



Called to dialogue

The way to overcome divergences of any kind and create fellowship and unity is – as Chiara Lubich proposed – the path of dialogue. We can dialogue even when we have to think of ourselves.

In practice, for all of us this means that whenever we have something to do with one or more brothers or sisters, directly or indirectly – on the phone, in writing, or because the work we do or the prayers we say are for them, we all feel we are in an never-ending dialogue, we are called to dialogue.

How?

By being open to each neighbour, emptying our soul to hear what they want, what they say, what worries them and what they desire. And, after having done that, we too share and give what we desire and what we feel is appropriate.

And if there are times when I must think of myself (in order to eat, to rest, to get dressed, and so on), I continue to do everything in view of my brothers and sisters, keeping in mind what others expect of me. In this way and only in this way, by continually living the “spirituality of unity” or of “communion-fellowship”, can I effectively contribute to making my church “a home and a school of communion”, Together with the faithful of other churches or ecclesial communities, we can contribute to Church unity. And with people of other religions and cultures, we can create spaces of universal fraternity..

Chiara Lubich



We are all called to reflect in our lives the Blessed Trinity, where the three divine Persons are in eternal dialogue, eternally one and eternally distinct.

Dear readers,

“We are called to witness to the possibility of Trinitarian relationships! What this means is, quite simply, for each one of us to do all we can to allow the others to emerge”. This phrase, uttered by Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement during an online meeting of the Focolare General Council and the Movement’s Delegates throughout the world (p.5), strikes me as being a wonderful synthesis of the whole spirituality of unity. Love, in fact, which

allows the other person to emerge and to shine in all the greatness of their deepest being, is a love which both unites and distinguishes at the same time. It’s a love which contains the dimension of the cross too, because it demands that we forget ourselves. I dream - and I guess I’m not alone in this - of a world with this kind of relationships among individuals, groups, nations, Churches ...

*Joachim Schwind
Focolare Communications Office*



Bartolomeo I, visits the international Centre of the Focolare

This morning His Holiness Bartholomeo 1, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople paid a visit to the international centre of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa. He was welcomed by Focolare President Maria Voce, who escorted him to visit the house where founder Chiara Lubich lived. He then prayed at her tomb. Joined by Co-President Jesús Morán and a small Focolare delegation, there followed an exchange of greetings and gifts. The Patriarch was in Rome for the international Prayer for Peace meeting promoted by the Community of Sant'Egidio being held at the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill) today. Tomorrow he will receive an Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy from the Antonianum University. The Patriarch will also be meeting with Pope Francis.

“Chiara committed herself to fraternity, unity and peace in all areas of human life, giving us a message through her life and her writings which we cannot ignore”. With these words Patriarch Bartholomew 1 recalled Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich, during his visit to the International Centre of the Focolare Movement at Rocca di Papa this morning.

His Holiness’ delegation included His Eminence Emmanuel, Metropolitan of France, His Excellency Cassianos, Igumeno of the Monastery of Chalki in Greece, Reverend Iakovos, Patriarchal Deacon. They were accompanied by Mons. Andrea Palmieri, Under Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPUC).

“The Movement and all the works that exist today thanks to her charism,” he declared, “testify to a life lived for the Lord, passing through the Cross, but always directed to the Resurrection”.

The Patriarch’s visit comes within the year of the Centenary of the Birth of Chiara Lubich: *“How many other things our Chiara would have done if she were still among us!”* continued His Holiness Bartholomew 1. *“But it is not the years that give meaning to life, it is not the quantity, it is not the length. It is how we commit the talents that He has offered us. It is the quality of a life lived in witness to He who is the Life”.*

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The Patriarch arrived late morning at Rocca di Papa, to be welcomed by Focolare President Maria Voce and CoPresident Jesús Morán. With them he visited the house which had been Chiara Lubich’s home for many years, and the chapel at the International Centre which contains the founder’s tomb. Here, he wrote a long dedication in Greek in the visitors’ book. Hence to the Auditorium, where, respecting safety measures and norms, it was possible for a brief meeting with members of the Focolare’s General Council, some members of the Movement belonging to the Orthodox Church and a representative group of youth.

The Patriarch expressed his affection and esteem for Maria Voce, calling her *“dear sister”*, *“whose friendship*



with us and with our Ecumenical Patriarchate is long and steadfast, since the years when you lived in Constantinople where you truly left an indelible mark of the ministry of fraternity, unity and love for all". He continued, "Having reached the end of your mandate as President, we also want to thank you for your great contribution to the Movement. Our memory of you, like all of you, remains in our heart, and you will surely continue the charism where the Lord calls you to".

There followed a presentation of some of the events celebrating the centenary of Chiara Lubich and some Focolare youth spoke of the "United World Project", which this year, with the motto #daretocare

is focussing on care for the environment and the most fragile parts of society around the world. The Patriarch commented, "Ideas and action, theory and practice. I hope that some Orthodox youth will be included in this project to collaborate with you for the good of humanity".

An exchange of gifts concluded the encounter. President Maria Voce offered a sculpture of the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus which came from the house where Chiara Lubich stayed when she was in Switzerland, and the Patriarch gave a wonderful icon.

