

IGINO GIORDANI (1894 - 1980)

Co-founder of the Focolare Movement

Igino Giordani was born in 1894 at Tivoli (Italy). He came from a family of humble origin and was the first of six children. When he finished his studies, World War I broke out and he was called to serve in the army, but as a Christian he refused to fire against the enemy. Because of this courageous decision he was severely wounded, and he had to spend some time in military hospitals. Giordani continued to study and graduated in Literature and Philosophy. He married Mya in 1920 and they had four children.

Courageous political coherence – Giordani was a witness to a political culture that values coherence, dialogue and peacemaking. He was a free man, never conditioned, not even by power: his life still challenges us today.

Among the first ones to join the Italian People's Party – His political career started in 1919; he was among the first ones to answer the “appeal made to free radicals” launched by Luigi Sturzo, founder of the new People's Party. He became quite well-known when he published *Rivolta cattolica* (1925), a book which fiercely opposed the fascist system and rebuked Catholics who let themselves be swayed by the promises of the regime. In this text, he already emphasized the need of universal brotherhood. Some of his apologetic writings challenged the ideologies of his time and affirmed that the spirit of service and love has to be the soul of politics and power.

Holiness and politics – He was a candidate for the 1924 and 1946 elections. In 1946, when elected to the Constituent Assembly and then a member of Parliament for Christian Democrats, he asked himself: “Can a politician be a saint?” Promoted as director of “Il Popolo”, the party's newspaper, Giordani wrote in his diary: “Spread holiness through a poor sheet of newspaper; spread holiness from a corridor of lost footsteps.... who can perform this miracle?”

Soon he encountered many difficulties in this new political experience. And as he refused to violate professional correctness by subjecting the newspaper to the whims of party currents, he decided to resign from the post of director; and he prayed: “Lord, this humiliation serves to put myself naked before you”. He had to face “misunderstanding, slander, mockery, abandonment” which meant “disappointment and bitterness”. He understood that these were “trials” on the road to holiness.

A staunch pacifist –Giordani was a convinced pacifist and his commitment towards peace was prophetic. He was a pacifist during the dramatic years of the first world conflict when division reigned between neutralists and interventionists. He was a pacifist when since the early twenties he envisaged the United States of Europe. His yearning for peace and universal brotherhood could be felt in a well-known speech delivered in Parliament in 1949 when he adhered to the Atlantic Pact. For him, the Pact was not only a means of defence, but a principle of pacification for the peoples of Europe, included Russia. His idea of peace stemmed directly from the law of charity, the need of solidarity, together with rational, social and economic issues. “War is murder” (it kills man; it is against the Fifth Commandment), “it is decide in effigy” (it suppresses man's image and likeness to God), and it is suicide, because, especially today, humanity is one body, which destructs itself through conflicts.

He was a man who not only spoke of peace but lived it. One still remembers how in the early '50s he used to dialogue with communists, such as Davide Lajolo, editor of "L'Unità" of Milan, through the pages of newspapers of which he was director. This was a time when communists were excommunicated from the Church, and such an initiative could have caused lack of comprehension and sensation.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, he, who suffered ideological and cultural persecution under fascism, helped to save fascist hierarchs from atrocities that occurred during the days after the liberation.

He was the one to present the first law in favour of conscientious objection; he presented it in 1949 together with the socialist Calosso. Together with a few others from various political parties, in 1951 he promoted parliamentary support in favour of peace.

His idea of democracy started from the ethics of human relationships, hence the recognition of each person's dignity and value when determining the common good. His democratic spirit was rooted in Christianity. In some of his well-known publications, such as *Disumanesimo* (1941); *Pionieri cristiani della democrazia* (1950) and *Le due città* (1961), he stressed that politics is the highest form of Christian love. Not only; but well aware that politics is exposed to "corruption, lies and ambition" more than other fields, he even wrote that "power satanizes"(1962). He launched this message, which is of utmost importance today: if we all need holiness "statesmen, legislators, public administrators need a double doze of it" (1962).

His meeting with Chiara Lubich - 1948 was a decisive year for Giordani. This 54 year old man, prominent in political and cultural circles met the 28 year old Chiara Lubich, in whom he recognized an extraordinary charism. He adhered fully to the Focolare spirituality and collaborated with Chiara, playing an important role in the life of Movement, to the point that he was considered co-founder

In 1953, when he left his political seat in Parliament, he dedicated himself to building a new social and political culture on a much larger scale: the human family. The meeting with Chiara was a turning point in his life. Later he said: "All my studies, my ideals, even the events in my life, seemed as if they all pointed to this direction.....I can say that before I have searched; now I have found".

He was fascinated by the evangelical radicalism of the "spirituality of communion" that Chiara lived and proclaimed. The turning point in Giordano's life brought such a profound change that "his friends were shocked" as he himself said. His polemical tendency changed and Giordani acquired a new and marked sensitivity towards dialogue. His individual commitment became communitarian, and later on, a number of politicians started to follow his example: from the first small group of politicians formed in the '50s to politicians worldwide that form part of the Movement of Unity in Politics that was founded by Chiara Lubich in 1996.

Giordani passed away on April 18, 1980 and the cause of his beatification is under way.