



Working in Perfect Communion

In these times of the coronavirus, often it is no longer possible for us to visit relatives, friends or acquaintances that we know are in need. The media seem to be the only way to express our concrete love. The following text shows us another way in which we can respond.

It is wise to spend the time we have by living God's will to the full in the present moment.

Sometimes, however, we worry about the past or the future. We are concerned about situations or people for whom we cannot do anything at the moment. This is when it becomes difficult to steer the ship of our lives. It takes great effort to keep to the course that God wishes us to have in that particular moment.

At such times we need strong willpower, determination, and especially trust in God, sometimes to a heroic degree.

"Can I do nothing to resolve a certain complex situation or for a dear person who is sick or in danger? Then I will concentrate on doing well what God wants from me in the present: study, homemaking, prayer, taking care of the children ... God will take care of the rest.

He will comfort the suffering and show a way out of that entangled situation".

This way the task is being done by two in perfect communion. It demands from us great faith in God's love for his children. And in turn it gives God a chance to trust that we do our part.



This mutual trust works miracles. We will realize that Another has accomplished what we could not do, and that he has done it far better than we could have.

Then our trust will be rewarded. Our limited life acquires a new dimension: we feel near the infinite for which we yearn. Our faith invigorates and gives our love new strength.

We will know loneliness no longer. Since we have experienced it, we will be more deeply aware of being children of a God, who is a Father and who can do everything.

Chiara Lubich

Taken from: Here and Now, New City Press, 2005

Dear readers,

What will the world and humanity be like after the global crisis caused by the Coronavirus? Right now, many are asking this question. The answer, that Prof. Vincenzo Buonomo, Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University gave during the Link-up CH on March 28 (see. p. 11/12), is quite convincing: "I believe that the world will always be the same; but it is important that during this period we change".

What are we to do? In an article published by "L'Osservatore Romano" of April 3, 2020, Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement, wrote: "The challenge presented to us by this planetary emergency is: not to escape and neither to try and survive only to reach safely our goal. We need

to radicate ourselves well in the present, while we face and accept our personal painful situations and those of others. Through these situations we can encounter 'Jesus Forsaken', and through our love for Him, we can find the strength and creativity to build fraternal relationships of love even in such difficult circumstances".

Hence the threefold invitation: radicate ourselves in the present moment; love Jesus Foresaken in all suffering and build fraternal relationships with creativity! May such a remarkable plan become our best wishes for this Easter Season.

Joachim Schwind
Focolare Communication Office

Emmaus: Nothing can stop us from **loving**

A message from Maria Voce, Focolare President, to the Movement's communities around the world, for 14th March, the anniversary of the death of Chiara Lubich.

Dear All, I am truly happy to send a message to all of you in the world today, the 14th of March, the day Chiara left for Heaven, and during the centenary year of her birth.

Since the year began, we have rejoiced in the great many extraordinary events that have taken place and are still happening around the world. These have generated great interest in the media, both in the person of Chiara and in what the charism has produced in her worldwide family. We can truly say that many people are meeting her!

We would want this celebration to continue, and also the many events, meetings, activities, conferences and communitarian Eucharistic celebrations. However, as we well know, the scenario has changed.

The epidemic caused by the Coronavirus is forcing many countries around the world to take drastic measures to limit contagion. At the moment, isolation and physical distance are the most effective means, together with the ban on any type of meeting or public event; even liturgical celebrations have been prohibited here in Italy!

Fortunately, the news from China, which we have been following with trepidation for weeks, is that the situation is improving; both contagions and deaths are decreasing considerably. But here in Italy and in several other countries around the world, the situation is still very serious.

We are well aware that the Coronavirus is not the only emergency humanity is facing. I am thinking of ongoing conflicts, like the one in Syria, of migrants who have been forced to flee their countries, and of old and new epidemics in some African countries.

Of course, many of us who are living in isolation - I am speaking to you from home right now - are experiencing something completely new. It's because we are made for fellowship and unity, and this can be seen from the fruits of this painful time, which so many of you have told me about. Thank you so much for these. You are the living proof that, even in extreme conditions, no one can take God away from us or prevent us from loving. There are many ways in which we can offer support and comfort, first of all through prayer. Then we can multiply acts of love, through a phone call, a WhatsApp message, an email..., so that no one feels alone: people who are at



home, but also those who are sick and those who are doing their best to heal, console and accompany them; all those who are suffering the consequences of this situation. In short, let's be creative and imaginative. Our Gen, but not only the Gen, are teaching us this with the many experiences they are sharing on social media.

Only in this way, by sharing the loving deeds that we can always do, will we become infected with the antiviral of hope, the antiviral of fraternity.

It will take time: days, maybe weeks or months..., we don't know. Anyway, time will pass. If we live these moments well, they will make us rediscover the strong and living presence of Jesus: in the Gospel that we live, in our neighbour, in Jesus in the midst who, even at a distance, we can keep in our large family. Above all, we will rediscover his presence in suffering that is loved, in which we recognize Jesus Forsaken - "the God of Chiara", as the Bishop of Trent likes to call him. We will also find Chiara in Him and learn to see every situation with her eyes. We too will be able to have the experience Chiara and her companions had. They hardly noticed both the war and the end of the war because they were taken up by God and his love.

The reality they were living was stronger than everything else. Everything began with this new faith in God's love.

