

## **Paul VI and Chiara Lubich. The prophecy of a Church in dialogue**

Study Days – Castelgandolfo, 7-8 November 2014

### ***Abstracts from the various presentations***

#### **The birth of Ecclesial Movements in Italy during the twentieth century. A historical overview**

*Prof. Andrea Riccardi*

Since the French Revolution, contemporaneity has changed the horizon of the relationships between the Church and society. In the first decades of the 19th century, the attempt to restore the State and the Catholic society proved to be a great failure. It was in this secularized society that the intuition of forming Catholic movements started to gain ground. "The Church must make movement in society" - this decisive insight marks all the contemporary Church. Thus, the "Catholic movement" started and the laity began to give its support to the clergy. During the 1800 and 1900, the Catholic Action was the movement par excellence for the laity. The Church as a movement became the Church of the people, as opposed to the conception of a Church, distributor of services. The next step was the charismatic dimension of movements that no longer originated from the hierarchy but from an autonomous affirmation. A popular "charismatic texture" has been created in the church, determined by the spiritual and responsible initiative of men and women, who realized that something is lacking in the Church, in the world and that something needs to be done. Such is the "case" of the Focolare Movement in the Italian Church.

#### **Paul VI and the lay apostolate: model and development in his vision**

*Prof. Alberto Monticone*

Paul VI had already expressed his interest about the Catholic laity during the sessions of Vatican Council II, enhancing the value of the work done previously, of which he himself had been an animator, a witness and a teacher and inviting some lay people to participate as observers in this great event. But it was during a general audience on March 23, 1966 that he pronounced a clear statement about this subject, when he spoke about the dual vocation of the lay Christian: the general call to holiness and the specific call to the apostolate. The relationship between the universality of the Church and her presence in individual communities was at the centre of Pope Montini's vision about the lay apostolate. One notices that between 1970 and 1973 the meetings of lay associations with the Holy Father increased; and so did the approval of their actions together with expressions of encouragement to continue their journey by following the indications of Vatican II. Yet there was no appearance of the new movements or of the ones that were developing after Vatican II, but a unique relationship existed between Paul VI and the Focolare Movement, and this continued to grow till 1978. Paul VI concluded his teaching on the laity with a recommendation that emerged in the style and words of all his pastoral work: friendship, which is fundamental in the relationship between pastors and laity and among the lay people themselves. But the history of friendship in the Catholic Movement and in the life of the contemporary Church, with all its lights and shadows, has yet to be written.

#### **Paul VI and Chiara Lubich: a journey of communion attentive to the Holy Spirit**

*Dr. Lucia Abignente*

Unpublished documentation has been used to present an analytical research and to reconstruct a historical perspective of the relationship between Mgr. Montini/Paul VI and Chiara Lubich. The care and wisdom with which Paul VI followed the progress of the Focolare Movement proved to be fundamental in the process of the progressive definition of its identity, in the search for an institutional form that respected the features of a movement that the Pope recognized as "God's Work". The contents of the five private audiences granted to Lubich, as well as the numerous epistolary contacts and public interventions show profound harmony in both thought and action. The day after Paul VI's beatification, his call for the communitarian dimension of holiness, "holiness of the people", which found full consonance with the charism and message of Chiara Lubich, emerged in a very significant way.

## **East Europe, Chiara Lubich and Paul VI**

*Prof. Paolo Siniscalco*

Initiatives taken by Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, supported by efficacious and practical suggestions given to her by Paul VI and immediately endorsed by the Movement, contributed, since the early 1960's, towards building a network of contacts and meetings in various countries behind the Iron Curtain, starting from East Germany. This network helped to provide the Pope with useful information about the religious situation in those countries, and locally, it was very useful for the life of the Catholic Church and for Christians who were prevented from expressing their faith by the totalitarian and atheistic regimes. Establishing themselves in East European countries, many members of the Work of Mary contributed towards consolidating the work initiated and made it easier to spread the message that stems from the charism of unity, a basic element of the Focolare spirituality, recognized by the clergy and the faithful as an answer to the needs that crop up in difficult, painful and dangerous situations.

