

Chiara Lubich to the Community in Ireland

22nd February 2004-07-03

Chiara: Here we are, dearest ones. As we all know, we are linked up with a number of our 'little towns'. So I feel my first duty is to greet them all in your name. So first of all I greet the Roman Mariapolis at Rocca di Papa, where I know Fr. Foresi, Oreste Basso and the first men and women focolarini are gathered. Then the little town in Holland is linked up with us, which is called 'Luminous Trail'. Then there is the little town in Spain, called 'The Exterior Castle'. Then there is the little town in Southern Europe, which I called 'Lighthouse' (which means light), and then the little town of Montet, Foco (in Switzerland) and the town called 'Renate' in Loppiano, Italy.

So we've done our duty to greet all our neighbours, and on Thursday we will be linked up with even more cities, but they told me that since today is Sunday, the ESA, the satellite company, can only link up Europe. But this is good for now.

First of all, I want to thank you, in case I forget, for all the flowers, the gifts, the letters that you sent me when I arrived. I really thank you. You are full of generosity. And then I want to thank you too for this great show, which obviously is a great compliment to the whole work, in my person, but also a great compliment to your marvellous country. (Applause). Before I came here, the focolarini prepared a whole history of Ireland, old and new, from all aspects, a book – that size, so I didn't know how I was going to manage to read it, with all I have to do, but on the plane I actually managed to finish it. So during this hour, obviously, we are going to do something different from before, and I'm going to answer some questions. Stefano will read the questions, so not the person who asked me the question, so they are answers that are more general for everyone. So let us start with the first question Stefano.

Stefano:

Chiara:

As you know in Rome this year at all the meetings, especially the first ones, where there were 1,500 focolarine women consecrated to God, then 1,500 focolarini men consecrated to God, and then more or less 1,500 married focolarini, they too are consecrated to God with their promises to God, as married people, and then there were the priests – 700 of them came. Then the other day we had 104 bishops and cardinals. All of these heard our theme, either a long or a short one, on 'Union with God'. It is a theme that people have been mad about, including the bishops, because it speaks about that special union with God that we can reach with our charism.

So I had to explain, summarising it briefly here, that for these themes we consulted various

writings and diaries from the past to look at them and study how, through this charism, the focolarini have succeeded in reaching union with God. Here I can't say anything more about this, but I will just say one thing, the most important thing.

We have seen that there is a way for us, an indisputable way for us, the one that is needed and that is of more value than anything else – our way to reach God, is our brother. We reach God by loving our brothers, one by one. Now for example, I have to love you and you have to love me. Doing this, if you go ahead the whole day loving your neighbour, by this evening, or tonight, you will feel union with God. And this is our way. This is our way. Foco, our Co-Founder, a man rich in talents – he was a member of parliament, an ecumenist, a journalist and many other things, now in fact they are making him a saint, and he has already been declared, 'Servant of God,' he used to say "I, my brother, God". This is the triad that we have to follow to be able to reach union with God.

These days, among the many that I would like to mention to those who are listening, a priest comes into my mind – Fr. Dario Corta. People say that he is a saint too. He had truly understood what was of value for us focolarini – he was a priest focolarino. It was to reach union with God. One of the phrases he used to say was "To reach the end of life and be able to say "I have always loved my neighbour". He had really hit on the right road. I remember too something he wrote in his diary, after he had been meditating on the Gospel where it speaks of the scandals, where Jesus speaks of scandals, and he wrote in his diary: "Loose an eye, even loose a hand, but never loose a brother."

And among our focolarini, there was another, our Ulisse, who also left for the Heavenly Mariapolis, he always had one idea, and he became a great person, a true focolarino, because the idea he had fixed on was his neighbour. He was living in Algeria where there are many, many Muslims. But he didn't look at whether a person was Muslim or Catholic, he loved everyone. We have many photos of him, taking up children. You can see how he loved them, how he saw Jesus in these children. Another photo that made a strong impression on me, shows him with an Imam, an Imam is a Muslim religious leader, and since this man was quite old, he was supporting him like this, and bringing him forward. It was said of him, especially by Farouk, a quite important person that he conquered to the Ideal, it was said, and Farouk wrote this in a letter to him after he left for heaven: "You have done something extraordinary. You have made our ideal enter the Muslim world. We were Muslims, and you acted in such a way that a little people of the Ideal is now living among the Muslims." For him too, the way was his neighbour. They say that he used to waste time for his neighbour. He never used to look at his watch, when he had someone to look after or someone to speak to. Never, never. He wasted time, but they say that he gained time. He gained it for eternity.