*Stefania Tanesini
October 20th 2020*

Living the gospel: **humility**

Growing old together

After decades of a happy and loving marriage, I realized that I was becoming intolerant towards my wife. She often doesn't agree with the things I do and always tells me so. One day, after hearing her repeat the same thing twice, I felt angry and firmly told her that I knew what I had to do because she had already told me. Naturally, she was upset by my attitude but so was I. I told her I was sorry, but inside of me I felt a great pain because I hadn't respected her or accepted that she was ageing. I wondered how many things I say and do that hurt my wife. Soon afterwards, our niece and her partner came to visit and we told them what had happened. As they listened, for no apparent reason, our niece began to cry and her partner took her hand and began to caress it. After a few moments silence, they confided to us that they had decided to split up because of their differences in character. However, listening to our story, they were moved by the beauty of growing old together and always trying to rebuild love.

(P.T. – Hungary)



*(taken from The Gospel of the Day, Citta Nuova, year VI, no.5,
September-October 2020) Thursday, October 15, 2020*

From a culture of trust to the **primacy of relationships**

Speaking to a group of Focolarini on 19 September, Maria Voce shared what is closest to her heart at this time. Some highlights of this spontaneous reflection:

Defining it as “a new step”, Maria Voce is reaching out to Focolare communities worldwide. What is closest to President of the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce’s heart can be summed up in one word: “relationships”. This new invitation seems to complete a trajectory launched 12 years ago, in the early days of her appointment as Focolare President, when she invited everyone to take on a “culture of trust”, building relationships capable of generating peaceful social co-existence respecting diversity.

As her second term draws to a close, with the Movement’s General Assembly just a few months away, the world is deeply affected by this long pandemic and economic crisis. In this context, Maria Voce returns to one of the key themes of her presidency: the centrality of relationships, as seen from the perspective of Chiara Lubich’s charism. It is an invitation once more to act as part of a network and in fraternal communion with all those individuals, communities and organizations who are pointing in the same direction, towards fraternity.

“I was deeply struck by the thought that Chiara, in 1943, found herself in a devastated world, where everything around her was collapsing. And God said to her heart, ‘It’s not true that everything is collapsing. There’s something that does not collapse. It’s God and God alone!’ And what did Chiara do? She went out with the message: God is, God loves us, this God exists beyond the war. This is what was needed at that time.

Jesus came on earth, and He certainly didn’t come alone, because where Jesus – the Son of God – is, the whole Trinity is present. So God the Trinity came on earth to show us the way, to teach us how to live according to the Trinity. To do what? To transform the world.

But what does it mean? It means relationships, it means connections, it means equality, it means listening to one another, it means being for one another, in a certain sense knowing how to ‘lose’ oneself in another.

This morning I was thinking about this and I asked myself, Jesus came on earth and what did He do? He walked along the roads of Galilea, and what did He find? An official, most probably involved in corrupt



tax-collecting practices; a young man fascinated by the words He spoke; a small businessman, Peter, who owned a boat. And He called them. He had the courage to transform them into His apostles, which means into people sent out to continue carrying His message to the furthest corners of the earth.

What else did He find? He found people of all types. He found sinners, the dead, those who were hungry. And what did He do? He multiplied the bread, He raised the dead ... He got involved in meeting the needs of others, staying among them. He even managed to draw the crowd following Him. What does it mean? He created community. He formed a community capable of listening to one another, to recognize that someone spoke a different language and to listen to them in their own language. What does it mean? It means they were capable of really accepting one another, of understanding each other even when someone speaks differently, they were really capable of accepting each other.

He transformed these people into His fraternity, His community. And He got them living solidarity between themselves. You see, when they were hungry, he said, ‘Give them something to eat’; when he cured the woman with a fever, she then got up and started to serve them; He gave the child whom He raised up back to her family so that they could look after her. You see, He did not destroy anything that was already there, but rather He transformed it!

So what should we do? We must transform the world by ‘being’ this Jesus. We must bring these Trinitarian relationships. And there’s no other way except by choosing Jesus Forsaken, which means knowing how to lose oneself in the other, knowing how to let the other emerge. Then God the Father will continue to create new things, and the Holy Spirit will continue to illuminate us”.

*by Stefania Tanesini
Thursday, September 24, 2020*



Letting the **other person** emerge

With three days of video-conferencing involving Focolare delegates in different areas of the world and the General Council, a further preparatory phase has begun towards the Focolare General Assembly to be held in January 2021.

The meeting of Focolare Delegates from around the world, held this year in video-conference, ended on September 12th; a date which, under normal conditions, would also have marked the last day of Maria Voce's (current President) term of office.

However, these times – which are anything but normal – have meant an extension of the President's term of office because, due to Covid, the General Assembly, which also has the task of electing all the governing bodies of the Focolare Movement, has been postponed from the beginning of September 2020 to January 24th – February 7th 2021.

How, then, can this time of waiting be transformed into a time of grace? This is the question that initiated and guided the conference of delegates and to which Maria Voce answered in a profound and concise way: "We are called to bear witness to the possibility of Trinitarian relations! This simply means: each one does everything so that the other person may emerge".

