

## **“Chiara and Religions. Together towards the unity of the human family” Personalities from different religions mark Chiara Lubich’s memory**

***A public conference to be held at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome  
on March 20, 2014 from 17.00 - 19.00***

When confronted with new challenges that arise from history, current politics and economy and from the collective imagination, the path of interreligious dialogue does not appear only as a challenge, but as a “pilgrimage towards the truth”.

This is the perspective of the conference, “*Chiara and Religions. Together towards the unity of the human family*”, to be held in honour of Chiara Lubich in Rome, at the Aula Magna of the Pontifical Urban University, at the conclusion of a meeting held at Castelgandolfo. It will take place on Thursday, March 20.

The sixth anniversary of Lubich’s passing away draws to Rome about 250 representatives from 8 major religions, interested in sharing a common witness to the way of dialogue that she has opened through her charism of unity.

The opening session will take place on Monday 17 at Castelgandolfo. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Shintoists and members of Tenrikyo, hailing from various parts of the world will be participating. There will be 23 Jews from Israel, USA, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico and Europe; 69 Muslims, Shiites and Sunnis from Maghreb, the Middle East, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Europe and USA; 34 Buddhists of the Theravada and Mahayana traditions from Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Italy; 19 Hindus from India.

This is an **unprecedented event** in the history of dialogue of the Focolare Movement. In fact, in past years various symposia have been organized, but the mutual understanding and reflection took place between Christianity and one other religion (Muslim – Christian, Christian – Buddhist, Jewish – Christian, etc). This will be the first time that a plurality of religious traditions will find themselves together and highlight the richness of this dialogue, one of the most relevant aspects of Chiara Lubich’s charism of unity, thus taking up her call to “aim at keeping our sight on the one Father of many children” and then to “look at all men as children of One Father”. Brothers and sisters of different faiths - a varied piece of mosaic composed over the years in the Focolare Communities around the world will be together on the path of dialogue.

The programme at Castelgandolfo will consist of moments of dialogue and of witness in homogeneous groups according to religion or in plenary sessions, allowing participants to open up to a 360° dialogue, thus going beyond what is specific, without ignoring the inevitable difficulties and the reflections that matured in the course of time.

**The conference to be held on the last day, March 20 at 17.00 hrs, at the Aula Magna of the Urbaniana in Rome, will offer a public and plural witness of Chiara Lubich.** The speakers will be the Buddhist monks Phramaha Thongratana Tavorn and the Rev. Waichiro Izumita, Dr. Vinu Aram, Hindu; Imam Ronald Shaheed and Prof. Amer Al Hafi, Muslims; Rabbi David Rosen, Jew. Cardinal Francis Arinze and Maria Voce, the current president of the Focolare Movement will open the conference.

**Journalists are invited for a briefing on Wednesday 19 at 12.30. Some members of the different religions will be present. This will be take place at Marconi Hall, Vatican Radio, Piazza Pia 3, Vatican City.**

Victoria Gómez (+39) 335 7003675 - Benjamim Ferreira (+39) 348 4754063