This is the only thing I can say, because otherwise I would spend this entire hour just talking about union with God. But if you go away with just this thought, I assure you that sooner or later you will feel union with God.

And you might ask me "But Chiara, how can you feel it?"

Well, you notice it for example, when you are doing meditation. At a certain point you have to

stop, because someone within you says “Stop. Think. Meditate on this.”

And you realise that you are not alone in life, but there is another within you. There is another. There are two of you. And so union with God begins, which then has many developments.

Stefano: Life seems to have more and more commitments between work, family, and other commitments. I feel the need to deepen my relationship with God, but I don't seem to be able to find the time or the space to do it in the right way. What would you advise?

Chiara: So to that person, who perhaps is present, I would answer as follows: Try to observe in the duties you have, also for the movement, and for the Opera, as for your own work, perhaps you are employee or a boss, who knows, or for your family – the things you do – they are three opportunities to meet brothers. Therefore, don't try to crucify yourself, seeing if you are managing or not managing to do the practises of piety, the ones we should do – Mass, the rosary, prayers etc. Don't crucify yourself. You should try to love that neighbour there. Your children are neighbours too, they are brothers in Christ. Your work colleagues too and wherever you go, you find neighbours. Love your neighbours. If you love your neighbours, you will hear someone inside you and he will become your guide. And he is the one who says to you, Jesus is not a perfectionist, but he is love – he says to you “You should go to Mass.” Perhaps you are a little tired and you can't manage the whole rosary. And he says “Say ten Hail Marys well for me and then don't think about the rest.” I do it too you know. When I am really tired, I come to an agreement with him. I say “Look I know you don't want me to be too tired. So I'll say ten Hail Marys well, and then the rest with my mouth, but my mouth sings your glory, as does my soul.” God is not a perfectionist, he is love. Do you understand? This is the answer.

If : In the letter the Pope sent you on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the movement, he called the members of the movement “Apostles of Dialogue”. Is dialogue something really central for us?

Chiara: It is really central, because it is through dialogue that we reach our aim, and now I'll explain how. The aim of our movement is unity, that is to bring about, with the Church, Jesus testament “may they all be one”. It is only through dialogue with our neighbours that we can succeed in collaborating with the church in this way. And even where Christianity does not exist, we manage to build friendships, as I will explain later, with many and in the meantime, we build a certain universal brotherhood.

In fact the goal of our movement is unity, for Christians, and universal brotherhood, for those who are not Christians, so that we can draw close to them and make friends with them, and in a tomorrow, introduce them to Christ.

I remember that one time when I was invited for lunch with the pope, because I've been a few times, it came to my mind to ask him “But your holiness, how do you see our movement?” And he answered “As an ecumenical movement.” Not in the narrow sense of the word, ecumenism between the churches, but a 360 degree ecumenism, a universal one. That was how the Holy Father saw the movement and he hit it right on.

So how do we dialogue?

You see we are very fortunate, because we have learnt what is most important in life. What counts most of all is love. It is to love. But let's fix this in our heads, there is nothing more worthwhile. So much so, that Scripture says that one day faith will disappear, and also hope. Faith will not be necessary, because we will see what we believe, and also hope will not exist, because we will already be rejoicing.... But love will continue. You saw Lieta, Stephen and all the others... We are still linked with them by one thing, by love, by loving.

But what is this love? It is not any old love, the way love is thought of in the world. No, it is a special love. It makes you love everyone, everyone – black, white, Africans, from your movement, or other movements, from your church or another church. It makes you love everyone, because Jesus died for everyone, for everyone.

Then it makes you be the first to love. That means not waiting to be loved, who knows when you'll be loved, perhaps never. You have to be the first to take off and take the initiative.

And it is not a platonic love. Not so superficial. It is a practical love. You have to make yourself one with the other: suffer with him, rejoice with her, share everything with that person, and see Jesus in everyone.