The sessions dedicated to sharing the life of the Focolare communities in the different geographical areas of the world highlighted the global commitment to face the challenge and the new "off-spring" due to the

Coronavirus pandemic: the impossibility of attending meetings in person has led to an increase in digital conferences that often reach more people and break down territorial or participatory structures which in the current situation have been identified as constraints. The economic difficulties, then, require new reflections in search of solutions for a moderate and sustainable lifestyle and in favour of suitable activities and structures. In addition, the climate of growing personal and community insecurity urgently requires a new evangelical life choice in view of a more united world.

The third day of the conference marked the beginning of a further preparation for the Movement towards the 2021 General Assembly. The extra time gained will serve to encourage a more participatory and widespread preparation, a synodal journey. The members of the Movement will have until October 24th, the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the themes gathered so far in order to identify people's preferences which will then be included in a working document. Before Christmas, the participants in the Assembly will have the opportunity to meet possible candidates for President and Co-President. And in a series of Webinars the main themes will be deepened

with the help of external experts. The preparation will then be concluded in the first weeks of January with group work among the participants.

*Joachim Schwind
Sunday, September 13, 2020*



Vietnam: a response to the poverty that has arisen from the pandemic

Solidarity projects initiated by the “Goccia dopo goccia” (drop by drop) Association in collaboration with other organizations operating in Southeast Asia.

The number of victims of coronavirus around the world is still very high. But even higher is the number of people who, whilst not having contracted the virus, find themselves in conditions of extreme poverty due to the economic and social situation created by the virus; deprived, in some cases, of even the basic necessities to live. Yet even in these situations, initiatives of solidarity are multiplying which are the result of networks that are sometimes crossing national borders.

In Vietnam, for example, the Long An area, south of Ho Chi Minh city, has large pockets of poverty. Here, the most vulnerable members of society have been indirectly affected by the pandemic. Many, especially among the elderly, who were living off lottery ticket sales, have had to stay in their homes, very often facing starvation.

This is precisely the area where the Swiss-based association “Goccia dopo goccia” operates, coordinated by an Italian focalario, Luigi Butori, who has lived in Asia for many years. Included amongst those who volunteer and support the project in different countries around the world are many friends of the Focolare Movement. “Goccia dopo Goaccia” has been working for some years now to implement more than 20 solidarity projects in Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam.

In Long An the association distributes about 40 rations of milk and food every month which helps many people including the elderly, those who are disabled, adults on their own, abandoned children living with grandparents and people suffering as a result of serious accidents, such as An, 14 years old, who is paralyzed and forced to live in a bed.

The association has someone who intervenes at a local level whenever necessary. Thanks to these local volunteers, it tries to reach the “least of the least” bringing not only material help but also moral support that makes them feel that they are not alone in facing this dramatic period of history. For those responsible for “Goccia dopo goccia” this is a very important element of their activity: making people feel that they have not been abandoned but that there is someone who is taking care of them, starting with a smile. The Long An project has been going on for about two years and is supported with the help of schoolchildren and families in different countries around the world. They are people who send small amounts of money and who, as the name of the association says, as numerous small drops enable large quantities of help to be provided.

“Goccia dopo goccia” also operates along the border between Thailand and Myanmar, with another project that supports Karen children in different villages in Mae Sot, the Mae La refugee camp and the Heavenly Home orphanage, even though during these times of pandemic, “Goccia dopo goccia” volunteers recently had to face a long journey to visit them and deliver material aid. “Three beautiful days,” they say, “during which we received much more than we gave.”

And finally, when Covid-19 was rapidly spreading, “Goccia dopo goccia” managed to collaborate with Caritas Singapore, Caritas Vietnam and other Associations that operate in Southeast Asia on a project aimed at distributing 1,200 food packages to families in the Binh Thanh area, in Ho Chi Minh City.

*Anna Lisa Innocenti
Thursday, September 3, 2020*

GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION



Foto di fauxels da Pexels



Global Compact on Education



A special event for all stakeholders in education on October 15 brings together formation and social agencies, institutions and organizations from around the world to forge an alliance promoting a more fraternal world, an aim close to Pope Francis' heart. Focolarina Carina Rossa is part of the organizing team.

“Never before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity”. Pope Francis used his message for the launch of the Global Compact on Education to invite us to promote “a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding”. An international event will mark the Compact. An actual physical event has been postponed due to the pandemic. However, a virtual meeting will take place on 15 October at 2.30 pm (utc+2) in live streaming on Vatican News Youtube channels with simultaneous translation in English, Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. We speak with Carina Rossa, a Focolarina from Argentina, who is part of the team organizing this event:

