

Lord, give me all the lonely

Every day we hear statistics about the spread of the pandemic in the world and see coverage from the most affected countries. These give rise to feelings similar to those expressed in the following prayer by Chiara Lubich. Even our planet, which is suffering more and more, is calling out for and awaiting our active and determined love.

Lord, give me all the lonely... I have felt in my heart the passion that fills your heart for all the forsakenness in which the whole world is drifting. I love every being that is sick and alone: even – plants in distress cause me pain... even animals left alone.

Who consoles their weeping?

Who mourns their slow death?

And who clasps to their own the heart in despair?

Grant me, my God, to be in this world the tangible sacrament of your Love, of your being Love: to be your arms that clasp to themselves and consume in love all the loneliness of the world.

Chiara Lubich
Written on 1st September 1949



Dear readers,

The news that filming has started in Trento, Italy, on the first TV movie on Chiara Lubich (see p.3) provoked an enormous response in the Italian press, exceeding all our expectations. It will be broadcast on the major national channel RAI 1 in the autumn. We know of another television program on Chiara currently in production. Press articles and radio transmissions dedicated to Chiara are appearing with

some regularity. So, this year the planned schedule of events to celebrate the Centenary of Chiara's birth "escaped" us due to the pandemic. Many events were cancelled and programs had to be changed. But it seems that maybe Chiara herself is carrying it ahead. A consoling thought, don't you think?

Joachim Schwind
Focolare Communications Office



Von der Leyen to **New Humanity and Politics** for Unity Movement of the Focolare

“To achieve the goals of the fathers and mothers who founded a true covenant in which mutual trust becomes a common strength, we must do the right things together and with one big heart, not 27 little hearts”. Thus writes Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in a letter to the international NGO New Humanity and the Politics for Unity Movement.

The leaders of the NGO New Humanity and its political section Politics for Unity Movement, civil and political components of the Focolare Movement, had in fact written to the President of the European Commission to encourage joint work in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the support of ideas and planning also during the preparation phase of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In her response, President Von der Leyen stressed how the EU has ensured the greatest response ever given to a crisis and emergency situation in the Union, with the mobilisation of €3.4 trillion (about €3400 billion).

The President also said that “the current change in the geopolitical context offers Europe an opportunity to strengthen its unique role as a responsible global leader” whose success ” in this era of rapid disintegration and growing challenges will depend on adapting to the

changing situation while remaining true to Europe’s values and interests”.

In fact, the President underlines in her letter Europe “is the main provider of public development aid, with €5.2 billion in 2019. In its global response to the fight against the pandemic, the EU has also pledged financial support in excess of €15.6 billion to partner countries, to be used for external action. This includes €3.25 billion to Africa. The EU will also support Asia and the Pacific with €1.22 billion, €918 million to support Latin America and the Caribbean and €111 million to support countries overseas “. Furthermore, the President of the EU Commission continues, “the European Union and its partners have launched the Coronavirus Global Response, which so far has commitments of €9.8 billion from donors around the world, with the aim of further increasing funding for the development of research, diagnosis, treatment and vaccines against Coronavirus”.

President Ursula Von der Leyen’s letter to New Humanity and Politics for Unity Movement concludes with an invitation to mutual trust between the countries of the European Union and to be one big heart.

Stefania Tanesini



The first TV movie on Chiara Lubich

A film about Chiara and the beginnings of the Focolare Movement will be aired on RAI UNO, the first channel of Italy's national state broadcaster, in autumn.

“Can the power of a girl’s dream and her faith change the world ?” This is the keynote on which the Italian director Giacomo Campiotti bases the film in which he narrates the story of Chiara Lubich, the young teacher from Trent, who in her early twenties lived the hardships and anguish caused by the Second World War. Lubich felt called to build a better world, a more united one, and since then she set herself the goal to build bridges between people, irrespective of their race, nation or religious belief.

This biography TV movie, the first to be made on Chiara Lubich will focus on the early years, those between 1943 and 1950. It is a co-production by Rai Fiction and Casanova Multimedia, produced by Luca Barbareschi. Cristiana Capotondi, an established Italian actress will play Chiara in the movie, while Sofia Panizzi and Valentina Ghelfi will also be in the cast. The shooting of the film will begin in Trent in a few days’ time, and it will start with “the times when the war raged” and “everything collapsed” and only God remained, as Chiara herself related in one of the very first stories about the Focolare Movement’s beginning . In the press release issued about the movie one reads: “Today, the tenacity in a figure like Chiara makes us consider the other person as an opportunity, a gift, a bearer of a seed of truth to be valued and loved, no matter how far apart we may be. Universal brotherhood is a prerequisite for dialogue and peace. Chiara’s message does not belong only to the Catholic world. She has contributed towards the value and role of women not only in ecclesiastical institutions but also and above all outside them”.

This movie will relate the story of the very first years, the foundation years, when Chiara realised that God was showing her the way to be followed and she responded, followed by an ever increasing number of people, who took roads that from Italy led to the whole world. It will also be a journey that speaks of the historical, social and ecclesial circumstances that Chiara experienced during the Second World War, the very first years after the war and the pre-conciliar years with ferments that stirred Catholicity.