Now we focolarine, and the others who are in the movement, volunteers, priests etc., we are spread all over the world. Do you know that we are in 182 countries? (I think there are only a few little islands left). We have learned this art, which is the art of loving, of love, and what do we do?

We love all those we meet. This is the career of careers. And then we do many things, but what we must do, is love. But as we love these people, at a certain point they ask you: "But who makes you do this?" or else maybe they become your friends before you ask them.... And then we begin to reveal to them what we have inside... I have learnt in my sacred scripture this and this is written. And so they come. If they are Catholic, we are linked with them at the level of the Holy Father, the bishops etc. If they are of another church, we link with them through the fact that we have many things in common with them: baptism, Scripture, the Councils, the Fathers of the Church. We have all these beautiful things in common. But you see, we know that we have these things in common, and yet Catholics remain separated from the others. Instead, for us it is not so. Since we have things in common, what do we do? We have schools for ecumenism, so that we can discuss these things, and feel ourselves to be sisters of those people who are Protestant, (Anglican or Lutheran), because we have a common baptism, how can we not be brothers and sisters.

Once, at the beginning of the movement, I asked a bishop "But do we have Jesus in the midst with a Lutheran or an Anglican?" And why not, it is baptism. Baptism makes you another Christ, it makes you love. We can't have the Eucharist, that is a different issue. There it is the Church that will decide when we can have communion together, but we can have Jesus in the midst. It is already a lot, a lot. It is not that they are on one track and we are on another. And then there is Scripture, Holy Scriptures, as I was saying, the Councils. At the first councils we

were all together. And it is the same with the Fathers of the Church etc. And with a great joy, we feel that we are there, all of us, him and that other person, we all have this beautiful patrimony. Its like this: (pointing to the glass) we have up to here in common. This is how we act with our brothers.

And then there is our spirituality which you all know, otherwise you would not be here. Our spirituality rests completely on words from the Gospel: God love, do the will of God (and for Jesus, his food is to do the will of his Father), the Word of Life, – it is all Gospel, all gospel. For this reason our Christian brothers who are not Catholic, are happy to share the spirituality with us. The spirituality helps them grow, helps them go ahead. We have to really make progress in union with God and go ahead. So with these separated brothers, as they were called one time, we find ourselves, instead of being almost lacking in interest or indifferent, what do we do? We feel that we are already something united, as though we were preparing a soul for the Church which will be united some day, because already among us we are united at least on that plain.

Then, perhaps you are in Asia, and you meet a Hindu, or you are in Japan and you meet a Buddhist. Or else you are in America and you meet a Muslim. How do we act with them? We can manage with them too. We have discovered that in almost all the sacred books of the greatest religions, there is a phrase which the Pope quoted at Assisi when he prayed. And this is the phrase. It is called the 'Golden Rule'. "Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Or, do not treat others as you would not wish to be treated. So when we meet these people, when our focolarini around the world meet them, they say to someone, who is maybe a Buddhist "Is this phrase written in your holy book by any chance?" They say, "Oh, yes, but I hadn't noticed it." "Go and see it, go and see.." So then your religion calls you to love. It says "Love". "Look mine says the same. I try to love you. You try to love me. We are friends. We remain friends and in this way, little pieces of universal brotherhood are created.

But we even attach ourselves to non-believers, to atheists and those who are seeking, those who have not got clear ideas. We link ourselves to them for this reason. They believe in human values, not in the supernatural. They believe in freedom, for example, in unity, in solidarity, in human rights. But perhaps we don't believe in them. If there is one novelty that came out with Jesus' incarnation, it is that he became man. The Word, so to speak, existed before, even though in the Trinity, you can't talk of a before and an after, but

The thing is that he became human. So He already contained the maximum human values, as strong as they can be. So we say to these people too – do you want to work for human solidarity? Let's work together because Jesus brings these values ahead too. So for example our Statutes include all these people and the Church has approved them all. Within, really within the Movement there are 100,000 people who don't have any religious belief. And I remember that they came a while ago and they said to me: Listen Chiara, how come you say that we are an essential part of the Movement? And I answer: otherwise we can't live our statutes. Our statutes say that we have to build a certain unity, which means fraternity with you too. They were all happy, they are such close friends of ours. Then maybe someone starts to baptise their children... but we don't look for this, it happens naturally. These are the dialogues that we have started and that we are developing all over the world with great joy. This is why the Pope calls

us apostles of dialogue. Look also in Ireland you have the opportunity to love. I think that here there are people of other origins, who are not Irish, there must be some foreigner too and love, love, love each one, that we don't lose, as FR. Dario said: Don't lose "lose an eye maybe, lose a hand but don't lose a brother. We can start. Do a first act of love, then go home, then you meet again, they recognise you, they know you, oh hello, talk, explain, tell...

