the Risen Lord in their midst, each of their disciplines will be clothed in newness, with the very newness that comes from the Holy Spirit.”

Particularly in the ongoing study of theology, comparing the truths of the Charism of Unity with the doctrinal patrimony of the Church, the existence of a new spirituality has obviously been verified, but one which fits perfectly into twenty centuries of Christian life. A dialogue on par with the times, a charism which is a perfect synthesis between continuity and novelty,

which renews the tradition and thus demonstrates the unity and the progress of history.

Also, regarding its specific goals, the Focolare Movement offers its members specific courses: There are courses for deepening one's knowledge of theology and of the social doctrine of the Church, there is the so-called Marian University, Ecumenical School and School of Ecumenism, courses on interreligious dialogue, and also courses on dialogue with the contemporary culture. And finally, particularly precious and prophetic, given the interdependent context in which we now live, there are courses in inculturation.

Since 1978 "New Humanity" journal has regularly published the findings of these studies.

Since 2008 Sophia University Institute has been offering a Master's Degree in Fundamentals and Perspectives of a Culture of Unity, a two-year programme, along with a corresponding Doctoral Degree .

Abba School

In 1990 the 'Abba School', a Centre of interdisciplinary study made up of 30 experts, was established. Its development was greatly helped by a German Bishop, noted theologian and philosopher, Klaus Hemmerle, as well as some highly qualified focolarini.

The purpose of the Abba School is to explore and discover the effects of the charism of unity in a range of disciplines. Chiara Lubich spoke about it on 9th June 2000 during a congress held by the Movement in Castelgandolfo, Rome:

‘Since the early days of our Movement we’ve been aware that the charism of unity brings its own culture, which is at one and the same time a child of traditional Christianity and through the light brought by the charism, something new. The growth in the numbers of the people of unity and the spread of the Ideal beyond the confines of the Focolare Movement, has highlighted the specifics of this culture, and made deeper study necessary: theological, and philosophical, political, economic, psychological, artistic and so on. This is what we are doing within what we call the “Abba School”.’

Sophia University Institute

Definition

Promoted by the Focolare Movement, the Institute was erected by the Holy See by decree of the Congregation for Catholic Education on the 7th of December 2007.

It offers a master’s degree in “Foundations and Perspectives of a Culture of Unity” – a two-year course duration – and a corresponding doctoral degree.

History

The institute was born from an intuition of Chiara Lubich who, ever since she was a young woman, longed to delve into studies in search of the truth. For this reason she enrolled in Philosophy at the University of Venice. But the Second World War came and destroyed the plans she had made for herself, and she was not able to pursue her studies.

Her search for truth was illuminated by the Gospel, and, through historical events, it led her along a way of active love for God and for neighbour.

The history of the Institute originates in her experience of knowledge through love and still today, this is the main characteristic of the Focolare Movement's approach to the field of culture and study. Faculty

The faculty is comprised of thirty university professors from a variety of countries and experts in various disciplines: theology, philosophy, ethics, law, political science, economy, linguistics, literature, natural science, mathematics, communication science, fine arts, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue. Each of them is in a living relationship with the others, appreciating what is of value in the different methods and approaches of each other, and the different types of knowledge, in order to construct a new and more integral world view.

Community

Sophia Institute sees itself as a community of training, study and research to which everyone contributes through the exercise of their respective skills and responsibilities – the faculty, students, and the personnel.

Site

The university is located in Loppiano, one of the Focolare's little towns, which was founded in 1964. It is a place where families, the young and the old, all share a lifestyle based on the Gospel. It has social, cultural, and production line activities. With its 900 inhabitants from 70 nations, it offers an opportunity to meet and dialogue with people of other cultures.

It is the proper setting for Sophia Institute with its library, fully equipped classrooms, sports and cultural activities, housing accommodations and dining facility.