Let's set out today being sure that everything is Love and that if we remain united in prayer and love for everyone, we will help to spread hope and raise up the world.

This will be the best way to celebrate Chiara and her Ideal, which is ours.

I am with you all, wherever you are. Ciao!



Jesús: “We are living a **time of grace!**”

Jesús Morán, Co-president of the Focolare Movement, in his homily during the Mass celebrated behind closed doors and transmitted via streaming shared the following thoughts:

(...) In these last few weeks, which have also been during Lent, a thought overwhelmed my soul: the vanity of all things, the insecurity of our ability to deeply understand reality, life and the course of history. In fact, it only took a virus, a non-cellular microorganism, to put in jeopardy all our great reasoning and our security, our economic plans, our political strategies; to trigger panic worldwide and highlight the woes of so-called globalization. As a newspaper headlined a few days ago, using football jargon: Coronavirus 1 – Globalization 0. That is the sad truth.

When thinking about the things that have been written in recent years on the phenomenon of culture in our times, the countless analyses and counter-analyses about the evolution of history and so on, I felt dismay and an almost paralyzing sadness. But it was then that I made a formidable rediscovery: Revelation, the Word of God addressed to humanity in human words and intelligence; the thought of God expressed in human words about the depths of life and history; a breath of understanding. In fact, I think that only the Word of God can provide us with answers for the period we are living in, because it alone preserves an eternal wisdom that goes beyond the times without losing its meaning. In the light of Revelation we realize something as overwhelming as it is paradoxical: that we are living a time of grace.

Wisdom! This is the right solution. This is indeed the time of wisdom, a time for wisdom; a vision of reality that moves on other tracks, which is extremely imperative and indispensable today. (...)

Wisdom that leads to an understanding of reality enlightened by love and that, precisely for this reason, triggers a formidable movement of living as one family. Truly God can do prodigious things, even in the midst of evil. He defeats it with his plan of love. Chiarà's life spanned almost a century and she lived it like a river of wisdom that watered the earth. She was attentive to the events of history and did not stop at what was on the surface of things, but went into depth and looked above to draw on the thought and vision of God and from God. That is why she paid no attention to anything but His Word.

Unity, in fact, is God's plan for humanity; it is the testament of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. Now we can see how much this word, unity, because it is anchored in Revelation, goes beyond the passing events, times and eras of history. It represents a vision of meaning that involves the past, present and future. It is a prophetic perspective that can activate the best energies of men and women of all latitudes, cultures, ethnicities and social conditions. Strengthened in unity we can transform the “globalization of indifference” into the “globalization of fraternity”.

The match is not over. Of one thing we are certain:
God's mercy will triumph.



The daily challenge of **becoming a family**

A couple from Croatia and their experience with the Focolare Movement's "Paths of Light" project.

“Like small children who start learning, we too learned to understand ourselves first, understand feelings, recognize them, understand each other, and learn that thinking differently doesn't always have to end up in conflict. We understood that the couples around us enrich our relationships, and that we need to avoid isolating ourselves.”

Melita and Slavko have been married for close to 20 years and are parents. They live in Croatia. They tell their experience as a couple candidly, without glossing anything over, or omitting those trying moments that made their path a challenge.

Their marriage was a “house” to build every day, often without knowing what tools to use. It wasn't a straight highway to drive with a powerful car, but a dirt road to be covered by bike with only one's legs, lungs and heart as the engine, with tiring climbs and then descents to recover on.

Theirs is a story that perhaps resembles many couples, yet it offers a key to understanding family that should not be overlooked. It came to light when they participated in the Percorsi di luce (“paths of light”) project in Italy, which the Focolare Movement has created for couples, especially those who are going through moments of division.

In one of the darkest moments of their relationship, they explain, it was thanks to meetings like these that they found the tools to “use each day so that our family can be happy and our relationship can grow. The tools facilitate the climb that awaits us all in life as a couple, to realize God's plans for our family.”

Through their words, it becomes clear that the image of the “perfect” couple is a painful illusion. The expectation of a linear and sunny path, nourished by the enthusiasm that follows meeting the “right” person, clashes with the reality of a “game” that everyone must play. In this game the outcome is unknown, your teammate sometimes turns into your opponent and you win only if you both win. It is a game with no written rules, but one that has to be played with a clear goal, or at least, if it fades away, rediscovering that goal. It is a game where everyone is called to contribute and face adversity, without shortcuts.

“Seen from today's perspective,” they say, “we can testify that marriage is not a fixed and static thing, and that a course like this is not a magic wand that solves all our problems forever.” Rather, here “we have learned that our first child — our marriage — needs the greatest care and priority, because only when we are in peace and harmony can we be able to give love to the children and people around us. Only in this way can we become fulfilled as people.”

In fact, their relationship went from feeling already fulfilled straight to the “starting blocks”. Melita tells about their beginnings: “It was a very beautiful time. I finally fulfilled my dream of having a man who could listen to me, console me, understand me. A person with whom to share similar views on life, faith, love. We soon realized that we wanted to crown our love with marriage.”

Soon, however, the first test emerged: the loss of a pregnancy forced Melita and Slavko to review their plans and focus on the practical organization of life, work and home. It was a productive time, where they experienced a growing unity between them and with their respective families. They shared everything, says

Slavko, finding “the strength, the will and the desire for common things”.