▼ Photo by Federica Di Benedetto



The director and producers intend and want to relate all about “the young revolutionary girl, who shared everything with those in need”. ANSA news stated this on July 27 and continued to say that “she read the Gospel without the presence of a priest; she was considered as harmful to the society of her time and so she was forced to report about her work to the Holy Office. She passed through the most difficult test of her life when she was asked to abandon the Focolare leadership. But the stone she threw into the pond could not be stopped and created wider circles, so years later, when Paul VI came to rehabilitate the Focolare Movement, it had already spread throughout the world”.

Stefania Tanesini



Running a business in Coronavirus times

Firms going under, thousands of jobs lost: lockdown has hit the European economy hard. But many entrepreneurs are trying equally hard to keep going. Andrea Cruciani in Italy asked himself what he could do to protect his workers.

How have business people coped in the emergency lockdown phase caused by Covid-19? We spoke with Andrea Cruciani, CEO of TeamDev software consultancy and Agricolus start-up, linked to the Economy of Communion project.



How has the lockdown affected you?

“Before lockdown things were going well. For the past 12 years, TeamDev has demonstrated 20% annual growth and we now employ a workforce of 50. Halfway through

February we took steps to raise money through the bank. But the lockdown meant by the end of March we had no cash liquidity left. For the first time ever, I found myself without money or opportunities.

The only option left to us was to start laying off staff. I was so unhappy about this because we have always taken particular care to invest in the welfare of the business.

Not surprisingly perhaps, some of our workers took fright and lost confidence in us. To lose the trust of even one employee was extremely painful to me.

Gradually, however, we found ways to meet the needs of everyone. As soon as the business started generating some income again, we immediately

began to supplement their unemployment payments through a special ‘Covid fund’. At the end, we were able to give the same pay to all, and they understood there was no bad-faith on our side”.

Have you learnt anything through all this?

“I’ve realized how fragile authentic relationships with employees and collaborators can be. It’s so important that authentic relationships are built on trust. We’ve been amazed to see how some of our people have found new energy from the desire to contribute to the common good. In this period the true humanity within our relationships has emerged”.

Do you have any advice for other businesses about caring for their human resources?

“Let me tell you a story. Three years ago I decided to promote one particular employee to the management of a department. But after a short time, this person quit. I realised that what I want out of life for myself is not necessarily what everyone else wants for themselves. This employee did not want the psychological stress of that management role and was not even ambitious for an increase in salary. Following that experience we began to improve some of our processes”.

Improve in what ways?

“First of all, we turned to a coach to improve the team spirit among everyone working in the company. Then we began to improve working conditions with some quite simple initiatives like offering fresh fruit for break-times. We also ordered seasonal fruit from a Caritas orchard project, to give everyone the opportunity to take what they needed home, free of charge. We also launched a program of integrated welfare, developing our existing long-standing integrated retirement package and other supports such as flexible working to accommodate family



commitments. In this way we protect the interests of those working in our companies. And, clearly, we strive to promote the growth of each person to be able to give the best of themselves”.

How do you view the future of the economy in general?
“I foresee a future where it will be ever more necessary to read the present moment and share our own perspective for the future. Chiara Lubich is a prophet for us, EoC business people, because she has taught us how to care for our employees and businesses. Some aspects are covered by the law but many other aspects are covered already by one’s conscience and commitment to love”.

Lorenzo Russo

Gospel lived: **I was tempted to emigrate**

I am a specialist in infectious diseases and, due to poor health facilities, poor hygiene and very low salaries, I was tempted to emigrate like many colleagues. However, after reflecting with my wife, I decided to continue my service to my brothers and sisters in our country. With the support of Christian friends abroad, it was possible to build a health facility complete with a laboratory and guarantee specific medicines even for the poorest people. In addition to the development of productive activities to improve basic nutrition, an attempt was also made to ensure psychosocial support for the sick and their families.

(M.- Democratic Republic of Congo)

*(see Il Vangelo del Giorno,
Città Nuova, anno VI, n.4, July–August 2020)*





Pasquale Foresi's biography published

Pasquale Foresi, the first co-president of the Focolare Movement and an avant-garde theologian was a very timid and a highly intelligent person. His first biography, edited by Michele Zanzucchi, has just been published in Italian. It relates the story of a man, the beginning of the Focolare Movement, a cross-section of history that has much to say to the Movement, the Church and society today.

The first biography of Pasquale Foresi “*In fuga per la verità*”, who together with Igino Giordani was defined by Chiara Lubich as co-founder of the Focolari, was published on July 9, 2020. It gives a very well documented account of the first part of his life, from 1929 to 1954. Even Focolare members knew very little about this part of his life because of Foresi's reserved character and his style of co-governance, as we would say today. It is a very interesting text, published in Italian, but versions in English, French and Spanish are in the pipeline. It is studded with unpublished facts and it flows like a novel, that speaks of Foresi's life and recounts all about the Movement's beginnings and Chiara Lubich, as a person, from his point of view. It also makes us reflect on the present life of the worldwide Focolare Movement, almost 80 years after its birth.

But who was Pasquale Foresi? Who was he for the very young Focolare foundress?

We put this question to Michele Zanzucchi, the author of the biography, a journalist and a writer, former director of Città Nuova. He was well-acquainted with Foresi, but besides, it took him two and half years

of research on papers, texts, books and speeches to produce such a thorough and deep piece of work.

