

DOSSIER - March 2017

Chiara Lubich to the families

Excerpts from keynote speeches

A movement of married people for the reality of family life

A vast movement has to branch out from our Movement, one where married people, supported by all the Focolare Movement, will cater for family life, for married couples, for those who in some way are related to the great sacrament of marriage, (...) so that this sacrament will be of great benefit to the world.

(...) God has entrusted to us a particular face, that of Jesus crucified and forsaken. So even when we deal with families, we must give preference to those in whom we encounter His face. We have to love very particularly families threatened by separation, by divorce, split up families that need to be reunited.

(...) In front of you, of Jesus in you, of Jesus in us as a Movement, now we undertake this task: be as Jesus who looks at the world and seeing the crowds has pity on them, because this part of humanity I entrust to you is the most shattered, the most that resembles Him Forsaken.

From the talk at Rocca di Papa (Rome), on July 19, 1967 when the New Families Movement was founded

Family and love

Perhaps it is true that the world is what the family has made it, but undoubtedly the contrary holds true as well; the family is similar to the society that has engendered it. Today, the world is often wallowing in mud, and it's unlikely that the family, which is immersed in it, can come out healthy. Thus, the family is in dire need of the extraordinary help of grace.

(...) From where does the New Families Movement start to bring about the healing that is needed? Which remedy does it use? What source does it draw from? There is no doubt: it is God who is Love, because the family is nothing but a mechanism, a treasure chest, a mystery of love: nuptial love, maternal and paternal love, filial love, fraternal love, the love of a grandmother for her grandchildren, of children for their grandfather, their aunts, their cousins....Nothing constitutes and binds a family like love. If the family has failed in the world, it is because love has grown less. Wherever love dies out the family falls apart.

(...) When this love burns in the hearts of the members of the family and is truly alive, there are no problems that cannot be solved, no obstacles that cannot be overcome, and no one complains of failures that cannot be remedied. The family returns to being beautiful, united and healthy, just as God imagined it. Today the family needs a potent injection of that love (...). Our Movement is called to bring the family, every family it meets, to make this resolution: revitalize the love that is inherent in every family with that love which is a pure gift from God. In other words, love must reawaken love. And it will, because everything cooperates towards the good of those who love. Even the hardships that can cause families to cry in today's world will bear fruit. They will give life to a new type of family, one demanded by our times and heralded by the signs of the times.

From the address to participants at the Familyfest – Rome, May 3, 1981

Family and prayer

In our epoch the role of the laity is highlighted in the Church. The Holy Spirit's special love for the laity, can be seen, for example, in movements he aroused with spiritualities suited for them. These spiritualities help the laity achieve full union with God without being withdrawn from their own environment. (...)

They emphasize that the heart of Christianity is loving others for the love of Christ, because this is the fulfillment of the law. They teach and encourage love that needs to be restored when shattered, because without such love not even our offerings to God are acceptable. They help us love constantly and share in the fatigues, anxieties, worries and joys of the people we meet in our daily life (...).

Thus, what takes place in our life is similar to what happens in the life of a plant: the deeper its roots sink into the soil, the higher its stem rises towards the sky. Likewise, the more we enter into the hearts of people around us and share in their sufferings and joys, the more we become united to God.

(...) May the family, the small lay church, learn to walk along these new paths, which the Holy Spirit is indicating to us today to reach the Lord; may it learn to experience these sublime effects of love. Through them every other prayer recited will acquire new depth. Thus, the family will be more God's family and God will be able to accomplish his plan for it. It becomes more open to many other families and together they compose a vast family of God's children who, united in the love of Jesus, become a model for the entire human family.

From the address to the Congress "Family – Society: Rooted in the Absolute for today's humanity" - Castelgandolfo (Rome) April 8, 1989

Seeds of communion for the humanity of the third millennium

If we look at the family, if we were to take an X-ray of it, we would discover enormous and precious values, which if projected and applied to all of humanity have the potential to transform it in one big family.