All of Loppiano is an open space for learning in which every corner has something to teach: from academic studies to domestic life or in gardening, keeping abreast of current events, and spending moments in wholesome recreation. Also the relationship with the families of the town is a learning experience, and welcoming the visitors and participants of meetings who frequently gather there.

The Institute foresees the opening of locations in other nations, for specialised fields of study.

Renewal of knowledge

Economy - Economy of Communion

The Project: The Economy of Communion (EoC) began in 1991, following a visit by Chiara Lubich to Brazil, as an active response to the very real social problems and imbalanced economy of that country, and capitalism in general.

The proposal made to businesses was primarily to share profits, and to have a different organisational dynamic based on sharing and fraternity. Today hundreds of businesses across the world are inspired by EdC, basing their management style on fraternity, sharing the riches produced.

Industrial Estates: The Economy of Communion typically has 'industrial estates' which are part of the Focolare little towns. In recent years a number of these estates have been established (3 in Brazil, and others in Argentina, Italy, Croatia,

Belgium and Portugal). They show economy where both working and producing are authentic expressions of the evangelical laws of mutual love.

Objective: The whole project has an objective of showing a part of humanity that is 'not in need', making reciprocity active on all levels: creating jobs that include those who are excluded by economic and social systems, spreading a 'culture of giving' and giving life to a variety of educational and cultural initiatives, helping emergency situations through practical aid and with projects taken ahead in collaboration with the Action for a United World, all of which is an application and development of the very first intuitions Chiara had of sharing profits into 3 parts.

Cultural reflection: Since the beginning there have been a range of studies inspired by and based on all the work being done within EdC. These studies include: theses, articles, academic conventions. The study and dialogue between the theory and the practise is another aspect typical of the EoC.

Official website: history, information, culture and news can be found on: www.edc-online.org

Ecology – EcoOne, International Network of people working in Ecology and Conservation

'EcoOne' is a cultural initiative promoted and supported by lecturers, researchers and professionals working in the Environmental Sciences sector, united by the wish to enrich their own scientific knowledge with an approach to environmental issues that takes account of human values and wisdom.

EcoOne is an international network of people working in the field of Ecology and Conservation. It consists of men and women of every age, culture and religion, with a solution-focused approach to environmental questions.

Their research is well rooted in religious and social thinking regarding guardianship, responsibility and sustainability that in turn influences planning and action on environmental issues.

Programme

EcoOne's research programme re-visits the fundamental questions that we should ask before proposing practical solutions to today's ecological problems. For example the programme re-evaluates the contemporary relationship between human beings and nature and seeks to have a new understanding of our interdependence.

This isn't just a scientific, but also a cultural exercise which encourages members of EcoOne to think broadly into the spheres of religion, history and tradition. By bringing together these elements, participants hope to get a new perspective on environmental issues through the richness and experience of philosophy, religion and art.

Contacts: <http://www.ecoone.org/>

Politics - Movement for Unity in Politics

What is it?

The Movement for Unity in Politics (Mppu) serves as an international workshop for shared politics. Those involved come from the whole spectrum of: elected politicians at various

institutional levels or party activists, members of different political movements, diplomats, public officials, students of political science, active citizens, young people who are interested in both issues in their locality and the big global questions, as well as those who want to exercise their rights and duties to contribute to the common good.

History

The Mppu has its roots in Chiara Lubich's charism of unity. Mppu can count Iginio Giordani, one of the great figures of 20th century Italy, as one of the earliest political people involved. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly and member of the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian Parliament.

Officially Mppu came to light on 2nd May 1996 in Naples (Italy), during a meeting between Chiara Lubich and a number of politicians from a range of backgrounds and cultural references. Today the Movement is spread in Italy, a number of European countries, South America and Asia.

Horizons

Mppu wants to contribute to building peace and unity between people. Universal fraternity is the inspirational principle for their action in politics. They want to translate universal brotherhood into laws and rights, and in a new light look at assets and institutions on a local, national and international level.