“We idealized our lives,” Melita explains, “by completing the tiles in our mosaic and waiting for the family to expand.” After three years came the joy of their first child, but with it also the need to find a less demanding and more rewarding job. Employment for Slavko came, but the new situation produced tensions, misunderstandings, deep wounds in the couple.

“The security we had built up and the trust in each other disappeared,” says Melita. “A period of dissatisfaction in our relationship began, with blame for the mistakes made. Slavko was not aware how dissatisfied I was, and I didn’t know how to make him understand the things that were bothering me.”

“I was content with life, thinking, ‘What more do you want?’” he says. “We love each other, we are married, life goes straight ahead. Why do I continually need to show my fidelity and affection? She’s the one who doesn’t understand that I love her and stand by her.

“I was deaf to her cries and I thought that she was the one who had to change and accept the new circumstances. In us there was a growing feeling of powerlessness and despair. We fell into an abyss from which we did not see a way out.”

The thought of separating went through their minds. They had reached the bottom.

But in that desert, life gradually began to flourish again. “At that moment the Lord sent our godparents and friends on our path, who, like others we had once erased from our lives, sent us directions to follow through them,” Slavko remembers.

By comparing their situation with other couples participating in the project, they finally managed to glimpse a way out. “Facing each other, and before God, we began to understand and know each other again. We learned that having a different opinion does not mean that my partner does not love me; on the contrary, we have learned once again how diversity enriches us – it completes us as a couple.”

Learning, discovering, growing and coming together as a person and as a couple: perhaps this is the unexpected result of an authentic and courageous journey, one that is unpredictable and full of tests, but also satisfying goals.

Melita and Slavko have discovered that God’s plans for them as a couple and their family are not at all predictable, but it requires a determination to love each other. And they have learned that it is through this commitment that they each fulfil themselves as people.

Claudia Di Lorenzi

Gospel lived: **A Conspiracy of love**

My mother-in-law was living alone; then she came to live with us, even though she had daughters who could welcome her. Her presence, very well accepted by my children, was an additional commitment for me, as I already had the family to look after. She suffered of some form of arteriosclerosis, that made her talk to herself without realizing that she was being heard, and she often spoke ill of me. My children laughed at this situation, even though it really hurt me. Was this the thank you for the care I was giving her? One day, when she was down with flu, our conversation at table fell on grandmother’s odd behaviour. My husband was very upset, but together we decided to live “a conspiracy of love”, which meant a greater effort to love grandma more and better. This was one of the most educational and fruitful moments in our family life. The many relatives, who often come to visit grandmother, are amazed at the atmosphere that reigns in our family.
(C.S. – Italy)



Edited by Stefania Tanesini

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United World by 2050?

400 young people, 56 countries, 16 languages, 4 days: WeGENerate!

Last January, myself and Luisa (a friend of mine from Brazil) spoke with 400 Gen (young people of the Focolare Movement) in Trent, Northern Italy. We asked them a question: did they want to be the United World Generation? Did they want to be the generation who will deliver a united world by 2050.

77 years earlier, Chiara Lubich and her friends made a phrase of the Gospel 'that all may be one' (Jn 17:21) the aim and mission of their life. When I was at the International Gen 2 Congress 'WeGENerate' last month, with a group of young people the same age as Chiara was when she said this 'Yes' to the Gospel, I thought for the first time that this Ut Omnes prayer might be a question, rather than a simple statement of prayer.

A question, because, this prayer requires an answer. A question because they are not only nice words to pray, but they challenge the reader to live the answer. A question because 'Ut Omnes' is a questionable subject and it's not 'a given' that it's even possible.

The question that Luisa and I asked last month (do you want to be the United World Generation?) was only, then, a reformulation of the question that Chiara Lubich answered in 1943. We put a date on the end of the question to see if we, the Gen, really wanted to answer this question.

Instead of answering the question with words, the Gen decided to organise. On one of the afternoons, 400 Gen from 56 countries with translation in 16 languages planned local and global actions to fight corruption, lessen inequality, stop climate change, reactivate dialogue and prevent conflict.

We answered this Ut Omnes question by planning advocacy training and global formation activities to

protect democracy, prevent conflict, fight corruption and stop inequality.

We answered this Ut Omnes question by promoting the #CleanPlate, #GreenDay #ClearPlasticJarChallenge and CarPooling campaigns to combat environmental problems.

We answered this Ut Omnes question by imagining platforms and apps to unlock dialogue; by breaking down ignorance and building relationships.

Mark from Syria answered this question by affirming his intention to return to Syria and help rebuild his country. Victor answered this question by challenging himself to be a living realisation of the charism of unity in Venezuela. Joelle answered this question by promising to bring this message of unity and love back to Lebanon. Contexts which are not dissimilar to the context in which Chiara answered this question in 1943.

Many people, like Mark, Joelle and Victor, will make their way to Trent this year to encounter the city that shaped Chiara Lubich.

They will visit the exhibition, they will take the tour of the city, they will encounter a community of people who are living to build unity in that beautiful city. They will travel to Trent hoping to understand the roots of Chiara's story and the story of the Focolare Movement. From my experience at this congress, if you really want to travel to the roots of the story of Chiara Lubich, you need to ask yourself the question that she answered in 1943: that all may be one?