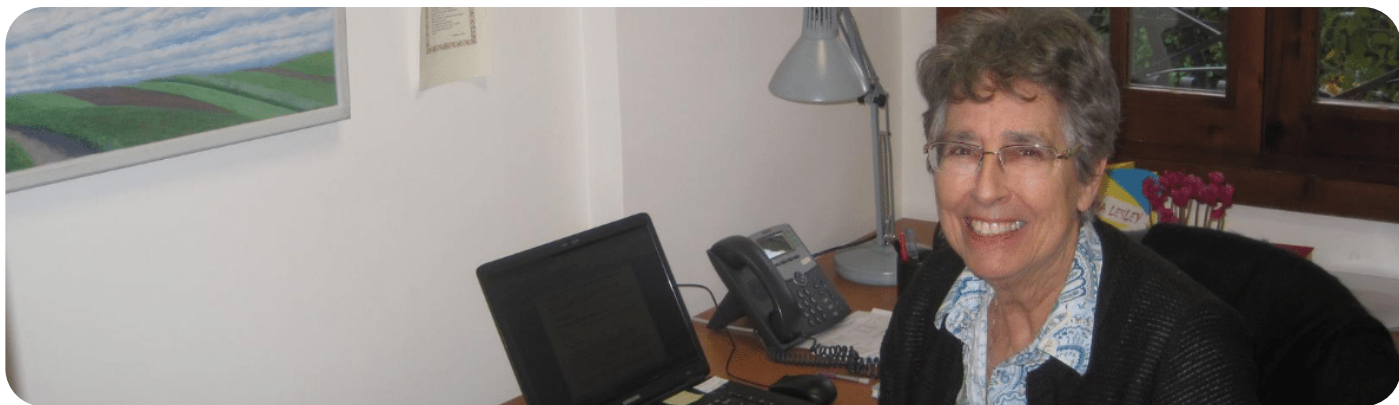
The Pope invites us to join an alliance on education to produce a change in mentality. How do you see this new way of thinking? “The Pope underlines that education is at the basis of all social and cultural change, and he calls us to dedicate ourselves in this field. So the first change lies in conferring dignity to education. He goes on to attribute a goal to education, that of “changing the world”, and invites us to think of study as an instrument to tackle the challenges of our times: peace and citizenship, solidarity and development, dignity and human rights, care for our common home. The Pope denounces the fact that the educational Compact between family, school, society and cultures has broken down and needs to be fixed. So the change of mentality here involves educational agencies, social activists, international

institutions and organizations, who must form alliances in order reach common goals and help to create a more fraternal world. To this end, the Pope has proposed a three step methodology: to place the human person at the centre, to capitalize on our best energies and to train individuals who are ready to offer themselves in service”.

Educating young people in what direction? Cultivating which values? “The new generations are at the centre of the educational plan, because children, adolescents and youth are the ones who will change the world. The hope is for ‘new men and women’ who will be ‘united in diversity’, in constant dialogue, serving the values of peace, solidarity and universal fraternity, respecting human rights and the dignity of the human person”.

The international event launching the Compact was originally scheduled for 14 May. Because of the pandemic it was postponed to 15 October and will now be an online event. How are the preparations going? “The pandemic forced us to rethink all our plans. So now, the October program will be the first step towards another worldwide event we hope to celebrate in the future with Pope Francis. He appointed the Congregation for Catholic Education to promote it, and the Alta Scuola Educare all’Incontro e alla Solidarietà (High School for Education to Encounter and Solidarity) of the LUMSA University of Rome is coordinating establishing relationships and getting the process underway. For example, a committee of organizations representing the world of education and formation on a global level has been set up. We are also selecting experiences on education from around the world which will be published on the event website, forming an Observatory of the Compact on Education. We are also collating the contributions presented throughout the preparatory meetings for publication.”

*Claudia Di Lorenzi
Tuesday, October 13, 2020*



An ecumenical spirituality

Chiara Lubich's charism for Christian unity. Interview with Lesley Ellison who is an Anglican and the first non-Catholic focolarina to follow Chiara.

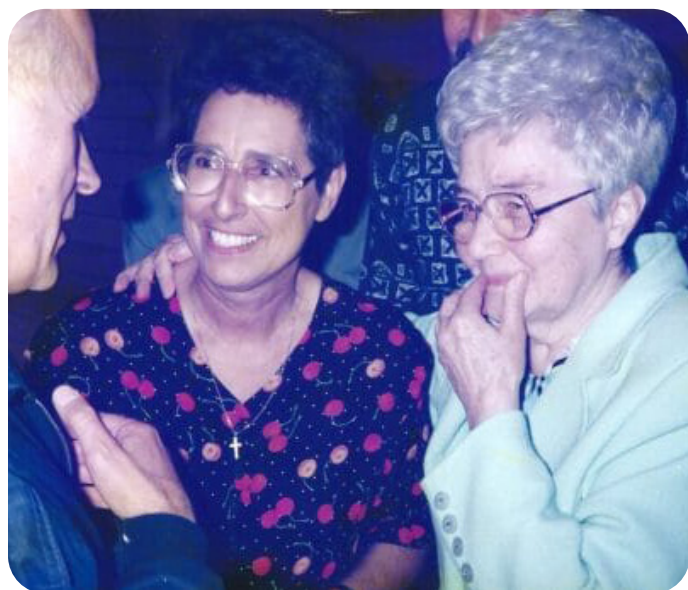
Living the Gospel, Word of God together; loving one's neighbour as Jesus did, to the point of dying for the other; living for unity among believers in Christ, beyond every affiliation and beyond all divisions. It is with these dimensions that the ecumenical potential of Chiara Lubich's charism of unity is unfolding. "A completely ecumenical spirituality" is how Card. Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity described the charism in the preface to the book entitled "A Spirituality for Christian Unity. Selected thoughts", published by Città Nuova, which is a collection of speeches and answers to ecumenical questions given by the founder of the Focolare Movement, one hundred years after her birth. The introduction to the book is given by Maria Voce, President of the Focolare with a foreword offered by Rev. Olav F. Tveit, former Secretary General of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, now President of the Conference of Lutheran Bishops in Norway.