In today's world interdependence links people, groups and nations, Mppu chooses instruments and routes of a "common politic" in which political action is put at the service

of social need and, through dialogue, gives space for all positive steps that have already been taken and put into action.

Initiatives

Within cities and national parliamentary seats, in the offices of local government and in public debate, Mppu offers meeting places as well as dialogue open to all those affected by the politics. They promote activities and seminars, campaigns and awareness raising with meetings on an international level, where several contributions of thought and experiences are considered in an attempt to find new ways of solving the problems present in that society.

Those who wish to take part must have the desire to create a culture of citizenship based on shared values and to strengthen, with competence and agreement, the necessary measures for inclusion and social cohesion.

There is special care is given to young people, the protagonists in commitment to civil society and who are active and aware of public life. Schools of formation in social and political life make up an international network, linking tens of cities in Italy, Argentina, Brazil and South Korea.

Architecture

Architecture can also reflect sharing, dialogue and encounter among people. In 2002, Dialogues in Architecture was launched to imagine, plan and create living spaces that reflect communion and reciprocity in the modern city.

What began as a permanent laboratory for reflecting on topics concerning city planning, architecture and the relation

between space and society, now engages architects, city planners, engineers, researchers and students who are in some way involved with the city and the territory, in an ongoing dialogue and study in the light of the inspirations Chiara Lubich.

The first sources of inspiration are the Focolare towns that have sprung up around the world: laboratories of social life, encounter between religion and culture and experimenting with new economic models and lifestyles based on sharing. They are also laboratories of the spirituality of unity, leaves a visible mark on the relation between construction and environment.

A Few Key Words:

Inhabit. Architecture and planning deal with issues related to building and living.

Locality. The role of an architect is to assist people in meeting the basic need to having a place to call home, a place of their own.

Peripheries. The study and attention on the modern city, focuses attention on those parts of the city that are most affected by poverty, degradation, social marginalisation – and finds solutions so that allow all to enjoy equal living conditions.

Participation. As part of a design method that gives strong attention to life that is regenerated and evolves with future generations, local citizens are guaranteed a listening, through a sort of pact among all those involved in the realization of the project.

Dialogue. Like the poetic tension and relation between full and empty, colors and materials, light and darkness, earth

and sky, landscape and settlement, internal and external spaces – it values the dialogic dimension, which is fundamental to life.

Dialogues in Architecture has promoted dialogue and discussions between students and projectors in Italy, Europe and around the world:

In 2006 it promoted the international seminar “Abitare la città” (Inhabit the City), June 9-11, 2006, Loppiano, Italy.

Law

Experts in the fields of law and economics find in Chiara Lubich’s charism elements to inspire new ideas and perspectives for the vision of a ‘culture of unity’.

Brought together by the desire to look at law as a necessary and useful tool to help transforming any group with genuine communion among its members, academics and professionals in the field of jurisprudence form an international network: Communion and Law.

It came into existence in 2001 following Chiara Lubich’s intuition of fostering a ‘culture of unity’ across the most varied branches of knowledge. The title Communion and Law emphasizes the commitment to share knowledge and experience from various professional activities in the realm of jurisprudence.

It strives to spread positive values and to focus cultural attention upon the human person recognized as having the fullest dignity, seen in the context of human relational capacity, of openness to the transcendent, and of the ability to forge a

world today in harmony with the best aspirations of individuals and peoples.

Communion and Law takes on board the need for relationality felt also among people active in the field of the law, without losing sight of the varieties of environments and cultures where they work.

In various parts of the world groups of people involved in Communion and Law have spontaneously come together and, in their meetings, they share their experiences with one another, telling of their efforts, successes and failures, and giving support to the development of a legal system that seeks to favour fulfilling the potential of persons and local communities.

Academic research, undertaken by groups of university professors from different nations, is looking at relationality and the principle of fraternity in the field of law. They are seeing how to maintain contact as they strive to find a common grounding despite the diversity of their disciplines. The possibility of a common approach can be seen; it would be part of a response to the need for a new way of relating, conducted according to the value of reciprocity.