And then ask yourself, do you believe it's possible to be one?

And if yes, what am I going to do about it?

Conleth Burns



Solidarity during the coronavirus...

Practical help, community building and stories of hope from all over the world are spreading the “antivirus” of fraternity.

“It is no longer ‘I’m afraid of catching this virus’ or even ‘I couldn’t care less about catching the virus.’ I need to take care of OTHER PEOPLE. I worry about you. I keep my distance for you. I wash my hands for you. I give up that trip for you. I’m not going to the concert for you. I’m not going to the shopping centre for you. This is an opportunity to turn an emergency into a time of solidarity.”

A young Italian woman from the Focolare Movement posted this message on Facebook. She is appealing for a radical change of mentality and action as her country rises to second place in the world ranking of nations affected by the Coronavirus.

As this virus continues to spread, it is affecting countries across the world in a variety of different ways – health care systems, schools and the economy are in crisis in some areas.

The economist, Luigino Bruni, international coordinator of the Economy of Communion wrote, “Although we understand the concerns of many leading economists at the moment, we believe that the task of “civil enterprises” does not end in merely calculating the damage and in contributing to the spread of alarm. This is the moment to demonstrate that the State is us and that corporate social responsibility is not only a marketing tool but is a genuine practice that is activated especially during times of crisis. It pays attention to common goods (health, work), practices correct communication, formulates concrete and sustainable proposals with an overall vision, initiates practical action in support of the most vulnerable people and enhances a system made up of companies, families, schools, universities, organizations and bodies that become protagonists of a new and indispensable proactive solidarity.”

Bruni referred to a recent example of social responsibility. Mahmoud Ghuniem Loutfi, who works as a delivery man in Turin, Italy, bought masks for the local Red Cross out of gratitude to the city that welcomed him and which has become his home. He did not think about the impact this would have on his finances but asked himself what he could do for his community, and, therefore, also for himself.

Mahmoud’s story is typical of the many examples of cooperation, sharing and solidarity we are seeing at the moment.

Gloria, a young girl who knows the Focolare in Hong Kong explained how technology is helping people to stay in contact. “We try to organize meetings by videoconference so we can stay united during this special period. Also, the fact that we have to spend more time at home with our family means we have the opportunity to understand one another better and share problems more.”

Caritas Lee lives in Ulsan, Korea. He told us about a fundraising activity at his university. “The goal was to raise 500,000 won (€380). Everyone was making small donations but I kept thinking about the 1595 people who had been identified as suffering from the virus at the time. Then a wonderful thing happened: a total of 46 million won (€35,360) was collected. This was donated to the diocesan hospital and the Daegu health district, the region most affected. After this initiative, other universities wanted to raise funds to help the health system. In addition, many volunteers as well as doctors and nurses began to offer their services for free in the hospitals. Another thing is that some landlords are not expecting their tenants to pay their monthly rent and some people are leaving food in front of houses for those who can’t go out.”

Yopi lives right in Daegu. His house is near a hospital



so you can hear ambulance sirens all the time. “At first, when I heard them, I prayed for the patients. Then I started to feel anxious. With the beginning of Lent I decided to pray the rosary every day. Slowly the anxiety has given way to peace in my heart.”

Micaela Mi Hye Jeong wrote from Gumi, also in Korea. “Here we’re preparing 150 masks to be distributed where the need is most urgent. We thought that instead of getting disposable masks that pollute the environment, we could make them ourselves from washable cotton. During a time when we are frozen with fear, it’s as if my heart is beginning to feel warm again because of the opportunity to practically live what the Gospel teaches.”

In Brazil, Armando, an Economy of Communion entrepreneur, has a company that supplies the health sector. “During this period, the cost of masks and disinfectant has risen by up to 500%,” he said. “I asked myself how, in this situation, I could witness to what I believe in and live for? I decided to go against market prices by selling my products at prices 50% (or more) lower than my competitors. What is more, my employees have all supported this policy.”

In Italy, some young people from the Castelli

Romani area have offered to go shopping in local supermarkets and provide free home delivery. “If you are over 70 years of age or have health problems and, as a precaution, you prefer to stay at home, we will take care of your shopping,” the WhatsApp message reads. “Don’t think about shopping, let’s get over this quickly.”

And also in Italy, in Gorgonzola, a small village in the province of Milan which is famous all over the world for cheese, don Paolo, a parish priest, and the mayor went to meet some of the civic leaders in the “red zone”. They took four large pieces of cheese, “a sign of the support our people want to show to all the people living in the surrounding area,” explained don Paolo. He continued, “I think this is a sign of wanting to donate an antivirus, the antivirus of fraternity. (...) We need to be careful not to infect other people but we shouldn’t adopt an attitude of suspicion. Instead, we should do so out of love for one another. Even giving up something or not going somewhere can be an act of love.” This is the time when we can transform an emergency into a “competition” of solidarity.

Lorenzo Russo

Gospel lived: **Baby clothes**

Used to having money, clothes, luxury ever since I was a child, I gradually had to drastically reduce my expenditure after the wedding. A few days ago I received an extra sum of money from work: I immediately thought about our baby that was about to be born and the baby clothes I could buy him.

But then, remembering how many poor people there are in the city, I told myself that the money could be used to help some of them. For the birth of our baby I received loads of second-hand clothes as a gift.

