

Press Release – March 3, 2017

Chiara Lubich and the family

On the 9th anniversary of the passing away of the Focolari founder, a review on what the charism of unity contributes to family life. The Movement's communities in the five continents celebrate this anniversary.

The 9th anniversary of Chiara Lubich's death will be on March 14. The theme chosen to mark this anniversary is the family, a theme very much in keeping with the dynamics opened by the Synod of Bishops and the subsequent Apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*. Besides, this year the Focolare Movement also marks the 50th anniversary of *New Families*, a branch founded by Lubich in 1967, to whom she entrusted families in the world.

Chiara considered the family as “the seed of communion for humanity of the third millennium”. She affirmed this in her message to Familyfest 1993, while hoping that “the values ingrained in the family – gratuitousness, spirit of service, reciprocity – are conveyed to the whole human family”.

In these words of Chiara, one finds the meaning of initiatives and events that will take place in various countries during 2017. The aim is to review the life journey and thought of these fifty years and highlight the anthropological and universal value of families in view of the “human family”.

The first event, with the title “*The family, source of hope and joy*”, took place in Cairo, Egypt. More than 300 people participated in the festive programme, and the testimonies shared highlighted the leading role of youth and the relationship between generations in the family. In the event which took place in Panama on February 12, the theme was “*Always be a family*”. In a society characterized by frenetic rhythms, over 400 people gathered in a city park for a day of dialogue, games and walks.

Families from the five continents are expected to participate in the international event that will be held in the small town of Loppiano, from 10-12 March 2017. The programme includes workshops for parents, children and grandparents. A group of experts will animate a Cultural Seminar that will reflect on “*The pact of reciprocity in family life, generating trust and relationships*”. This seminar is being organized in collaboration with the Sophia University Institute and is expected to lead to a Study Centre on the family, with the aim of deepening the contribution that the spirituality of unity can give to today's family.

The central part of the Loppiano event will be on Saturday afternoon, March 11. The programme will consist of the three main items: “*The family, a net of relationships*”: relationships between the couple, with their children, between generations; “*Love, means and response in addressing critical situations in the family*”: sharing of pain, challenges, sorrows; “*The family, a creative source for the social aspect of every people*”: networks of families, solidarity and hospitality, commitment to society. The programme will include real stories of families, reflections by experts and contributions from the heritage of Chiara Lubich's thought and life about the family. It will be broadcast through live streaming.

The anniversary of Lubich's passing away is an annual occasion for the Focolari communities worldwide to meet, celebrate, give witness and renew commitment. So, the year 2017 will also be enriched by a multitude of events happening from Singapore to Vilnius (Lithuania), from Sydney (Australia) to Houston (USA), from Manaus (Brazil) to Bujumbura (Burundi), that embrace the world like the stars in heaven and recall Chiara's legacy: “Be a family”.

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