Particular attention has been given to young people, both students and those beginning their careers. Every summer in various places in Europe a study session is held and, every few years, there is an international congress where there are also sizeable delegations from outside Europe. In this way young people discover a new vision of law, not simply as a mass of rules but as a way of building positive relations, an instrument for bringing about a fraternal vision of relationships.

Medicine

The international network HDC – Health Dialogue Culture – previously known as Communion Dialogue and Medicine, started in 2003 and involves professionals from various disciplines in health sciences, as well as from different geographic regions and cultures.

HDC was inspired by the Spirituality of the Unity of the Focolare Movement, which was founded by Chiara Lubich, in Trento (Italy) in 1943. It also has its roots in the culture that emerges from this movement which strives to create constructive dialogues. The movement has helped create a contemporary culture in many areas including: politics, economy, sociology, law, psychology, health, art, communication, ecology, pedagogy, sport...

Through engagement with the scientific community, HDC wants to contribute to the construction of a Medical Anthropology, which supports attention towards better science and health. This focus is based on the constant respect to the life, dignity and integrity of each person. HDC continues to promote the individual while striving to achieve a higher level of social/collective health. HDC is proposed to be a “space” for cultural reflection. We are connected to professional practice and experience in the context in which we find confirmation on theoretical suppositions, new lines of study and research.

Some steps from HDC

2001 – First Steps – International Congress – Rome (Italy):
“Current human health: a possible balance”

Key points:

The search for individual answers to the necessities of health;

Creation of the universal principles, based on the centrality of the person.

2007 – International Congress – Rome (Italy): “Communication and Relationship in Medicine: new perspectives to the doctor’s practice”

Key points:

Role of the doctor-patient relationship, among health sciences professional and the various types of services, network structure;

Operational models and practice in various countries.

2011 – International Congress – São Paulo (Brazil): “Spirituality and health on the global view of the person”

Key points:

Strategies and implementations of spirituality in professional practices.

2013 – International Congress – Padua (Italy): “Which medicine: among globalization, sustainability and health care”

Key points:

To contribute to the creation of a health system appropriate to the current medical challenges, through the principles suggested at the Ethical Charter: common well-being, respect, relationships, reciprocity.

2014 – Latin-American Congress – São Paulo (Brazil): “Integral Health: challenges and priorities in Latin”

Key points:

Proposals for a political health model for the Latin-American countries.

2015 – Summer-School – Lisbon (Portugal): “Health between present and future: challenges and responsibility for the youth”

2016 – Summer-School – Prague (Czech Republic): “The evolution of biomedicine: challenges to the professional ethics”

In these years, many events happened in other nations including: Lithuania, Romania, Poland, France, Germany, Australia, etc...

2017 –International Congress – Brasil (São Paulo): “Promoting Global Health: strategies and actions on the individual and collective level”

In today's modern health care system, it is accepted that biochemistry and genetics are not enough for an insightful understanding of health and illness. The personal, sociocultural and spiritual dimensions of health can no longer be ignored for their ability to provide quality of life. The context of each patient must be taken into account and underpinned as necessity. As health contributes remarkably to economic growth and social well-being its determinants must be considered highly strategic. Health systems have to look at patients in their wholeness respecting their complexities and experiences as vital to their overall health. Therefore, relationships which cultivate a deeper understanding between health professionals and their patients become key elements of a better healthcare system.

The Congress endeavors to better understand these aspects through the sharing of experience and good practice among its participants.

The Arts

The Arts & Society encompasses all aspects of the human aesthetic environment: beauty, in the fine arts (painting, music, dance, film, photography, drama).

The Focolare Movement is also concerned with art and beauty. Since the 40s, at the very beginning of the Movement one fact has been very apparent: the charism of unity, in all its expressions and ramifications, should draw every man and woman of every epoch to discover not only the goodness and truth of God, but also His beauty.