Of course, I would have liked brand new baby clothes, but the things I received out of love were much more valuable and beautiful to me.

(Anita – Venezuela)



*Edited by Stefania Tanesini
(taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno,
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The immense strength of the Italians

Fraternity, tenderness and creativity: the right ingredients to face the coronavirus emergency, with thousands of experiences of love for others Struck particularly hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, Italy is experiencing one of its greatest ordeals since World War II. Despite this, Italians are facing it with countless gestures of solidarity, fraternity and tenderness.

“At the beginning I was afraid of contagion, so I was very quick in my nursing duties,” writes I.V., a nurse in the ward for patients testing positive for Covid-19 in the province of Naples. “A patient asked me for a coffee from the machine. At first I told him I couldn’t. But then, by involving a colleague, we found two coffee machines for all the patients.”

Having to stay at home changed life for Salvo and Enza’s family in Viareggio, with their children Emanuele and Marco. “Until a few days ago,” says Enza, “the children, taken by so many commitments, could barely say a quick hello to their sick and bedridden grandmother. Now they stop more and try to help me, even just by giving her a glass of water. At lunch and dinner we have more time to talk and to laugh, too.”

In Lucca, Paolo and Daniela offered to do the shopping for all their neighbours, and they donated some masks too. Also in Lucca, Rosa and Luigi, a young couple of teachers with two children, all at home at the moment, lent their car to a family with a serious financial situation.

In Siena, Giada and Francesca offered their services as babysitters for the children of nurses living near home to support them. In Pisa, Carla and Giacomo prepared food for some families near home, while in Arezzo there was a race of solidarity between Rosanna, Rita and Mario to support two people who cannot go out, through shopping and preparing meals.

In Latina, in order to support her young colleagues away from home and forced into isolation, Barbara began to record videos to share her recipes. They thanked her very much, because by doing this she makes them feel at home, like family.

Emanuele and Simonetta from Sardinia have been in quarantine for two weeks with their three children. “It immediately seemed to us an opportunity to build deep relationships as a family,” they write. “Since we



came into contact with the virus, we started sharing our experiences in a chat group with other people who are experiencing the same suffering.

“One day some of them needed food. Since we couldn’t do the shopping ourselves, we found another couple who immediately were able to provide. And we realized that we should never give up when faced with someone else’s needs.”

“In my work in the cardiology intensive care unit, I found myself with a young patient who had a complicated heart attack,” says Orsolina, a nurse from Sicily. “In her eyes I saw fear and despair, because she did not have the comfort of her family and small children with her.

“I felt that I could be her family. So I helped her with her personal hygiene, thinking about what I would have wanted if I were in her place – making her bed just right, fixing her hair. Her eyes changed, and we felt a great joy together. At that moment we were a family.”

In Rome, Mascia, Mario and their son Samuel are discovering that “this virus, as well as reminding us that we are all interconnected, is giving us the opportunity to appreciate small things, to put family and affection first, to give free rein to creativity against the frenetic schedules and rhythms we are used to.” As class representative, Masha is looking for the best way to love families and teachers, keeping relationships vibrant through online chats and phone calls.

As Focolare’s co-president, Jesús Morán, said a few days ago: “This is truly a moment of wisdom... It leads to an awareness of reality enlightened by love and... triggers a formidable movement of fraternity.

“Truly God can do exceptional things, even in the midst of evil. He defeats it with his plan of love.”

Lorenzo Russo



Together we can get through this

How the many children who are members of the Focolare Movement are living this moment of global emergency. A new website designed for them goes online.

“We have to stay at home at the moment, but we have a secret to stay happy: loving. So every morning we throw the dice and do what it says”. Gen 4, children who are members of the Focolare Movement, are not giving up. Even in isolation, they start each day with their ‘dice of love’. Each of the six sides bears one point of the ‘art of loving’ and they try to live it during the day.

In some cities, the Gen 4 boys and girls have been busy writing letters and cards offering help to the older residents in their apartment blocks. They’ve drawn their parents into the activity too. “None of our neighbours has actually asked us for practical help,” explained one mother, “but it’s been a great opportunity to get to know each other and they’ve all been calling us to say thank you”.

“What if some of the children here don’t have as many toys as we do?” reflected Niccolò and Margherita, two Italian Gen 4. So they filled a box and left it in the hallway of their apartment block, with a sign saying: “Ciao! We found these toys at home and we’re not using them. You can take them if you like and keep them. Courage!”

While it may be true that “home” in these times is coming to signify “limits”, in Rome the Gen 4 have welcomed a proposal to build their own small houses out of cardboard and fill them with accounts of their acts of love. As the cardboard houses fill up with notes and pictures, the adults confined with them are learning how everyone can fill their home with small acts of love.

The Gen 4 are present all over the world. As the pandemic spreads to all countries, it’s natural for them to feel solidarity with those who are suffering the most. Two Gen 4 in Asia sent a video-greeting with the image of a rainbow, as they called out “Courage Italy!”. Another greeting from Africa encouraged everyone “We can get through this together!”