Lesley Ellison, an Anglican focolarina, is the first non-Catholic focolarina to follow Chiara:

Your experience has paved the way for many. Did you ever have hesitations?

"I grew up in a Protestant family with prejudices against Catholics, and at that time in Liverpool the two communities were separated. Like Chiara, I also wanted to give my life to God. When I first heard her speak, in Canterbury in 1967, I had been visiting the focolarine in Liverpool for a year. We tried to live the

Gospel but I didn't know they were Catholic. Just as I did not know the community of people around the focolare. It was a shock to realize they were all Catholic but in Canterbury, listening to Chiara, I understood that God loves everyone, and that "everyone" also includes Catholics! I felt I had to take a step and put aside my prejudices. When I got to Liverpool a Catholic couple offered me a lift home. This was unheard of. "But I'm Protestant," I said. "That's all right! We love each other!" they said. This was my first ecumenical experience."



When did you feel that the Spirituality of unity could be yours?

"In 1967 I went to visit the little town of Loppiano. During the visit there was a Catholic Mass but being an Anglican I could not receive the Eucharist. This rift between our Churches seemed absurd to me, so painful that inside I cried out to Jesus: "What can I

do?” And I seemed to hear Him respond, “Give me your life for unity.”

Living the Gospel is the way that Chiara indicated for unity. Why, as an Anglican, did this proposal have an impact on you?

“My formation as a young Anglican asked me to “listen to, read, take note of, learn and digest inwardly” the word of God. So the idea of “living the Gospel” which I heard for the first time in the focolare, was a complete novelty and gave my Christian life a new communitarian dimension”.

Jesus asks us to love one another as He did, to the point of giving our lives for one another. What does this mean for you in your relationships with people of other Churches?

“It’s in the word ‘as’ that I find the whole of Chiara’s charism, Jesus crucified and forsaken who is Life. This is the way God Himself wanted to dialogue with humanity, and it is the model He offers us for any dialogue with one another and with Him. For me, giving my life means welcoming the other, listening, putting aside my thoughts and judgments. But it also means offering my thoughts whilst being completely detached from them. This is what Chiara did with me and with every person she met. And this is how we try to live the relationships with one another in the Movement.

Claudia Di Lorenzi
Tuesday, August 25, 2020

The Gospel lived: **give and you will be given**

I forgave my son’s killer

After my son was killed during a robbery, nothing made sense in my life anymore. Desperate for help, I attended a Gospel meeting. There I listened to a commentary on Jesus’ phrase: “Love your enemies”. Those words were like a rock for me. How could I forgive those who had killed my son? But in the meantime, a seed had been sown within me. As I attended that group, I felt the urge to forgive became more and more urgent. I wanted to find peace of heart. The Gospel still spoke of peace: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”. In the midst of my family’s tragedy, the decision to forgive finally prevailed. Now I can truly call myself a “daughter of God”. Recently I was invited to meet with my son’s killer, who had been arrested. I knew him. It was hard, but grace intervened. I did not feel hatred or resentment towards him. In my heart as a mother there was only great pity and the desire to entrust him to God’s mercy.

(M.A. – Venezuela)



*taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Citta Nuova, year VI, n.5,
September-October 2020) Thursday, September 17, 2020*



Myriam, a martyr for peace

Her smile, her joie de vivre, her commitment towards justice and peace are words that come to mind when one recalls Myriam Dessavre, 26 years old, who lost her life on Sunday, August 9 in Niger.

Myriam and five other French youth were killed, together with the Nigerian driver and guide who accompanied them when they were visiting the Kouré giraffe reserve, 60 km southeast of the capital Niamey. These youth were on a humanitarian mission, with the NGO Acted, in a country that faces multiple crises and ranks at the bottom of the human development index.

Myriam, a martyr for peace, obtained a first degree in communication and information at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse and then a Master's degree in peace studies at the Paris-Dauphine University. She specialized in political conflict resolution and the title of her thesis was: "The Colombian State and the FARC: is reconciliation possible?" She furthered her studies in this field through work in Colombia, Tunisia and Chad.