“Foresi met Chiara Lubich during the Christmas holidays of 1949. He was then a young man in his twenties, but he had already experienced a more adult life than his age; so he was “prepared” to collaborate with the Focolari foundress. He was the son of a Livorno family; his father, a teacher and a Catholic laity leader, later became a member of parliament and his mother was a housewife. He had three brothers and sisters. Since his childhood, Pasquale showed uncommon practical-theoretical intelligence. On September 8, 1943, the day of the armistice, at the age of 14, he escaped from home “to give some service to Italy”. Soon after, he joined the blackshirts, and then, because of the Nazis themselves, he took part in combats and he even fought at Cassino. Before he escaped, he freed deserters who were condemned to death. His philosophical-religious conversion started there. He was with the partisans when the war ended, and then, immediately afterwards he entered the seminary in Pistoia. Two years later he was at the prestigious Capranica in Rome. But he left; he could not accept the incoherent way some clerics lived the Gospel. He found this coherency in Lubich and her friends. Within a month, the teacher from Trent understood that God sent this young man to help her accomplish God's work that had just started. Foresi cooperated with her in setting up centres of community living for virgins, in the Church's approval of the Movement, in the building of centres and small towns, in the setting

up of publishing houses and launching magazines, in the inauguration of university centres..... From that day on, Lubich remained faithful to the role God entrusted to Foresi, and she never abandoned this, not even when he was struck by a serious cerebral illness in 1967, when he was barely 38 years old and he disappeared from public life. For her, Pasquale always remained one of the two co-founders of the Movement, the one with whom she confronted every decision she had to make”.

What kind of priest was he? What was his vision of the Church?

“With a very traditional formation on the sacraments and priestly life, I would say neo-school. Foresi helped Lubich to develop an original idea of the application of the presbyterate, the idea of “Marian priesthood” stripped of “power” and animated only by deep rootedness in the kingly priesthood of Jesus. This idea of priesthood is still being applied and experimented today. For Foresi, in particular, the priest had to be a champion in humanity, in being man-Jesus. The underlying vision of the Church is linked to a prophetically conciliar perspective: the Church as the people of God, the Church-communion, naturally synodal and one that gives value (which does not mean in any way devaluing the “sacramental” presence of Christ in his Church) to the presence of Jesus in humanity in more “lay” forms, particularly in the presence promised by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst” (Mt 18:20)”.

Why did Chiara Lubich entrust Foresi, and not a lay person, with the realization of some of the Focolari’s works, the so-called “concretizations”, such as the international centre of Loppiano and the launching of the publishing house Città Nuova?

“It would be great if this question is asked to the one who could really answer it... However, I note that the other co-founder of the Movement was Igino Giordani, a married lay person, a member of parliament, a journalist, an ecumenist. He met Lubich back in 1948, and the foundress saw in him the presence “of humanity” at the heart of her charism. So for Lubich, Giordani meant a radical opening to the world, following the priestly prayer of Jesus: “Let all men be one” (Jn 17:10). But in Foresi – who was of a more “concrete” nature than the “idealist” Giordani – she



saw the one who would give her the practical support needed to achieve her work. We need to say that Foresi was extremely “secular” in this characteristic, even though it was very clear to him that the Movement’s mission was primarily ecclesial, and that it could not be done without the ecclesiastics”.

Let’s try to guess: what would Foresi say to the Focolari and what would he invite them to aim at if he were alive today?

“A real gamble. I believe he would invite the Movement to do the necessary ‘updating’ , while keeping in mind the nascent state of the Movement. Therefore, he would invite the Movement to go back to the founder’s mystical intuitions of 1949-1951, read them again and apply them. And also to look very carefully into the process of concrete realization that took place especially during 1955-1957, when Lubich received other illuminations that referred to the concretization of the previous mystical intuitions”.

Stefania Tanesini



USA – facing up to the “original sin of racism”

Can the two major crises currently rocking the United States – the pandemic and racism –lead to a better future? Susanne Janssen, editor of Living City Magazine, reflects.

Racism is a virus that has never been eradicated in the United States. After the Civil War (1861-1865), slavery was legally abolished, but still today people of color and white people are not treated in the same way. The death of **George Floyd** has shone a light on this problem. The fact that those 8 atrocious minutes of George Floyd pleading for his life were captured on video means it could no longer be blamed on the victim. This video, together with the large number of people (not only Afro-Americans) who united to protest against racism, are a sign that this time something is different. Our hope is all that has happened will not end with a wave of protests but will lead to real change.

The role of the Catholic Church

After a few days’ silence, the Catholic Church positioned itself alongside the anti-racism protestors. The Cardinal of Boston, Seán O’Malley wrote that the killing of George Floyd “is painful evidence of what is and has been at stake for African Americans – the failure of society in too many ways to protect their lives and the lives of their children. The demonstrations and protests of these days have been calls for justice and heart wrenching expressions of deep emotional pain from which we cannot turn away”. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has described racism as the “original sin” of their country, persisting through the nation’s history, festering to this day. Reflection on the issue is now gaining ground in the Church and society.

The first steps

The slogan “defund the police” calls for something more than a simple restructuring of police departments. It demands a completely new start, to create a police force which is more accountable to its citizens. In recent years much has been said about the increasing militarization of the police; but to tell the truth, much of what they do, should actually be the role of social workers.

