

(English translation)

Rome, 1977

## **Chiara Lubich Answers: What is a Focolare?**

### **The Focolare centres are at the heart of the Movement you founded. What is a Focolare?**

A Focolare is a modern community made up of a small number of people who live in the midst of the world and who do not distinguish themselves from others in the way they dress and they work. But they have left the world, their countries, their families, their careers, to give themselves to the cause of unity in the world.

The Focolare is also open to married people if they feel within themselves a desire for a total commitment. They are asked to be spiritually detached from all things even if they remain in their family.

The life of the Focolare is guided by a rule which sprang from life and can be applied to all circumstances. But the norm of norms, the basis of our life, is the constant, mutual charity that must always circulate among the members of the Movement. This charity makes Christ present among them as much as this is humanly possible. This is the Focolare, for without Jesus among its members, a centre can no longer be called a Focolare.

And what is the result of this? The result is an unbelievable asceticism because those who live in the Focolare must always be ready to die for one another, to carry one another's burdens, to carry one another's worries, to share one another's joy.

The Focolare also brings about a modern communitarian mysticism. It is Christ, present among the members, who guides them in what they have to do, in the actions they must carry out. The life of the Focolare, therefore, is contemplation and action at the same time. In other words, the Focolare is a little piece of "living Church", the Focolare, if it is what it should be, is paradise on earth.

### **This joy that one sees on the faces of the people in the Movement where does it come from?**

It comes from having centred on the will of Jesus. There is only one way to follow him and he said it, "Whoever wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."

To deny ourselves is already suffering, to take up the cross is already suffering. There is only one way to follow Jesus, and the members of the Movement want to follow him: it is to love suffering. You might say, "It's not human." No, it's not. It's superhuman because it's supernatural.

So when the members of the Movement experience joy, they are already joyful. When they are suffering, they change, as through a divine alchemy, the suffering into love, and so they are always joyful.

Chiara Lubich

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