Chiara Lubich confirmed this herself in her talk to the Mariapolis of 1964: “Being surrounded by the world keeps us far from God, and often leads us against the Church (..) and wanting to live a genuine Christianity, it would be good – always in charity – to show from the Church not only goodness and truth, but also, beauty through both decor and mode of dressing.”

The characteristic of a ‘people’ which lives according to the commandment of evangelical love is in fact harmony established between individuals and which finds its expression in all the external dimensions of life as an effect of unity. It is this very vocation to harmony that characterises the life of the Movement in every phase of development. This harmony is not limited to the style of furnishing a house but also incorporates

the artistic environment which is the natural environment through which beauty is shown.

“Satisfy this thirst that the world has for beauty, send great artists with big souls which will draw people towards the most beautiful of all people, Jesus!”

Chiara Lubich wrote the above in May 1961 in a little manifesto dedicated to the Centro Ave Arts Centre, which had just been established by an international group of artists: Ave Cerquetti, Marika Tassi and Tecla Rantucci. These three women understood that the result of them working as a team of artists sharing their spiritual values and individual inspirations as an expression of the life of unity would fuse into a mutual giving so the result would belong to all.

In 1966 thousands of people came from all over the world to Loppiano, a recently established Focolare town in northern Italy. To ensure a warm welcome to all and a cultural exchange live music and dances were needed. A group of young boys set up a music group and Chiara Lubich gave them a Christmas present of a red drum kit and a guitar. A group of girls also set up a band and Chiara gave them a green drum kit. The colours of these drum kits formed part of the name of their bands; Gen Verde (green) and Gen Rosso (red). By prefixing the name of their bands with the word Gen a clear link was made with the new generation of the Focolare Movement. The Gen are young people throughout the world who are committed to a project of universal brotherhood also through artistry, which is much loved and close to young people.

Whilst over the years the members of these groups have changed their aims remain the same and they continue to take

their performances all over the world. As well as their own work they animate other groups with a wide range of styles and types of music.

Today there are many musicians and artists around the world who work in the same way in their own medium – putting in the first place ‘mutual and constant charity’ among them and with those around them, trying to give to the world the gift of the beauty of God through their own artistic talents. Some artists have organised workshops focused on painting, opened up theatrical rehearsals. The discovery made is that art expressed through living the Gospel can reveal its true characteristic in very discipline: music, theatre, poetry literature and all the others.

There have been many developments within the Movement in meetings for artists from that first meeting back in 1970 to an international congress for artists in April 1999. At the congress a ‘network’ of artists was set up composed of individuals and groups from all the expressions of art in the most varied nations of the world.

“Beauty will save the world” said Fedor Dostoevskij. An artist discovers so much by sharing their own inspiration as a ‘gift’ to others in a rich exchange of ideas and experiences showing the harmony between arts and life. So it is that the dimension of eternity is translated into art making credible the suffered and extraordinary inspiration of every artist.

Pedagogy - EDU-Education for Unity

EdU, Education for Unity, gathers an international group of scholars and professionals in the field of education. Its aim is

to elaborate the educational theory that emerges from the life, thought and spiritual experience of Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement.

Objectives

Reflection and the gathering of experiences. Coordinating study and research projects aimed at underlining the fundamental importance of the relational dimension in education; a dimension that reflects Jesus' commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you", so that "All may be one".

EdU therefore has the role of outlining and elaborating a "Pedagogy of Unity". It does this through specific forms and categories of research and reflection in the field of education, with particular importance given to contributions from different cultural areas.

Initiatives

Pedagogues, experts in Educational Science and educators, work together to build a culture based on reciprocal love and unity amongst individuals, groups and nations. Through working groups, forums, publications, seminars and conventions, EdU is committed to exchanging research on educational aims, methods and outcomes.