What differentiates today from the violence suffered by Afro-Americans in the past, is the way many people are striving to learn from, listen and face up to the past, focusing on those structural issues which have lingered since the time of the abolition of slavery and segregation, such as the so-called “Jim Crow laws” and the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Yes, because the first step has to be facing up to those prejudices within everyone, and the social privileges generally afforded to white people. Authors Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo declare that “being a good person” is not enough in this regard. The step required is to oppose the very structures of oppression, as even



now, in a routine police check, the color of your skin can make the difference between life and death.

The contribution of the Focolare Movement

Firstly, Focolare communities are looking hard at themselves for traces of discrimination and racism. The Focolare's thinking on racial justice is an essential starting point before entering in sincere dialogue with one another and with people around us.

We create space to listen to the painful testimonies of racism endured, and also to the experience of those raised in predominantly white environments who are striving to engage in a process of recognizing their own limits. These are not easy conversations, but they are necessary in order to build relationships that are more real.

“If we're not careful, we risk reinforcing the principles of popular rhetoric on diversity which too often support the privileged and accentuate the differences,” affirms an academic of color. Another Focolare member now more than 80 years old, he too an academic, admits that throughout his life he has had

to learn to become more open, particularly when one of his daughters married a Jamaican. “I was worried their children would suffer discrimination. But now I see they are a shining example for many”.

The role of youth

Young people are in the front line demanding a change of mentality. One young girl of mixed race said, “I want to help my brothers and sisters to be listened to more, otherwise I will regret it for the rest of my life...”

The very “Black Lives Matter” slogan which united many people, drawing them out onto the streets in huge numbers, has itself been targeted to provoke polarization. It's not rare to come across messages which strive to discredit those campaigning for more justice. However, there are also signs of a gradual change in public opinion. In fact, many have condemned President Donald Trump's handling of the recent crises: the pandemic and structural racism. At time of writing, the Democratic Party candidate, Joe Biden, has a 13% lead in the polls, but it's far too early to predict the situation come November when Americans go out to vote.

Susanne Janssen, Editor, Living City magazine

Gospel lived: Racism

I was a student at the middle school; classes and homework were fine, but the relationship with my classmates wasn't. One day, while I was finishing my science homework, I was verbally insulted by one of them for being an Asian. I didn't know how to react to his racist abuse. I did not utter a word, but a strong feeling of revenge gripped me. Then a strange thought crossed my mind: “Now is your chance”. It took me a while to understand quite clearly that it was “now my chance to love my enemies”. My first reaction was to ignore this and defend my Asian identity. Loving my enemy seemed as if I would only be contributing towards a more negative situation. I was very uncertain about what to do, but after some time I decided to keep silent. I forced my angry heart to forgive while I offered my personal wound to Jesus, who suffered so much on the cross. After forgiving my enemy, I sincerely experienced a happiness I never felt before.
(James – USA)



*(see Il Vangelo del Giorno,
Città Nuova, anno VI, n.4, July–August 2020)*

Maria Voce: help save the world with love

What have we learned from the pandemic? Which tools can we use to build a new world? What specific contribution can each of us make? From Maria Voce's spontaneous words to a Focolare community in Italy on 16th July.

For a number of years, July 16th has been a double celebration for the Focolare communities around the world. It's the anniversary of the special pact of unity between Chiara Lubich and Igino Giordani in 1949 and also the birthday of Focolare President, Maria Voce. Once again this year the celebration became an opportunity for spontaneous and informal dialogue – in which Maria Voce spoke from her heart about the meaning of that special day, about the life of the Focolare in recent months and the contribution the charism of unity can make at this crucial time for humanity. She had received many greetings, good wishes and much affection from all over the world and for this reason she wanted, and wants, to thank each person in a special way. We publish below part of what she said, with extracts from amateur video footage of that occasion.

“... The pandemic has taught us a great lesson, hasn't it? We must recognise this. It has made us suffer and is still making us suffer. We don't know how many painful consequences will still come from this pandemic, do we? But it has also been a great lesson. The main lesson was telling us 'you are all equal'. You are all equal: whether rich or poor, powerful or wretched, children, adults, immigrants ... you are all equal. That's the first thing.

Second: even though you are all equal, some people are suffering more than others despite this equality. So what makes you all equal? You are all equal because God made you all equal. You are very different from each other but you are all his children. You have all been created by him with the same love, a great love. Then human beings came and began to differentiate between people, and we keep on doing this. So, yes to one person, no to another; one person is worth more, another less. This person can give me something, but that one can't; this person is exploiting me, that one isn't ... and we start differentiating between people.

What happens when we do that? The result is that there are some countries where hospitals are well-equipped and countries where they are not. There are countries where there are enough masks for everyone and others where there are not.

There are places, even here in Italy, with very good internet connection and where distance schooling is possible, and other places that don't have it. So we are all equal before God but not all equal in the eyes of other people, where real care for all is not there. Does this hold true for us too? Perhaps I too am more willing to spend time with one person than with another and I differentiate between one person and another. I've seen this too and so am I really living the pact if I am like that, the pact that tells us to be ready to die for one another, not only for people I like, but any person at all?