During a Peace Movement national council meeting held on June 18, 2016, Myriam spoke about the choice of her studies. She was then 21 years old. Today, her strong and meaningful words impress us even more. We quote what she said at the end of her talk: "I have the impression that there is a growth in the number of young people of our generation who want to promote peace. I think that social networks are contributing towards this, not only through the abundance of bad news, but also because of the increase in some sort of "global solidarity". Anger caused by horrible happenings, such as terrorist attacks, wars in the Middle East and famine, is transmitted instantly through social networks, and we are directly affected. We come to the point of asking ourselves: "When do I go there?" So, I'm not surprised that more young people seek professions that engage in work for peace. May be, we are simply looking for the means to live in a better world".

Myriam learnt more about building this better world through the Focolare spirituality and her commitment as a member of the Focolare Youth Movement. Her father, Jean-Marie, who died in 2014, was a volunteer. Her friend Sophie, who was very upset, said: "She was my best friend. I met her during a Mariapolis in Lourdes, when I was 13. With her, you could have a good laugh about anything". And she continued to testify: "She had strong convictions and defended the values of peace and justice. Her work was not easy, but she was passionate about it and it fulfilled her. It warms my heart to think that however unfair, terrible and violent her death was, it was not without meaning. She gave her life for what she believed was right."

Carl, another friend of hers, described Myriam "as a radiant, humble and beautiful person who gave her life to serve life, peace and others". Speaking about what her death meant to him, he said: "I realize that the message she composed through her life is being delivered to us thanks to her departure to heaven. In one way or another, each one of us gets a daily provision of bad deeds and/or the lack of doing something about them; this is the martyrdom of evil".

Anne-Marie, a focolarina who knew her said: "Myriam fulfilled her dream, she satisfied her passion by joining her experience to her commitment in this field". And she continued: "For the 120 Gen representatives from all over the world, who met for an online congress from August 7 to 14, it was evident that Myriam had to be the precious guardian angel for their Project #Daretocare, aimed at promoting initiatives on active citizenship in the fields of social justice, politics and economics". Anne-Marie remarked: "It seems as if now Myriam is telling us: 'Move on! Don't waste time on useless things!'"

*Emilie Tévané, for Nouvelle Cité
Wednesday, September 30, 2020*



A language capable of building bridges

Trento, Chiara Lubich's birthplace, will soon host a conference dedicated to the value of the Focolare founder's texts, both spoken and written, from a linguistic and literary point of view. The event, which takes place in the Centenary of Lubich's birth, is coordinated by an international study and research group and can be followed via web.

Not only words, but treasure chests capable of offering new understandings of Chiara Lubich's charism. The analysis of the language of the founder of the Focolare Movement, in her spoken and written texts, has for some years now been at the centre of the work of an international study and research group on Linguistics, Philology and Literature which is part of the Abbá School of the Focolare Movement. The Group, together with the Chiara Lubich Centre, is one of the promoters of the conference to be held in Trento from September 24th – 27th 2020 entitled “Chiara Lubich in dialogue with the world. A linguistic, philological and literary approach to her writings”. We talk about it with the coordinator, Anna Maria Rossi, linguist, teacher, collaborator of the Chiara Lubich Centre, one of the curators of the exhibition “Chiara Lubich City World” at the Gallerie of Trento (Italy).

Why choose for this conference a title that emphasises Lubich's being “in dialogue with the world”?

It is a choice born spontaneously from the experience of dialogue between the scholars of the research group that is promoting the conference. They express very different disciplines, ages, cultural, geographical and social backgrounds. Drawing on Chiara Lubich's message and witness in our life and work, we experience the richness and fruitfulness of dialogue, openness to others and the appreciation of

diversity. In this regard, Chiara's talks and writings are a very precious source that deserves careful study. It also seems to us that in the context in which we live today, in a world that is increasingly connected but sometimes struggles to find words that are able to build a fabric of true relationships, the theme of all-round dialogue is particularly topical.

The themes that will be addressed in the conference are varied, touching on different areas and will be explored in depth by scholars from various parts of the world. What do you think are the most original and innovative contributions that this conference will bring to the understanding of Chiara Lubich's thought and charism?

The writings of authors that we can consider masters of the spirit, such as the mystics, especially contemporary ones, are often seen only as texts of spiritual edification. In reality they are works of great literary value, testimonies of a living, creative, courageous language. They are writings that deserve to be studied and made accessible to a varied public, not necessarily religious, but one that lets itself be touched by beauty and values. Chiara's words, spoken or written, her texts and talks are the expression of a very strong ability to relate to the other and to give her thoughts and inspirations in a simple, comprehensible and at the same time effective literary way. Furthermore, the most recent studies in the linguistic field highlight how not only reality constructs language, but also language, the words we use, constructs reality. It is not difficult to see this also in everyday life: hateful, exclusionary, offensive words are able to create a closed, violent, aggressive society. Chiara has always used a language capable of building bridges, of opening new understandings, of reaching every person, every people. It is not for

nothing that her writings are translated into the most varied languages, this also a sign of thought and word capable of embracing the whole world.

Is this the first time you have held a conference of this kind?

