

Montecitorio
Aula del Palazzo dei Gruppi parlamentari
12 March 2015

CHIARA, UNITY, POLITICS

Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement

Honourable members of Parliament and authorities,
Citizens, friends and especially the young people here in the hall

I'm honoured and grateful to be able to greet you on behalf of the Focolare Movement in such an important place.

Chiara Lubich dedicated her life to an ideal, to unity.

She sought to bring unity into every sphere of life. There is no field in which she didn't experience it. The international character of the Focolare Movement is an example, where each person is deeply committed to overcoming the challenges of diversity, forging unity without losing their own identity. The arts, the worlds of health, economics, sport, mathematics, psychology, education, philosophy and theology... the sciences and humanities have all provided opportunities to recognise the importance of unity and how it can be achieved. Could politics be excluded? Of course not. The importance of unity in politics is clear to us all. It is so obvious that we take it for granted.

The Italian Constitution, for example, refers to unity in the family (art. 29), national unity (art. 87), unity in policymaking (art. 95), in legislation and in economics (art. 120). The contexts and goals are different but one concept is clear: unity is part of the picture in each case, having something to say to politics, to the life of society and institutions, proclaiming its own value and role. Moreover, unity is intrinsically important to politics and should be identified for what it is, a political framework which can have an effect on the entire life of the country, over 360 degrees.

Chiara saw politics as "the love of all loves" which enables planning by civil servants and the needs of communities to be in unity with each other, and which helps citizens to achieve their personal and social aspirations.

Unity is a universal value and so it is also cross-cutting, but it is not neutral. It has some basic requirements so as to be seen in the right light. This is why when Chiara spoke to politicians, and about politics, she always talked about universal fraternity. Without this type of mutual recognition, which is a challenge to everyone involved in politics, whether they are individuals, parties, peoples, or institutions..., it becomes difficult – even impossible – to start a conversation about unity, whether in the context of a town council or a local authority, in Parliament or in a political party; and it becomes even more difficult in the international context, especially today when war seems to be almost on our doorstep.

Politics is the ground on which unity is built, but it cannot be done without starting from fraternity. Only fraternity can give the right value to freedom and to equality, which otherwise are in danger of being isolated principles. Only fraternity can help humankind make progress because it enables us to consider every man or woman as our brother or sister, someone to whom I can give something and from whom I can certainly learn something.

Unity and fraternity as Chiara Lubich understood and practised them have hardly begun to emerge onto the political scene, but the positive experiences to date are not small – as shown briefly in the video and in what the young people said this morning – and they are happening in various parts of the world. These encourage us to keep going and to do more and more, however difficult and daring that might be.

There have also been positive theoretical contributions, like the research done by the Department of Political Studies at the Sophia University Institute and in other Universities around the world, where they have sought to unpack the theoretical and practical effects of the term ‘unity and fraternity’.

Today’s event is intended to be an opportunity to understand more, in the context of an open, attentive, responsible, loyal and fraternal exchange between different viewpoints. Unity and fraternity will certainly be enriched, especially if they are lived. This meeting will show how unity and fraternity can be practised in, and offered to, the world of politics. It will give us a loftier vision of politics, the type of politics every country needs, one that is worth putting into practice because it gives meaning to the life of those involved in it, whether they are politicians, civil servants or citizens, working together for the common good.

This is my hope!

This is our dream, for peace and for unity among peoples.