Today people are saying we must create a new world, a new humanity. Everyone says that a new world must be created. However, in a small way, Chiara made a new world. Chiara's family scattered across the globe is already a new world, at least in a small way. Of course it's just a start, a model, a small sign, but it shows that it is possible. So, if it has been possible for this little group (which is only relatively little because it numbers hundreds of thousands around the world) to do this in a small way, I ask, is this little people, Chiara's people, ready to tell everyone that a new world is possible?

It is possible: we must be convinced that it is possible and remember the thought for today, "Believe in the power of love." So, first of all, let's believe that love is a powerful force. Have we experienced it? Yes, we have experienced it very often. But now, it has diminished a little; the thermometer of love has gone down. Let's put some more mercury in the thermometer and make it rise. Let's increase the amount of love in the world and you'll see that everything else will rise up. We will be a reality that goes through the world doing good to all. And we'll do this without having to say, "You know, we do things in this way; come with us because we are like this." No, we are who we are; we are just like the others; we are poor wretches like everyone else, but we live in paradise and we don't want to leave this paradise. But we want to be with others. We don't want stay among ourselves in paradise. We want to bring this paradise to others and not keep it for ourselves, because it's comfortable ... and let the world get lost. No! The world must be saved; we must help save the world with our love."

Stefania Tanesini



“The Experience” of living in **Mariapolis Lia** becomes a university course

For over fifty years, the Focolare Movement's little town in Argentina has provided training programmes for thousands of young people from all over the world: now the experience of living there has university recognition as a “vocational training programme”.

Until just over a month ago, many people used to say that the experience of living in Mariapolis Lia was so rich and varied that it gave you a master's degree, so to speak, in “life under the banner of the culture of unity”. Now the “experiencia” - the experience - as the annual course for young people is called really does have university certification. The new study programme has been drawn up thanks to the collaboration of educational teams from the Latin American Centre for Social Evangelization (CLAdES), the Mariápolis Lía School and the National North western University of the Province of Buenos Aires (Unnoba).

The course will have the academic title “University extension and vocational training programme” and will be based upon four fundamental elements: anthropology-philosophy, history-culture, the community and the transcendent. It will take 11 months to complete and those who do so will have access to university extension and accreditation of vocational training in three different areas of choice: education, eco-responsibility and multicultural management; community leadership and development of community engagement; or art, communication and multimedia production.

The training will be developed through specialized seminars, work placements and evaluation of the application of values deriving from Christian social teaching.

There are also plans to integrate this course with the Latin American section of the Sophia University Institute. Mariápolis Lía, situated near the town of O'Higgins, Buenos Aires, offers young people an educational experience that integrates work, study, cultural and recreational activities, sports and specific interests. All activities are regarded as integral elements of formation. In fact, the notion of student coincides with that of citizen, therefore, it is assumed that all young people who live there are engaged in the life of the little town.



A team of teachers and experts in a variety of disciplines - spirituality, anthropology, sociology and Christian doctrine - follows the young people in their learning.

The 6000 young people who over the years have spent a period of time at the Mariapolis are proof of its formative value. In their later lives in a range of different environments – as managers, economists, educators, professionals, workers, parents, consecrated persons... the “experience” has remained a shining point, helping them to overcome personal and professional challenges.

Stefania Tanesini



Five years of **Laudato Si'**

*Five years have passed since the publication of **Laudato Si'**, Pope Francis' encyclical on the care of the planet.*

Here we discuss it with **Luca Fiorani**, professor at the universities of Lumsa, Marconi and Sophia; ENEA researcher; and head of **EcoOne**, the Focolare Movement's ecological network.

In these times of pandemic, what lessons can come from **Laudato Si'** and its paradigm of integral ecology? I am thinking of how "everything is connected". The pope, before the pandemic, made us savour its positive side, the wonderful relationship that exists between elements of nature, including people. The pandemic, on the other hand, has brought out the dark side of "everything is connected", because human activity, which led to the destruction of natural habitats, and the virus's leap of species from animal to man are linked.

What is the evangelical foundation of being committed to care for creation?

It is "Love thy neighbour as thyself." One of the key concepts of **Laudate** is, "Listen to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". It is true that for the Gospel, nature has value in itself, but it is also true that caring for nature means ensuring a healthy planet for the most disadvantaged and for our children. It means reminding us of the "lower billion" – those billion people who are victims of a "chronic pandemic" due to 17 neglected tropical diseases.

Can the concept of integral ecology guide the future?

This is the fundamental concept of all Pope Francis' teaching, which invites us to overcome the current socio-economic system. Today we still live with the paradigm

of the industrial revolution, which considers natural resources unlimited. Yet resources are indeed limited, and therefore we need to find a different model of development that also takes into account the needs of peoples forgotten by so-called "evolved" societies.

Laudate calls for a change of attitude. What does it mean to live the principles of integral ecology?

Integral ecology concerns not only the environment but all aspects of human life: society, economy and politics. Therefore each of us must try to change our lives, starting, for example, with consumer choices. Then we can choose leaders who are sensitive to caring for nature and campaign to apply pressure to disinvest from fossil fuels in favour of renewable energy.

In this special year of **Laudato Si' celebrations, how will the Focolare Movement participate?**

The movement participates in initiatives of the Catholic Church and in events promoted by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, to which it adheres. In addition, it is organising a "New ways towards integral ecology" conference, to be held at Castel Gandolfo (RM) from 23–25 October, details of which are available at ecoone.org.