One thing that I wanted to add that I have written here. We build unity in the Catholic Church not only with individuals but also with Movements but I'll tell you about this later.

And something else. Christians of other Churches are part of this Movement, do you know how many other Churches? 350. We are in touch with Christians, not Catholics, of 350 Churches. So it's a substantial movement. We love them, they love too, they bring this revolution of love ahead too. The other day there was a celebration in Rome. We were invited by the Mayor to the Parliament building in the centre of Rome. And there they launched a book written by our Enzo Fondi, who is in Heaven now, and by Michele Zanzucchi who is here and is our focolarino journalist. The book is about our Movement. I wrote the first chapter, which is a summary but then they go into detail, it's a book as thick as this. It is called "A people born from the Gospel". This is a fantastic thing, fantastic. They couldn't say anything more beautiful to us because that's how it was. In the air raid shelters we opened the Gospel and they we put it into practice and the promises of Jesus came true.. a people born from the Gospel. We are this. But if we love, since love is the essence of the Gospel, love is really the synthesis of the Gospel .. if we love.. let's love all our neighbours.. we are always a people born from the Gospel. So perhaps the most beautiful thing, let me say it, the most beautiful thing on earth, I wouldn't change vocation.

For example, I'll add something else to show how things are going. We have a close friendship with a modern Japanese Buddhist Movement which is called Risho-Kosei-Kai. I knew its founder who has left this life and now there is his son. We are such good friends.. I was invited to Tokyo to speak in a huge temple, maybe the biggest in Tokyo, to 12,000 Buddhists and they wanted to know my Christian experience. It was unbelievable, because they don't want to know about theology, they don't want to know about catechism but they like experience... you can see that really witnesses are more listened to today than teachers. That time I remember I told my story that you know off by heart. At a certain point I said that Jesus loves us a lot to the point of counting the hairs on our head. And I remember at the end a Buddhist lady came: Really, really Miss? Really Chiara? Does he count the hairs on our head? Does God love us this much? Of course God loves us this much. I was there in 1980, now we're in the year 2004, so 24 years ago. We have kept in touch.. there are 6 million of them but they are spread to America too, not like us of course, wherever they are we welcome them, in our Mariapoli for example in Luminosa in New York or in others, we welcome them, we love them and without wanting to we end up talking, they ask us and we speak of our ideal, of our achievements so they learn.

Recently we published a book – I Fioretti, I hope you have it here too, or shortly. It is a collection of evangelical incidents where you can almost get the idea of a little miracle. For example, I don't know, someone gives a poor person all he has in his pockets and then goes home and what happens? That maybe there he finds an envelope with the same amount if not more because the Gospel is true, it happens. The Gospel says "Give and you will receive" So this

happens. We have collected many of these little stories from all over the world, that were sent to us and we made this book. But you know what? These Buddhists what did they do? As soon as they heard about these episodes which are life, they printed them in Japanese and they are distributing them.. they have a kind of parish and a kind of diocese and they're distributing this book to everyone, to everyone and in the meantime they're living the Gospel without knowing it. But to them, they don't take no for an answer!

So you also know that our children have the cube of love that has 6 faces. On each one is written all the art of loving: "Love everyone", Be the first to love, Love practically, See Jesus. As soon as these Japanese heard that there is this dice of love they wanted many, many dice and also a little book which explains everything. They produced it and it goes to all these 6 million people in all these parishes in Japan who now have the dice of love but do you see that Christianity is going in. And there is a friendship between them and us.. recently the present President told me: but we will never again be able to distinguish ourselves from you.. we are one with you. So we build this fraternity, these points of universal fraternity which are wonderful. If all the world was like this.. we wouldn't have to talk about peace, we'd have it already.