No, this event is intended to be a follow on from a conference held in Castel Gandolfo (Italy) in 2015, whose title, inspired by an expression by Chiara Lubich, was: “saying is giving”. The word understood as ‘gift’ and the main builder of relationships stimulated the reflections of researchers from various fields in the humanities, which are now collected in the publication edited by Città Nuova “Il dire è dare. La parola come dono e relazione nel pensiero di Chiara Lubich”. (Saying is giving. The word as gift and relationship in the thought of Chiara Lubich)

Five years on, we have decided to follow up this initiative, to present further studies in the linguistic and literary field, based on her texts, her thought and her charism.

This meeting was to be held in April 2020 as part of the events for the Centenary of Chiara Lubich’s

birth, but was cancelled due to the lockdown. Can you tell us how it will take place now?

In the aftermath of the pandemic, we have suspended all our public activities, without losing hope of carrying out the event in the year of Chiara’s Centenary, albeit in a different way. In fact, now – thanks to the new methods of communication – we find ourselves in a situation which, paradoxically, favours a wider participation. In agreement with the Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino, which is hosting the event at the Gallerie di Trento, we can safely welcome around fifty people there. However, it will be possible to follow the conference through a zoom link, requesting the link to the Organizing Secretariat (studi_linguistici@centrochiaralubich.org) In this way people from various parts of the world will participate: we have already received registrations from Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Taiwan. The presentations will be translated simultaneously in Portuguese and English. We hope that it will be truly an opportunity for a “dialogue with the world”.

*edited by Anna Lisa Innocenti
Saturday, September 19, 2020*

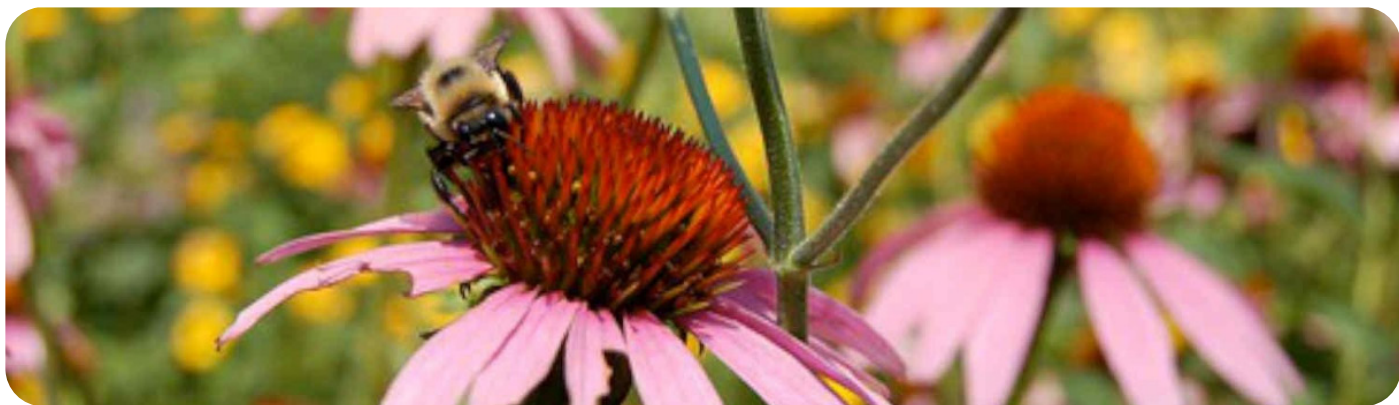
Gospel lived: **love is the most eloquent word**

A shared tragedy

Several years ago we moved with our four daughters from war-torn Lebanon to Tasmania where we struggled to integrate into a world that was so different to ours: the people here are very reserved and the “nuclear” family is in stark contrast to the “extended” family of our country. Not long after our arrival, one of my husband’s colleagues lost his two-year-old son in a fire. Thereafter, he and his wife refused to receive visitors and meet people, and remained almost segregated at home. We could not understand this attitude because in our culture tragedies are shared. We wondered how to love them, taking that pain on us too. So, for a few weeks, I cooked for them every day, leaving the food outside the door with a note, without disturbing them. One day the door finally opened and since then a friendly relationship has been born between us and them. Over time we have made other friends who enrich us with their culture. And now in our house there is always someone who comes to visit us, a bit like in Lebanon. (Carole – Australia)



*(taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, year VI, no.5,
September-October 2020) Friday, September 25, 2020*



New pathways towards integral ecology

The “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation”. The Focolare Movement supports this in two different ways – with the initiative “Time of Creation” and with a meeting in October 2020.

1st September is the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation”. It was established by Pope Francis in 2015, the year that he launched his encyclical *Laudato si*. In this document, the Pope invites everyone to commit themselves to care for creation because this is our home and our most precious good. He also asks that we go beyond the current socio-economic system: we can no longer exploit planet earth as if there were unlimited natural resources. We must act quickly and find a different model of development. What can we do to be more concrete?

Laudato si opens up the notion of “*ecological conversion*”: it speaks of change in lifestyle and trying to practise integral ecology. Therefore, the text refers not only to the environment but also to politics, economy and society. We need to start with ourselves and think about what we consume: we should choose politicians who show concern for the care of nature and who promote the production of renewable energy and decrease the use of fossil fuels.