Amongst its most significant activities to date:

1st International Convention: "The Community as Educator". The student-teacher relationship, relationships between educators and between groups, the theory-practice relationship- EdU's first International convention aimed at bringing relationships back to central interest. This Congress

was held at the Mariapolis Centre in Castelgandolfo, Rome from the 31st March to the 2nd April 2006.

1st International Seminar for EdU Coordinators: “From Fragmentation to Unity. Educator’s Viewpoint. Education Viewpoint”. A dialogue on the current debate in Educational Science about the risk of knowledge fragmentation. An exchange on the centrality of education. Mariapolis Centre in Castelgandolfo, Rome from the 21st to the 23rd May 2004

2nd International Convention: “Education, an act of love”. A reflection on the current relevance of Chiara Lubich’s ‘lesson’ on the Art of Loving. Cadine, Trent from 9th to 10th October 2010.

Sociology

‘Fraternal love everywhere brings about positive social relations that are capable of increasing solidarity, justice and happiness among human beings. Our experience going back sixty years tells us that these fraternal relationships lived in the daily business of personal, family and social life, as well in political institutions and economic structures, liberate unexpected moral and spiritual resources. These are new kinds of relationship, full of meaning, which give rise to the widest range of initiatives, which create structures that benefit individuals and communities.’

From Chiara Lubich’s message to the Congress of Social-One, ‘Social Relationship and Fraternity: Paradox or Sustainable Model?’, Castelgandolfo, 11 February 2005.

In Chiara Lubich’s charism, which has been recognized as significant for various fields of culture by several universities (of

both catholic and non-catholic foundation), there are elements that offer social scientists, working within the constraints of their discipline, the possibility of generating new ideas, new theories and new perspectives. This conviction is shared by sociologists and students of social work meeting together as the international group called Social-One.

Drawing from the charism of unity, Social-One first of all strives to grasp the points for reflection and research, and the interpretative keys useful to the understanding of social reality, in such a way as to develop innovative concepts and models capable of directing social dynamics towards the achievement of a more united world.

Social-One has an experience of life, study and discussion that takes place via a dynamic dialogue of listening and mutual openness. It considers sociological concepts such as 'respect', 'gift', 'solidarity', 'agape', understood as fraternal love without self-interest. In the last few years it has focused on the topic of 'agapic behaviour', holding seminars and international congresses.

Social-One's central research group meets regularly in Rome and it is in contact with a worldwide network of scholars. This network is based especially upon groups of researchers in Italy, Belgium, Argentina and Brazil.

To find out more: <http://social-one.org>

Sport

Sportmeet is a worldwide network of sports and people who work in sports. We are men and women of every age, culture, ethnic background, language and religion who see

sports as an important and positive reality that allows us to challenge ourselves and others. We are motivated by the desire to make a contribution through sports to a more united world.

Sports enthusiasts from every background are part of Sportmeet : athletes from the most varied backgrounds, professional and non-professional, amateurs, people who want to challenge their own physical capabilities, people who love spending time outdoors, physical education teachers, instructors and specialists of every type and level, professors of physical exercise and sports science, undergraduates and graduates in physical exercise specialties, health workers belonging to different professional levels in the field of sport, timekeepers, referees, judges and clerks of the course, directors and managers of sports businesses and organisations, journalists and media professionals specialising in sports, public administrators and directors of sports institutions, people who work in commerce related to sports, and everyone else professionally and culturally associated to the world of physical activity.

Sportmeet is represented at the United Nations by New Humanity of which it is a member. This is an NGO with General Consultative Status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) .

To be part of Sportmeet simply means to be part of its vision. No other form of agreement other than sharing the common goals is required. Sportmeet seeks communicate with every person or body agreeing with our objectives.

The official Sportmeet site is one of the windows of this project today: it gathers and promotes the ideas, studies and

research, projects and stories of people who commit to this spirit. <http://www.sportmeet.org/en/>

SOCIAL COMMITMENT

The Focolare Movement has a universal charism therefore it is committed to social action in every place and environment.