So, maybe someone doesn't know this, that one day I was invited to America, to the United States and they asked me to speak in a Mosque, an important Mosque: Malcolm X. Malcolm X was a person who was assassinated and there is a story well known throughout the world.. and they asked me to speak there. A beautiful mosque, all carpets on the ground and the Leader, their president who is called WD Mohamed said to me: Tell your experience. I couldn't believe it, to tell it there too. So I went barefoot and I faced Mecca... and I wore a Chador. And I spoke to them. Of course there were sayings that I knew in the Koran that are like ours For example, they say God is great, God is great. SO at the end of my talk I said God is Great. Everyone clapped, enthusiastic because I had said God is great. But meanwhile they drank in all the rest. Just think that now we have over and this statistic is a few years old.. over 40 mosques in the US where they invite our focolarini to go and share their experiences And their papers are full, full of our things.. And they do all their things as they can. To show that things are going ahead There too, there are 2 million of them and we are what we are.. we join with them.. another segment of universal fraternity. But things have gone ahead even more.

Chiara, more than ever before the media have created a global village, eg, we all witnessed the attack on the US on 11th September, the war in Iraq and the big demonstrations against the war. How can we use the media to share the good and positive events in this global village.

But I wouldn't wait for others to do something, we try to do it ourselves and already we use the media. For example, you know that we have the monthly Link Up through which we are in contact with the whole world. I don't know how many cities receive it because the number increases all the time but that's important too... the other day in Florence, there was a Cardinal who came to hear the Link Up because he wanted to find out what this Link Up is – when I call all the countries and then I ask – have you had your day meeting? How is so and so? Have you done such and such? And we chat amongst ourselves for about 40 minutes and I greet them all and then there is the other part.. we say to each other, they say to me what they think and I say what I think and we're living family, the global family exists among us.

Afterwards, you know, I give quite a strong spiritual message then Eli my secretary and a young focolarino read news about the important events which have happened in the last month, naturally now it'll all be about Ireland... At the end this Cardinal said: "It's amazing to take part in something like this because this is a real family not a pretense" We are a global village! It's a fact! But where is this global village? It's a fact! This is it.

Now we're going to be linked up for Stuttgartoo – have you heard about this big event of Stuttgart– I'll tell you something about it later. Fede, who spoke to you this morning, told me that there are already 136 places linked up in Europe, but they're not little focolares or small places that are linked up, there are entire stadiums which will be full of people linked to Stuttgart, so the whole of Europe will have this possibility.

And now we're hearing that there will also be Stuttgart events in the other continents too, about 40 are already planned but it will be 100 or more. So we're already doing something.

To be able to do this we're working with experts in the communications area. Then things are going ahead because other Movements are coming and asking us – how do you manage to link up with the whole world. SO we explain to them, we help them with equipment etc, we set it up and they do it too so things are growing.

Besides this and maybe this is new for you, there is now hope that we can also make films, both for television and for cinema because as you know as we were saying earlier on, we're everywhere and we're also in N. America and we're in Los Angeles too with a men's and a women's Focolare. There by chance a focolarina got to know someone in Hollywood and we are lay people and as lay people we can go everywhere and bring Jesus Christ. And for a few months now, maybe even a year, about 60 people in Hollywood, including directors, actors, producers, scenographers etc About 60 of them are in regular contact with the focolares in Los Angeles. There in Hollywood where there are about 400,000 people dedicated to making films for the world, but now they are fed up with the programmes that are being made, they want something expressing values and they feel that we bring this and it is Christianity, it's values and it works. So we sent someone and Michele who is here went too, with the others who are looking after this project, to Hollywood to discuss things and then someone from Hollywood came to Rome and they will come again for a congress so something will start there too and these are very important means of communication. Already a film is being made, a kind of film, I think it's a documentary or film, I'm not sure. Some of our people went to different parts of the world to film and it will be called "The Golden Rule", that is how they live this love which has reached all these places too.

Now there already are 3 production centres, let's call them this, I don't know what they're called, one in Rome, one in Belgium and one in Australia. For example, our married foc. no in Australia runs the Centre he began and he is considered the most important director in Australia. SO it has started and it is happening and it will go ahead. This for now....