This year, the Focolare Movement is continuing to promote “*Time of Creation*” the annual celebration of prayer and action for our common home that begins on 1st September and ends on 4th October, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, greatly loved by many Christian denominations. The focolare’s global network is encouraging everyone to organize events and register them on the website. This ecumenical initiative began thirty years ago: in 1989, Dimitrios, Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, was instrumental in encouraging the different Christian Churches to

jointly declare 1st September as “*World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*”. This year, the suggested theme is “*Jubilee for the earth: new rhythms, new hope*”. This theme is helpful in considering the integral relationship between the earth’s rest and ecological, economic, social and political life, particularly in the light of the far-reaching effects caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

Later, from 23rd to 25th October in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, there will also be a meeting organized by EcoOne – the ecological network of the Focolare. Participants will include experts in ecology, politicians, university lecturers and representatives of organizations and associations. This meeting will examine the impact of *Laudato si*’ on the contemporary world and new pathways towards an integral ecology. The event aims to showcase the role that individuals and social entities can play in the care of our common home.

In addition, this is also a special year because on 24th May, the fifth anniversary of the encyclical, Pope Francis announced that the coming year will be dedicated to *Laudato si*.

The urgency of the situation is such that it requires a concrete and immediate response involving all levels – local and regional, national and international.

We need to create “*a popular movement*” that engages at grassroots level, an alliance between all people of good will. This is why it is important to participate in initiatives such as “*Time of Creation*” or the EcoOne meeting in October. As Pope Francis reminds us, “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (LS, 14)

Lorenzo Russo

Tuesday, September 1, 2020



Gennadios Zervos: the unity of two sister Churches

A long and deep friendship united the Focolare Movement to the recently deceased Metropolitan.. The article that follows was written by Gabriella Fallacara, a focolarina and expert in ecumenism who for many years was in charge of "Centro Uno", for the unity of Christians.

"When I first visited Gennadios Zervos' modest house, I was greeted with particular cordiality. His mother, who spoke little Italian but beautiful Greek offered me a strange dessert: it was a small "curl" of a white creamy substance that was stuck firmly to a long spoon and it was immersed in a glass of clear water. Its subtle flavour seemed to embody every aspect of the orient." This was how I began my article about an interview with Gennadios Zervos that I wrote for "Città Nuova" magazine.[i] That first meeting dates back to November 1970. I did not know then that, after a few months, Gennadios Zervos would be elected by Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and his Synod and be given the title of Bishop of Kratea. This meant that for the first time in 275 years, an Orthodox Bishop was to be consecrated in Italy.

That "homely atmosphere" was a characteristic of the friendship that Bishop Gennadios shared with us for many years.

Zervos was very young when he first came to Naples in 1961. He was only twenty-four years old but he was a high school teacher and lecturer in Greek patrology in the Superior Institute of Theology in Bari. He also wrote for the magazine "Stakis" which was the most important paper in the Greek Orthodox world. He had already graduated in Orthodox theology in Constantinople and

in Catholic theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Naples. He certainly had a prestigious career before him, but how did this develop?

He had actually expected to carry out his mission in Greece, but the Patriarch Athenagoras presented him with a new goal. "You need to be in Italy," he said, "because it is the centre of Catholicism. We need young theologians there ... for the unity of the two sister Churches." And this is a prophecy that has been fulfilled.


The last time we were in contact, a few months ago, he spoke of the joy that has always been characteristic of our relationship. "I will never forget our meetings in Rocca di Papa [ii] because they gave me the joy of knowing Chiara Lubich who I had admired for so many years. There were our meetings with the Orthodox, as well as our meetings with the Bishops Friends of the Movement. The last time I saw her was in the Gemelli Hospital. Her splendid figure and her splendid personality live in my soul. For us she is a pillar of love and unity through whom we have come to know the supreme testament of our Saviour, his will that "all may be one."

Gennadios was a humble but determined protagonist of the "new season" that began with the Second Vatican Council. He shared and lived Chiara Lubich's charism of unity which contributed to the fulfilment of the vision of the Council. His simplicity and integrity made him an ambassador for the Eastern Church, thus creating bridges of respect, collaboration and understanding. His contribution to the history of the Church fills us with gratitude.

*Gabri Fallacara
Saturday, October 31, 2020*

[i] G. Fallacara in "Città Nuova" Feb. 1971

[ii] Ecumenical Meetings promoted by the Centro "Uno" Secretariat.



Members of the Movement who have concluded their earthly life:

18 September 2020

Pedro Arfo Pereira - focolarino from Italy

19 September 2020

Pietro Viola - priest focolarino from Italy

21 September 2020

Giusetta Ruju - focolarino from Italy

27 September 2020

Efrem Gobbo - priest focolarino from Italy

29 September 2020

Heinz Barion - focolarino from Germany

07 October 2020

Claudio Battistutti - focolarino from Italy

15 October 2020

Zaccheo Hwang - focolarino from Korea

19 October 2020

Giuseppe Ruggeri - focolarino from Italy

22 October 2020

Berthold Spägle - priest focolarino from Germany

23 October 2020

Paolo Gallo - 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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