Your latest book is entitled **Francesco's crazy dream: a small (scientific) manual of integral ecology. Why do you speak of a crazy dream?**

Because it truly seems impossible to change the course of this planet towards a world where we all feel like brothers and sisters, and build more bridges than walls. But as Focolare's founder Chiara Lubich said, "Only those who have great ideals make history!"

Lorenzo Russo



Maria Voce on “Chiara still with us”

Maria Voce’s new book “Luce che avvolge il mondo” [Light that envelops the world], is published today by Città Nuova, for now only in Italian. It is a profound and courageous re-reading of the cornerstones of the spirituality of unity in the light of the questions posed by people today concerning our present times and the near future.

This is probably Maria Voce’s last book as President of the Focolare Movement. In it we find her thought regarding the Movement set out clearly and powerfully more than in any previous publication during her 12 years’ leadership of the Movement. The book reveals the cornerstones of her action and her legacy, but also her experience in the very delicate time following the death of a charismatic founder like Chiara Lubich. This volume certainly deserves to be read “slowly” and meditatively, allowing time for reflection, because in it we find all Maria Voce’s spiritual, cultural and lived adherence to the charism of unity. It contains a series of talks given at various times on the twelve main points of the Focolare spirituality – God Love, the Will of God, the Word, our neighbour, mutual love, the Eucharist, Unity, Jesus Forsaken, Mary, the Church, the Holy Spirit, Jesus in the midst. These talks were given year by year during her two mandates.

In the preface, Maria Voce’s friend Andrea Riccardi [founder of the Sant’Egidio community] writes: “Maria did not want to repeat but to reread Chiara’s message and charism in a Church and a world that have changed. Spiritual movements grow in a deep tension between, on the one hand, faithfulness to their origins and their charism, and, on the other, an exploration of the life and developments of the future. [...] It is an outstanding and remarkable example of the creative faithfulness that is required of a founder’s followers – especially if they are leaders”.

In the introduction, Jesús Morán, Co-President, asks himself with what spirit Maria Voce has written these texts and affirms it is one of actualization for our times. “She has not repeated the talks written by Chiara in the past, but has actualized them (...). She gives us her own renewed understanding of the points of the spirituality of unity that draws directly from the source of Chiara Lubich’s inspiration but also emphasizes

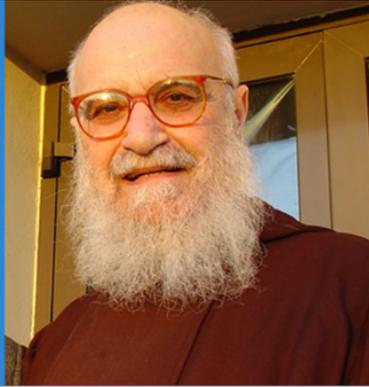
further connotations and brings hitherto unexpressed shades of meaning to the fore. She has done this while being prompted also by the issues and concerns increasingly faced by the members of the Movement in the context of current events in the Church and in the world.”

Leafing through its pages we find a variety of questions posed more or less explicitly to Maria Voce by people in the Focolare Movement. In response to the question, “What is God asking of the people in the Movement?”, she answered: “He asks each of us to reach out to our own environment, engaging with our neighbours in a spirit of unity, but being open to everyone. At the time, Chiara herself said that that would be answer enough. Chiara emphasized very strongly that above all God asks us to make ourselves one with the person who is near us, with those who share our life’s journey and with the people we meet day by day, even – as far as possible – the ones we hear about through the media. We are called, therefore, to live unity every moment of our life, day after day, as happened from the very start.”

Maria Voce also offers her reading of the lights and shadows on the progress of the Focolare Movement. She does so at a time in which the Covid pandemic has changed many things both at a personal and community level, and does so also in view of the upcoming General Assembly in 2021 during which the Movement will elect a new president and leadership: “At this time, we feel that God is urging us to sow seeds of this message of unity in new and larger fields and not worry about diminishing strength or lost ground. We should joyfully witness to the opening up of ever new horizons and the flourishing of countless living cells of the Church spread throughout the world. This happens wherever two or more are ready to love one another with mutual love and to go out towards others so that, as Pope Francis wishes, many people may meet God.”

This attitude towards the current situation enables us to be enriched by an understanding of the present and look to the near future with the optimism characteristic of Maria Voce. She is certainly not naive, because she is well-grounded in the Gospel words that speak of unity and on the life that has sprung from it throughout the world.

Stefania Tanesini



**P. Bonaventura Marinelli OFM^{Cap}
Italia
1920- 2020**

The first religious to follow Chiara Lubich

At 100 years of age, Father Bonaventura Marinelli OFM^{Cap} has died. He was the first member of a religious order to follow Chiara Lubich's spirituality. Father Fabio Ciardi looks back on his life.

On July 15 we celebrated the feast day of his namesake, Saint Bonaventure. On August 1, Fr Bonaventura Marinelli left us for heaven, where he could celebrate the centenary of his inseparable contemporary, Chiara Lubich. What a deep and faithful friendship they shared!