Back in 1940 Trent, during the Second World War, Chiara Lubich and her first companions helped heal both physical and moral wounds, gave goods to the poor, supported families resolving difficulties and welcomed those who were at the margins of society through talking and sharing with them.

In 1962 Chiara Lubich explained where the idea for that 'social revolution' came from: "The gospel says that whoever wants to follow Jesus must leave everything they have and give it to the poor... It's the first step to take in order to follow Jesus". They acted on this literally loving God through practical actions for those around them.

At the beginning of the Movement one of the first spiritual intuitions Chiara Lubich had was the understanding of God as Love. She recalls the experience when in 1979 she wrote: "You can only respond to Love with love, love for God, as a response to His Love for us and you do this by immediately doing something out of love for your neighbour. Whoever we met in our life was given our full attention, our care, our kindness."

They were intense years during which the first focolarine dashed untiringly from one part of the city to another to bring help to whoever needed it. In those days their seating plan at the dinner table was “a poor person then a focolarina, a poor person and then a focolarina”.

The first target for help from these young girls were the poorest. They were sure that behind the sad and troubled faces of these people there hid the face of Jesus. As the community around them grew they were more able to give help to whoever needed it. They did this for several months. It was natural in this small and yet great revolution of social care to help not just the poor but all of humanity: “There were those who needed feeding, dressing, something to drink and also those who needed teaching, advising, supporting and those who needed prayers”. And so they became aware of the power that the charism of unity brought with it, seeing the effect it had in the world.

This life, made up of social action and contemplation, attracted people from all walks of life: among them was Iginio Giordani, a very well known Italian journalist, politician and writer who is now considered a co-founder of the Movement.

Giordani was the first to intuit the impact the charism would have on the various sectors of society: he and many others since as well as thousands today have realised the possibility of putting evangelical love into practical actions in all social circumstance: homes, hospitals, schools, offices, factories, clubs, volunteering politics, economy and theatre.

The same strategy is used everywhere: to bring fraternal love is the aim and also the action mode; the method, fraternal

love remains the doctrine used to value the skills and competence of each person so forming a network of sharing for the common good.

So a community, which is a “people of God” was born, and through Him immersed in everyone’s problems that wounds can be healed in every city.

A common bond has developed between people of goodwill who share a vision of a more just society enriched by diversity. Sharing together can lead to new practical solutions to problems, sometimes in the most unexpected ways.

Azione Mondo Unito

AMU is an NGO that was established in 1986; it is officially recognized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the realization of projects of development cooperation, training activities and development education.

It is inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement and aims to spread a culture of dialogue and unity among peoples. Together with the populations involved, we are committed to carry out sustainable activities that lay the foundations for an effective development, respecting social, cultural and economic local realities, and in the perspective of a “development of communion”.

AMU operates in several countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, with cooperation initiatives involving, depending on the context, support for basic needs (housing, food and health), development of agriculture and handicrafts, micro-enterprises, basic education, vocational training, post-emergency interventions and social development. In recent

years, the change of the international scenario made it necessary to expand the range of action, previously limited to the so-called developing countries, also to Italy and Europe.

AMU is associated with CIPSI (Coordination of Popular Initiatives of International Solidarity); it is also accredited by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research for the training of school personnel on issues of global education and human rights.

Associazione per Famiglie Nuove

The Azione per Famiglie Nuove Onlus is an organization established in 1998 and nurtures the concepts of universal unity and brotherhood that bring life to Movimento Famiglie Nuove and the entire Focolare Movement.

With the aim of bringing value and dignity back to families, AFNonlus operates around the world and promotes support and training initiatives for families, as well as projects to support impoverished children, within a prospect of sharing cultures, religions and social experiences.

Throughout these years and thanks to its long-distance sponsorship programs and social projects in about 50 countries worldwide, 40,000 children have regained social dignity through improved living conditions and taking part in the development of the community in which they belong.