Alongside the children, Focolare animators are actively accompanying them through this delicate period. From Brazil to Congo, new ideas are springing into action. In Bilbao, Spain, they wrote, “We had the idea of holding meetings for the Gen 4 and their families every week via the web. We share how we are living this new situation, highlighting our acts of love. We encourage each other by promising to pray for peace, for the sick and for all who are suffering”. A group in Portugal is preparing a video about each Sunday’s Gospel reading which they share on social media every week.

Being part of a network is proving valuable at this time. And a new website (<https://gen4.focolare.org/en/>) from the international Gen 4 Centre has just gone online, for children and their educators, offering material and formation programs in the Focolare spirituality, designed for this age group. The timing is significant. On 29 March 1972, Chiara Lubich gave life to the Gen 4, as the youngest generation of the Focolare Movement. A few years later, comparing the whole Movement to a large tree, she defined the Gen 4 as “the buds of the tree. (...) Something so very precious, very precious. It is the very future of the tree”.

Anna Lisa Innocenti



The world **will no longer be the same**

During the *CONFERENCE CALL CH* – on 28 March Stefania Tanesini interviewed professors Amy Uelmen (USA), Luigino Bruni (Italy) and Vincenzo Buonomo (Italy) about their vision of a world after the Coronavirus pandemic. We report excerpts from this interview.

Stefania Tanesini: I'd like to ask you all the same question. "The world will never be the same after this pandemic", this is what people are saying and we're reading them all the time everywhere. Is it really going to be like that? And what does it mean?

Prof. Amy Uelmen, Georgetown University – Washington D.C., USA: So here we have not yet seen the worst. We're really bracing for the most brutal impact especially in New York City. So we really ask for everyone's prayers also for that.

But I think already we're living a very, very strong moment of truth. Our society greatly values individual initiative and freedom to realize creative plans and dreams and this can be wonderful. But the risk of being intently focused on our own pursuits is to become callous or even blind to those with fewer resources who hope to realize they're equally valid dreams. So why should people with resources care about those who don't have health insurance or sick leave or unemployment insurance or protection for those on the margins because they're undocumented? I think this virus gives us a strong clear answer. It brings into focus this image. We are truly one body, deeply connected throughout the world. And if we do not find a way to reframe our political and social life to care for each other's basic needs concretely, then no one can flourish. This is the moment of truth of this virus.

And so you ask, "How will this experience change our world?" I have no illusions that our current levels of political polarization are going to magically disappear.

But I believe that this moment of truth will be seared into our collective psyche. And this profound experience of being physically connected to each other can help make space for much, much deeper reflection on the limits and the possibilities of our current political and social structures. And so in this I find a sense of hope.

Stefania Tanesini: Luigino, you're an economist, so from an economic point of view, what will we be like? What will humanity look like after this pandemic?

Prof. Luigino Bruni, economist, Economy of Communion coordinator: Well, we can't say yet, we have to wait for it to end one way or another. But we can say a few things. First of all that we will have to learn how to live with a level of vulnerability, because if we dream of a world with zero vulnerability, then countries will be closing into a new kind of nationalism, borders will be raised again, and that would be the worst thing that could happen to us. That is, we would lose centuries of integration just to dream of a world with no risks. It's the great theme of the risk factor. In other words, we must learn once again to manage vulnerability and risk in a new way, in a global way, in a totally new way.

And then we will have to get used to short distances again. It has taken us centuries, millennia to learn to shake hands, because we did not do it. We did not touch, embrace one another. In the ancient world we were afraid and suspicious of the other, of the foreigner, of those who came from afar. Well, now when we go out of our house, we'll have to learn to be physically close to people again, because there will be a tendency to stay away, to seek immunity, fearing that the other person is a virus for me and not a friend, a brother or sister. And for us who care about a united world, this is very serious.

What will change in the economy? I don't know, I'm afraid it might change very little, in the sense that it is not



so obvious to people today that this crisis is also a crisis of capitalism. I'm afraid that when we open our front doors again and all go shopping in shopping centres, businesses will absolutely have to produce more, even work harder than before to make up for lost months.

But in these months of this massive experience, the beautiful thing is that we are all together in having the same experiences around the world. This is something that has never happened before in humanity. So we need to grasp this moment because people are listening more.

While you were talking about relational goods, how much are relationships worth now that we are shut in our houses?

So, to conclude, what comes next will also depend on what we do now, that is, what we think, the ideas we have if we have them. Let others hear us, this way we make culture, we create an opinion, because people are now listening much more than they did before the crisis and more than they will afterwards.

Stefania Tanesini: Vincenzo, you are Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University and professor of International Law. So what kind of a world awaits us?

Prof. Vincenzo Buonomo, Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University, professor of International Law – Rome, Italy: I believe that the world will always be the same. I mean, the world ahead of us will be a world that has seasonal cycles, a world with limited resources, a world made up above all of many kinds of diversity. The important thing is that in this period we have changed, meaning that the capacity for change has developed in everyone the ability to respond to new situations.

At the moment many people are almost assailed by the anguish of wanting to think about tomorrow. Tomorrow must certainly be thought about, but thought about in this climate of a change that starts from us and then immediately will have repercussions on the institutions, on the rules.

People are saying that this is a conflict, a war, as if that were something new. In reality, we experience conflicts on a daily basis. This is a different war. At the end of a war, rules have to be rewritten. The rules will have to be rewritten now and above all the values that we share. I believe this is the most important aspect. That is, at this stage we must be able to propose something, not just wait for people to change, but to be active, to propose something.