In the years 1942 to 1946, as a young priest studying theology while living in the Capuchin monastery in Trento, he was, as he loved to say, “an eye-witness, albeit at a distance” of the beginnings of the Focolare Movement. At a distance, because in those years, no close contact was permitted. But eye-witness because he saw for himself the way those “extraordinary Third Order Franciscans” were living.

“After the bombardment of 1944,” he recalled in an in-depth interview, “Chiara and her companions were always in our sight. They came to Mass, not in our church which was bomb-damaged, but in the sacristy which was even smaller and so we were brought even closer together. I remember what a deep impression they made on me every time I saw them. I’m rather shy by nature and find it hard to talk to people. But I can still remember how throughout the summer of 1943 and afterwards, when I was out almsgiving among the people, it became easier and easier for me to meet with families, children and others. This new way of seeing people came not from my nature, but from the life I saw in Chiara and her companions.

In 1946, a year after I had been ordained a priest, my superiors sent me to a university in Switzerland. For the first few months I regularly received letters from my companions with whom I’d made a pact of unity. Then,

suddenly, nothing, silence. The Vatican’s Holy Office (now known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) had started investigating the Movement, but I didn’t know. Personally, I found myself slipping into unutterable desolation. Until 23 April 1948, precisely. I’d returned to Trento to vote in the elections, and that morning, before leaving to go back to Switzerland, I met Chiara. She brought joy back to me, but in a much deeper way than before. I understood that what matters is to love. I felt I was touching heaven with my fingertips. When I arrived back in Fribourg I wrote to her. That was the first letter”.

So began a correspondence through which Chiara communicated what she was living in that period. It’s thanks to Fr Bonaventura that today we have such a priceless patrimony of writings, some of which have become very well known. For example the letter dated 30 March 1948, in which she confides, “the book of Light the Lord is writing in my soul has two aspects. One page shines with mysterious love: Unity. The other shines with mysterious suffering: Jesus Forsaken”.

The letters demonstrate the deep relationship which sprang up between them.

11 May 1948: “Your letter confirmed for me the impression I had of your soul, so beloved of the Lord. And immediately, without delay I would like to give you all that is mine, all God has built in me, using my nothingness, my weakness and wretchedness. (...) What I wish to write to you today is that we mustn’t break the unity God has made. (...) Saint Francis will not be happy until you revive it in yourself and also in your brothers. So make a start. You can do it”.

8 September 1948: “Your letter gave me such joy. Jesus is present. I found Him in your thirst for ‘life’, in the optimism it contains, overflowing through the pages, and above all in the peace that comes from your desire to

love Him more and more. You can be very sure, as long as I'm never parted from Jesus (and how could that ever be? In Paradise I'll have Him even more), I'll never stop following your soul with a vigilant eye and fraternal care”.

27 January 1951: “You can't imagine how your soul is 'penetrating' my own (almost literally, as if I could almost feel the effect on me!)”

I remember the joy whenever they met and spontaneously started talking in their Trentino dialect. They were the same age, but he felt he was a disciple and she was his mother. In one of their first letters, Chiara signed herself “s.m.,” which Bonaventura straight away interpreted as “sua madre” – “your mother”. So he replied, signing his name as “s.f.” (“suo figlio” – “your son”). And Chiara herself understood.

A Focolarina remembers hearing Chiara greet him in 2000 with the words, “this is my first son who is a religious!”

Fr Bonaventura lived a long life. A Professor of Sacred Scripture, a translator of German biblical commentaries, bearer of various roles of responsibility in his Order including Provincial, Formator, and in the General Definitorium. He was then invited by Chiara to lead the international Centers of Spirituality for Religious men at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome and at Loppiano, the Focolare Movement's small town in Italy.

Self-effacing and extremely humble, he knew how to witness unostentatiously and sincerely the Ideal Chiara had transmitted to him. He was, in the words of one of

his confreres, “a true child of the Gospel, in wisdom and simplicity of life”.

I have my own personal memories of Fr Bonaventura, from the time in 1978 we went to Canada together for a whole month, to animate a formation school for religious men. Later I lived in community with him at Castel Gandolfo. I found an entry in my diary for 10 November 1999, when he had already left to take up a new posting and came for a visit. I wrote, “Bonaventura arrived and there was a really festive atmosphere, as usual”. I was struck by that “as usual”.

Perhaps my most beautiful moment of all with him was on 18 March 2008, at Chiara's funeral in Rome, in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. At the end of the ceremony, he asked me to help him approach the coffin, despite infringing official protocol. He was an old man by then, and he had difficulty bending down. But he managed to kneel down in order to hug and kiss the coffin. So I too knelt down and kissed the coffin (but actually for us, it was embracing Chiara not the coffin). And with that, everyone started to surround the coffin to kiss it. But with Bonaventura it was a unique gesture of a son towards his mother.

I too always felt his love for me. In one of his last letters, he wrote, “You're in my thoughts and I'll always remember you with gratitude. I hope to have the joy of meeting you once more in person. This morning I entrusted you especially to Saint Francis. A hug!”