## **The ecumenism of Paul VI and Chiara Lubich: harmony, support and prophecy**

*Dr. Joan Patricia Back*

The pontificate of Paul VI coincided with the Focolare Movement's ecumenical commitment that began in the 60's through contacts with members of the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican Churches, and later on with the Orthodox Church. Chiara Lubich's relationship with Paul VI, Athenagoras and other representatives in the ecumenical field encouraged her and made her realize that the spirituality of unity, born of her charism could contribute to the full and visible communion among Churches. This presentation, which is also supported by unpublished documentation, speaks of facts that wove the story of the ecumenical path of the dialogue of love, of the spiritual dialogue, of "the dialogue of life", the basis for theological dialogue.

## **The revolutionary innovation: the prophetic dimension of the Focolare spirituality in relation to the Church's social teaching of Paul VI**

*Prof. Alberto Lo Presti*

In Paul VI's contribution to the social teaching of the Church one finds innovative ideas that determined development in the Church's teaching on themes about peace, economy and work. Key readings that help one understand these innovative ideas are the intellectual research of Igino Giordani and the spiritual initiative of Chiara Lubich. Both reflect the appeal for social innovation launched by Paul VI in 1971 (*Octogesima adveniens*, 19), a project capable of emancipating itself from ideologies to indicate with courage solutions for the ills of contemporary society. The response of the Focolare Movement is in its vision of universal peace and in the economy of communion.

## **Charism and institution: ecclesial recognition and statutes**

*Prof. Adriana Cosseddu*

Unpublished documents, letters and norms introduce a research that aims at comparing two essential components in the "story" that marked the approval of the statutes of the Work of Mary of Mary (Focolare Movement). One of these components is the *Church*. As an "institution" the Church postulates a principle of order with a legal perspective according to its laws; not for this to become a superstructure in relation to the supernatural roots of the people of God and to fraternal communion, but rather to achieve the protection and growth of ecclesial life in its various aspects. The other component is "life". This expresses itself in the world in forms that are always new, while among the various expressions it can create in the Church, there are also those born from a charism, that has its origin in a gift of the Holy Spirit. The *institutionalization* necessary to welcome the charism of unity in the "womb" of the Church as an institution reveals the various stages that led to its ecclesial recognition, starting from 1947. The *excursus* gives evidence of the relationship between Paul VI and Chiara Lubich.

## **Ecclesiam suam of Paul VI, Vaticano II, Chiara Lubich's charism of unity**

*Prof. Mgr. Piero Coda*

By going into Paul VI's work on one hand and Chiara Lubich's on the other, the lecturer speaks about the synergistic convergence of a diversified action of Christ's Spirit in his Church today. This action has already explicated itself through distinct and peculiar forms, paths and objectives, prior to its celebration, on the

wavelength of what Vatican Council II would have authoritatively proposed, while then contributing to accompany it with renewed vigor and new inspiration, and later carrying out its bright and challenging legacy.

This is a theological reading meant to understand the links and the ideal cross-references between the two works in the space of light described by the Council. Since one is dealing with theology, history cannot be absent in this consideration. But one has to keep in mind that this is not a historical account that allows an effective sharing of points of view; it is a reading that illuminates some aspects of an objective convergence – despite the considerable difference in formation, vision, and mission - between Paul VI's ecclesiology and that of Chiara Lubich in the context of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. It can be said that these ecclesiologies, especially the first two (although not exclusively) are *in actu exercito* (in the sense that there is an explicit ecclesiological orientation, mainly pastoral). But the second one is *in actu signato* (in the sense that it is a charismatic experience with an implicit and obvious ecclesiological scope), but definitely all of them are meant to propitiate significance and important renewal.