(...) Is it natural for a family to put everything in common? This could be the seed from which an economic system at the service of humankind can spring forth, a seed for a culture of giving, of an economy of communion.

Is it spontaneous in a family to live one for the other, to live the other? This is the seed of acceptance among groups, peoples, traditions, races and societies that opens the door to reciprocal inculturation.

Does the passing on of values from generation to generation come spontaneously in the family? It could then be an incentive for placing new emphasis on education in society. What is more, the example of correction in the life of the family can be a model for the justice system.

Is another member's life valued as one's own in the family? This is the seed of the culture of life that must enlighten the laws and the structures of society.

Does the family take care of its home and try to make it reflect the harmony among its members? This is the seed of a renewed awareness of the environment and of ecology.

In the family, are studies aimed at the development of the person? This is the seed that can lead to cultural, scientific and technological research aimed at discovering little by little the mysterious design of God for humanity and to working for common good.

In the family is communication impartial and constructive? This is the seed for a social communication system at the service of humankind; one that highlights and transmits the positive and that seeks to be an instrument of world peace and unity.

Is love the natural bond among the members of the family? This is the seed of structures and institutions that work for the good of the community and of individuals that aspire to universal brotherhood, giving value to each individual nation.

Local, national and international structures and institutions that have these objectives already exist: ministries, hospitals, schools, law courts, banks, associations and varied organizations. But these structures need to be humanized; they need to be given a soul so that their spirit of service reaches that same intensity, spontaneity and love for each individual felt in the family.

God created the family as a model for every other human coexistence. This therefore is the task of families: always to keep the fire of love burning in every home and to reawaken those values that God entrusted to the family in order to radiate them generously and unceasingly to every sector of society.

From the message to Familyfest – Rome, June 5, 1993

The family is the future

Blatant and hidden violations of human rights are countless; they continuously occupy the media and they invade us with profound sadness. And they are all injustices that in the end fall on the smallest and most defenceless sector of society: the family unit.

In a certain sense, the family today is the "container" of humanity's suffering.

(...) We could create a graphic representation of the contemporary family by way of an image: a wounded and desolate mother who clutches the sufferings of humanity to her breast while crying out "Why?" to the

heavens. It is a situation that takes your breath away. It makes us wonder: what is the family's future? Or even worse: does the family have a future?

Faced with the overwhelming mystery of suffering we often find ourselves lost. In the Bible we read of a culminating moment of suffering, expressed with a "Why" cried out to heaven. In the evangelist Matthew's account of Jesus' death, we read: "At about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice..." "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

(...) There is no human tragedy or failure within a family that is not contained in the night of the God-Man. With his death he has already paid for everything; he signed a blank cheque capable of containing the sufferings and the sins of every man and woman that was, that is and that will be. He is like a divine grain of wheat that decomposes and dies in order to give us back life. In that terrible experience he also reveals to us what it really means to love: to be capable of giving of oneself completely, to make oneself nothing for the others.

(...) In the face of whatever suffering may come our way, big or small, and in the face of contradictions and problems that have no solutions, let us try to enter within ourselves and look head on at the absurdity, injustice, innocent suffering, humiliation, alienation, or desperation before us. It is here that we will recognize one of the many countenances of the "Man of Sorrows".

(...) These are not dreams. They are the experiences of many families who by recognizing more and more the forsakenness of the God-Man in their daily lives, have transformed their flood of pain into new life. Sometimes the traumas are resolved and families are reunited; but at times they are not: externally the situations may remain as they were, but the pain is illuminated, the anguish is eased and the fracture is overcome.

At times the physical or spiritual suffering lingers on but it acquires meaning when we unite our "passion" to the passion of Christ who continues to redeem and to save the family and all of humanity. And so the burden becomes lighter.

From the address to 19th International Congress for the Family, Lucerne, Switzerland, May 16, 1999