National and international institutions have shown us that they are only relatively able to respond to problems. Why? Because we are now in a completely new context. If there ever was a need for a further push to reform the UN or to reform the World Health Organization, that time has now come. But now it is up to us to take responsibility, because if we wait for someone else to reform the UN, or reform the World Health Organization we will go on waiting. The risk is that some ruling classes will be worked out in many countries. Let's look at the risk assessment at a global level. What will be the new contribution to come?

Every day I spend time with students in online classes, almost daily. Just this morning I was saying to my students: "Look, your peers who have just graduated in medicine have been sent out to the front lines. You have not been asked to do that, you're studying other subjects, but you too are asked to be ready to take over the helm of an institution, of a country, of a local reality.

Stefania Tanesini: So what is our contribution, the contribution we can make tomorrow, in the near future, when we will go back to normality?

Amy Uelmen: The greatest gift that I can share is the courage to be open about how the crisis has laid bare my own fears and anxieties and my own limits. And so as Luigino was saying, I think it's precisely this kind of vulnerability that we can live in our relationships. On this basis, we can build communities where we can fully receive each other in our reality and be human together and discern the way forward.

Luigino Bruni: In this crisis we have understood how important people really are, because on the one hand there are billions of us in the same situation. And yet we have seen how much one person who does not respect the law can do that is harmful, or can do that is good. And we have also seen what the common good is, because we have seen what the common evil is. To understand we are a body, that we are bound together, and we must not forget that anymore.

Vincenzo Buonomo: Powerful concepts such as the united world, such as sharing and solidarity. These concepts, we must be able to express, for example, through different rules. Now is the time, if we could not do it before. We have an opportunity at all levels: locally and globally.

Collegamento CH, March 2020



Padre Silio Naduva
Isole Fiji
(1967 - 2020)

Fr Silio Naduva: Focolare pioneer in the Fiji islands

He passed away recently at the age of 53. His passions were building bridges between peoples and cultures, and forming the new generations.

Young people were the primary focus of Fr Silio Naduva's work as a priest in the Fiji islands, in the South Pacific. He died recently at the age of 53. He dedicated his profoundest energies to ensuring a human and spiritual formation and education for the youth of one of the most remote islands of the archipelago. He realised that globalisation which brings the world into their homes cannot equip these young people with the knowledge and instruments needed to continue their lives in an informed, free and fruitful way.

He got to know the charism of unity of Chiara Lubich in the late 1990s. What fascinated him was "the capacity of the ideal to create a sense of family, forge union between people, and in particular with the flock the Lord entrusted to him," so described Roberto Paolini, a volunteer member of the Focolare, who collaborated with Fr Silio in a series of formation weeks in his parish of St Anne, at Napuka last summer. "In the spirituality of unity," Roberto continued, "he discovered an incredible driving force" which helped him face moments of great pain and suffering.

Born on 28 February 1967 in Serua province, in the small village of Namuamua in the interior of Fiji's main island, Silio was the seventh of nine brothers. From an early age he demonstrated great generosity, resilience, resourcefulness and a caring nature towards his family members and everyone else. He attended a Marist school and at the age of 17 was conscripted into the Fijian armed forces. Silio was

posted on two missions which involved traumatic experiences, but he never lost his profound sense of humanity.

Only after the death of his father in 1996 did Silio enter the regional Pacific seminary to start his formation. The very next year he met the Focolare Movement. Silio was ordained priest on 1 January 2005, at the age of 37, beginning his ministry in the parish of Vudibasoga, in Nabala. He was diagnosed with a serious illness in 2013, but this did not hold him back in serving and using all his energies for his parish.

In 2018 Silio accompanied a group of young people to the Genfest at Manila in the Philippines. He returned with the ardent desire to encourage his young parishioners to follow this pathway. He guided and educated them, he encouraged them to join him in building bridges towards the youth of other communities, who despite having different cultures and languages, are part of our same family. One of the last things he did was to promote a meeting for youth from his own parish with young people from other parishes nearby, organized last August in collaboration with Focolare and with the local Caritas agency. In such a fragmented community, where the social network is lacerated by poverty and violence, Fr Silio worked to unfold a wider horizon to these youth. He offered them a vision and experience of how living alongside each other can nurture solidarity, and how peoples separated by large distances, by differences in traditions, cultures and language, can meet together in mutual respect and with a shared desire to build real relationships as brothers and sisters of the same family.

Claudia Di Lorenzi



Regina Betz

Ottmaring (Germany)
1921 - 2020

Regina's race came to its end

Regina Betz, a German focolarina, professor of sociology, pioneer of the Focolare Movement in Germany and Russia, who was passionate about ecumenism and fully committed to the Christian renewal of society, passed away on March 17, at the age of 99 years.

Ever since I met her, I have always known her to be a very busy person, yet she never made you feel that she had no time for you. She rather gave one the impression that she had a goal to reach and was reluctant to waste time. When she stopped to have a word with you, she was fully present; her smart lively look and her broad mischievous smile brightened your day.

Regina led a very full life. The elder of two children born into a Catholic family, who lived in Göttingen (Germany), she grew up in area where the majority of the people were Lutherans; so she practised natural ecumenism, strengthened further by the common resistance to Hitler's nationalism. Having spent a few years in Italy during the Second World War, after finishing her studies in Social Economy, she settled in Rome where she worked at the Pontifical Council for the Laity for three years (1955-1958).