Fr. Fabio Ciardi OMI

Gospel lived: Faith Problems

Our third child was born with Down syndrome and I considered this cruelty of nature as a punishment for my marital infidelities. I was ashamed to go round with this child and I carried so many unanswered questions inside me. But as F. grew up, I started to discover primordial goodness and cosmic peace in this child. I cannot explain the relationship between this and my problematic faith, but slowly I acquired other eyes and, I would say, another heart too. The relationship in my family changed as well. Strangely enough, I began to live F's condition as a gift. I have no more problems about faith and dogmas; everything is grace. Behind the veil of misunderstanding there is innocent and pure truth. (D.T. – Portugal)



(see Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, anno VI, n.4, July–August 2020)



Happy birthday, Danilo!

The 100 years of Danilo Zanzucchi. A married Focolarino – one of the first in the wake of Igino Giordani – Danilo along with his wife Anna Maria, would soon become the couple leading New Families at a world level.

Chiara always had a predilection for that young engineer who, after having erected his first important buildings in the north of Italy (“all still standing” Danilo assures with pride), left a promising career to move to the capital, and as a family collaborate full-time for the purpose of the Movement. But Chiara’s esteem for Danilo is above all for having been able to grasp, in its entirety, the charism that the Spirit had given her. Among his first assignments was the collaboration on the construction of the Mariapolis Center in Rocca di Papa that would become the International Headquarters of the Focolare Movement.



A married Focolarino – one of the first in the wake of Igino Giordani – Danilo along with his wife Anna Maria, would soon become the couple leading New Families at a world level; developing in the following decades an innovative and effective Family Pastoral Care appreciated at all latitudes for the rich spiritua-

lity from which it draws and for its openness to the demands of the contemporary world.

The profound interior life of Danilo did not go unnoticed by ecclesiastical leaders who were struck by his brilliant presence, his skills. Diocesan President of Catholic men in Parma (Italy), when transferred to Rome he became consultant and, later, member of the Vatican department for the Family. These latter responsibilities, accompanied by Anna Maria, made him a guest several times in the home of Pope Wojtyla and also a testimonial of service to the Family in television broadcasts, also shown in world wide vision. When welcomed by Danilo during a visit (1984) to the International Centre of the Movement, the Polish Pontiff did not hesitate to promote him sympathetically as “Foreign Minister of the Focolare Movement “. A collaboration that also continued with Benedict XVI, and his request to the Zanzucchi couple to write the text for one of the Stations of the Cross (2012) at the Colosseum in Rome presided over by him was significant of this.

Danilo is celebrating his 100th birthday with Anna Maria (90), his 5 children (two Focolarini and two married Focolarini), his 12 grandchildren and the whole Focolarino world. In particular with the countless families of the various continents for which with Anna Maria, he has been an example, a confidant, a guide, remaining a lovable and safe point of reference for each one. His psycho-physical condition remains excellent, despite the fact that many years ago Chiara herself, with all of us, feared for his health which has obviously been well recovered. He is able to go to Mass almost every day and it is not uncommon to see him participate in the periodic meetings of his Focolare and those of the Focolare-Families.

Perhaps because he was invested with a special mission, the Lord preserved him in two particular episo-

des in the Second World War. He himself tells us that if it had not been for the providential shove of a comrade who pushed him elsewhere, he would have died under a bomb that was crashing right where he was standing. Another time, it was his knowledge of German that saved him from an already deployed firing squad . It can happen that Danilo, in order to dilute somewhat complicated moments, still decides to let everyone enjoy one of his mythical and resonant speeches in that language , putting everyone in a good mood for the various lexical licenses he grants himself.

The gratitude of the entire New Families Movement for this century of Danilo's life given to God and his brothers, goes to this great figure of a man of Faith and Works.

Thank you Danilo for being a giant of righteousness and tenderness, an example of simplicity and wisdom, a temperament of leader and artist: a Saint who lives next door.

Thank you also, Danilo, for having never stopped, not even now that you are a hundred years old, to impersonate the Evangelical Child that has always shone through your being, your speech, your good humour, your water colours, your countless cartoons often improvised on paper napkins, which masterfully capture and express the best that is in each of the protagonists to whom they are dedicated. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DANILO!

From the New Families website





Members of the Moviment who have concluded their earthlylife:

01 June 2020

Helene Adler - married focolarina from Austria

17 June 2020

Mario Massa - married focolarino from Portugal

20 June 2020

Rupert Liegenfeld - focolarino from Austria

29 June 2020

Giorgina Quarello - focolarina from Italy

01 July 2020

Fernando Guerrero - focolarino from Spain

07 July 2020

Hans Peter Jäger - priest focolarino from Germany

08 July 2020

Roswitha Schappacher - focolarina from Germany

21 July 2020

Judá Goiz Durán - married focolarino from Mexico

27 July 2020

Mária (Marika) Dufincová - married focolarina from Slovakia

30 July 2020

Patrick van Bladel - focolarino from Sweden

01 August 2020

Father Bonaventura Marinelli - OFMCap - from Italy

22 August 2020

Lucio Dalla Fontana - priest focolarino from Italy

Contributions to the Mariapolis newsletter:

Dear Readers, this printable Pdf newsletter contains the most important articles published in the "Mariapolis" section of the Focolare Movement's international website (www.focolare.org/mariapoli).

You can download it from the site or receive it by email by activating the link.

*It is a **free service** from the Communications Office.*

We are always grateful to those who wish to continue to support our work financially and in that way contribute to the spreading of the charism of unity.

The editorial staff

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