Moreover, since 2001, AFNonlus is working as an Organization Authorized by the International Adoption Commission presided by the President of the Council of Ministries, for the international adoption of abandoned children.

Dal 2005 AFN onlus opera come Ente autorizzato dalla Commissione Adozioni Internazionali della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, per l'adozione internazionale di minori in stato di abbandono.

The Association is also involved in training and development projects with particular attention to disadvantaged children and families in a socio-economic need: it carries out social interventions involving families and local communities; supports capacity building projects for minors and families; promotes the culture of reception for a more inclusive society; it is activated in case of emergencies, intervening with projects to support the resumption of life of local communities.

A typical characteristic of the activities promoted by AFN onlus is the continuity of the services it provides in all areas where it operates.

The Association operates in the entire national territory as well as in international contexts with regional and local initiatives and activities, and promotes establishment of similar associations with the same purpose and spirit, in Italy and abroad.

Today, AFN onlus is registered in the Registry of Legal Persons as well as in the Registry of Non-Profit Social Welfare organizations.

http://www.afnonlus.org/#pll_switcher

EDITORIAL ACTIVITY

Magazines and Publishing Houses

Our goal is unity, a goal that we hope to reach even though its full breadth is still far beyond our understanding. It calls us to be fully devoted with our intelligence and energy, our faith and our strength.

Citta Nuova (New City) Publishing House which was founded by Chiara Lubich in 1956 is one expression of the Focolare Movement. It looks at the world through the lens of universal brotherhood-sisterhood and day by day reports on the adventures of the people of the Focolare who strive to render more visible and real the ideal of a united world.

This is the goal that unites all twenty two publishing houses and the thirty seven editions of Citta Nuova magazine that are published throughout the world.

The Focolare's monthly Citta Nuova magazine presents a view of people and events from the prospective of unity. With special attention to the signs of the times, the magazine is attentive to communion within the Catholic Church, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and dialogue with persons of diverse convictions.

Citta Nuova is an expression of the spirituality and of cultural, social and economic proposals offered by the Focolare Movement that was founded by Chiara Lubich.

The New Humanity Journal has been a cultural expression of the Focolare Movement for the past thirty years. Founded in 1978 by Chiara Lubich, it is a bi-monthly publication of Citta Nuova Press and offers research and studies from the humanistic disciplines.

First among all is the Abba School journal, which is put out by the international study group that Chiara Lubich founded when she invited researchers from several academic areas to examine the cultural content of the charism of unity. This magazine also gathers the fruits of the research that is carried out in the several “schools” promoted by the Movement in particular fields of intra-ecclesial, ecumenical dialogue and dialogue between religions and culture. It also expresses new prospectives of thought that are being opened by the charism of unity in the social, economic, political, and professional fields.

Charism in Unity magazine deals in monographic form with different themes of spirituality from the starting point of Gospel wisdom, the charismatic light that shines in the present-day Church and real life experiences. It contains doctrinal articles, the witness of the saints from all ages and the experiences of men and women religious today. It attempts to encourage unity among all: men and women religious, lay-people and priests, so that the variety of the gifts and the richness of the charisms might be brought together in harmony.

“Sophia— research on the foundations and correlations of fields of knowledge” is semiannual academic expression of the research being carried out by Sophia University Institute, under the title Sophia” (Wisdom), and the subtitle “research into the foundations and correlations of knowledge”. The title is meant to describe its purpose and focus: that is, thinking about the significance and contribution of the scientific disciplines provided by the research and teaching at Sophia and the sapiential dimension of life and of light and interpersonal and

interdisciplinary dialogue that defines the project and programme of the institute.

Contributions from the presenters range from biblical theology to systematic theology, philosophy, political economy, politics, cosmology, epistemology and logic and the foundations of mathematics.

“Gens” explores the spirituality of unity and its ecclesial possibilities. It is a bi-monthly publication, published in several languages for a seminarian audience.