During this time she met the Focolare Movement, and when speaking about this encounter in a book (1) she wrote later on, she revealed that she was struck by "a light and a force". Being eager to discover the secret behind all this, she decided to participate in the Mariapolis of 1958. There she met "Christians, who freely chose to live unity" and the model of a "new and human society" and she remarked: "After a long time, I found what I have been looking for and my heart sang a song of great joy".

When Regina returned to Germany, where the Focolare Movement was not yet present, she continued

to work for the Church and made important trips to Asia and South America. In 1966 she was among the volunteers of the Focolare Movement, and she was invited to teach sociology at the formation school in Loppiano (Italy). There, at the age of 46 she felt the call to be a consecrated member of the Focolare.

From '68 to '90, Regina was a professor of sociology in Regensburg (Germany) and a collaborator of the "Institute for Eastern Churches". She had the opportunity to meet Christians from Eastern Europe and to travel to various countries in the Balkans, to Bulgaria and Romania. She was particularly impressed by the enthusiastic behaviour of young communists and their concern for the lower class.

In 1989 she was offered academic work in Moscow, and thus the first Focolare was opened there. She related: "Life in Moscow turned out to be a life of togetherness: together in the focolare, together with so many Russians who came to know our way of life. I discovered the great generosity and cordiality of the Russian people, and experienced great hospitality and sharing. No structures, but many friends".

Life around the Focolare flourished; however this happened at a price. Confiding to me personally, Regina expressed her wish that the "dark" part of her life would also be communicated after her death. In a diary of that period she wrote: "I have nothing more to give, but it is consoling to know that He is with me in this emptiness ... I feel exhausted all the time, I am afraid and I feel that I cannot manage to conclude anything anymore".

When Regina returned to Germany in 2008, she went to the small Ecumenical town of Ottmaring. The years she spent there were marked by the relationships she

established with so many different people; she kept these relationships alive through visits and through thousands of handwritten letters, full of wisdom. She followed the events of the Church and society with attention and participation.

In spite of her fragility, she remained faithful to the personal Word of Life she received from Chiara Lubich, which said: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:25). "Many times I had to leave everything and

go to start all over again somewhere else! But what a lot I have gained from this: so many experiences, so much knowledge about the life and culture of people in different countries, so many relationships with a countless number people!"

On March 17, Regina Betz ended her race; she definitely left everything. I'm sure she discovered an unimaginable life.

Joachim Schwind

1) *Regina Betz, Immer im Aufbruch, immer getragen, Verlag Neue Stadt, München 2014.*

Gospel lived

The hundredfold



I live in a small town, where there are only a few shops, and you don't always find what you need. One morning a poor, sick neighbour of mine knocked at my door and with a big smile on her face asked for some cooking oil. I needed the little I had for my own cooking, but I felt that I had to give it all to her. When I came to prepare lunch, I realized that I had to make do without oil, but I was happy. I was just going to handle the pot when someone knocked at my door. It was a nun; I have not seen her for quite some time because she lives far away. When I opened, she told me: "Come, I've something for you in the car." And she gave me three boxes full of oil containers: a total of 54 litres. (G.V. – Burundi)

The stolen tablecloths

I work as a cashier in a restaurant and I have no qualms about asking for leftovers from the kitchen to take to the children who live on the street. I always meet so many on my way home every day. One day, as I was getting off the bus, someone snatched my bag from my hands and ran off! I was stunned: the bag contained ten tablecloths from the restaurant which I had just picked up from the launderette. What was I to do? How was I going to tell my employer? Buying fabric to make new ones was out of the question because I couldn't afford it. I didn't know how I was going to tell

my mother or the restaurant manager, but I was sure the Eternal Father would help me. The following day I told my employer what happened to me and, without getting upset, he tells me he wants new tablecloths as soon as possible. Just at that moment, a customer who had overheard our conversation approached us and said he was willing to buy the fabric needed to make new ones. I couldn't believe it! I was so happy and immediately thought of the children I would still be able to help with the food.

D.F. - Philippines

Edited by Stefania Tanesini (taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, anno VI, n.2, march-april 2020)

Members of the Movement who have concluded their earthly life:

22 February 2020

Olga Chudová, married focolarina from Slovak Republic

26 February 2020

Hans Müller, married focolarino from Germany

07 March 2020

Antonio Giuseppe Manconi, priest focolarino from Italy

09 March 2020

Cesare Bazzan, focolarino from Italy

15 March 2020

Paolo Rocher, focolarino from Italy

17 March 2020

Regina Betz, focolarina from Germany

20 March 2020

Renzo Schienoni, married focolarino from Italy

25 March 2020

Fiorenzo Vittone, priest focolarino from Italy

04 April 2020

Josef Viert, priest focolarino from Germany

04 April 2020

Lori Maria Bergozz, focolarina from Italy

07 April 2020

Lalla Lucarini, married focolarina from Italy

13 April 2020

Franco Guardigni, priest focolarino from Italy

13 April 2020

Father Ermanno Rossi (O.P.), from Italy

15 April 2020

Silvano Gianti, focolarino from Italy



Contributions to the Mariapolis newsletter:

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The editorial staff

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