

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 5 May 1981

The Will of God According to the Spirituality of the Focolare Movement

Chiara Lubich to an Ecumenical Meeting (*Part 2*)

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We would look at Jesus. We wanted to imitate Him, not so much in an exterior way, as for example, in the scourging or in going without a haversack, etc., but we wanted to do, as He had done, the will of God.

The saints were also viewed by us in this way, from this perspective. They were not to be imitated blindly - the saint did it like that, I too must do it like that - no! We had to do, as they had always done, the will of God. And how different these saints were from one another, but how identical they were in having all done the will of God!

For us, I remember, in that period, to do the will of God was all our Ideal! All! Yes, there was the consecration to God - some consecrated themselves to God, others no - and it was important, but the will of God was more important. To do God's will was the norm that bound all of us in one brotherhood among ourselves, with Jesus and as children with the Father.

And who expressed God's will for us?

We found it above all, in the new-born spirituality which was developing. Quite soon we understood that there was a special will of God which was particularly pleasing to Jesus, which was the new commandment for new times.

It was the will of God for us to put into practice above all, that command, "Love one another as I have loved you." And it was in seeking to carry out this command which was God's will, that we made a pact among us focolarini. We, first focolarine, looking at one another - as you know - we said to one another, "I am ready to die for you; I for you...I for you, I for you ...the will of God. All for each one.

Also our love for Jesus Crucified and Forsaken (that is, for Jesus in His greatest suffering when He cries, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") was in function of that commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you." We had to love one another as Jesus had loved us, with that measure.

It was the living out of this new commandment that fully brought about the unity that Jesus wanted, enabling us to have Jesus in our midst. ... It was in order to put this command into practice that we lived all the other words of the Gospel. God had focused our attention on the New Commandment. And in so doing - we realize this more and more - God had revealed to us the very heart of Christianity.

But also God's "commandments" showed us God's will. It was also expressed by the precepts of the Church, by our superiors, for example, by the demands of our state in life, and by the signs of the times. Even civil laws were God's will for us, as well as the various circumstances, whether they were joyful, sorrowful or indifferent.

We had a kind of compass for determining God's will: it was "the voice" within us, the voice of the Spirit. "Listen to that voice!" was one of our exhortations. We got used to listening to "that voice" in order to truly know God's will.

Later on we understood one of the reasons why God had founded the focolare.- which can be lived everywhere - also in the family, in the convent, everywhere. In focolare, we are, so to say, between two fires. Jesus within us and Jesus in our midst. And we feel that Jesus in our midst is like a loud-speaker that amplifies the voice of Jesus within us and it makes us better discover God's will for us. And this is also Saint Paul's idea, who says that in order to understand God's will, it is well to be part of a Christian community where Jesus is present. (see Phil 1: 9-10).

At the beginning of the Movement, we could have lost our lives from one moment to the next, because we were not safely sheltered from the bombings. So having asked ourselves: when must we do the will of God? The answer was immediately clear: now, in the present, because you don't know if you have a future, because you can die from one moment to the next.

Only the present moment was in our hands. The past was already gone, and we didn't know about the future, so we had to concentrate on the present. By living the present also the future would become the present at a certain point, and we would arrive at the end of our lives like this. We would use the example of the train. Just as a traveller would not think of moving forward through the cars so as to get to his destination sooner, but remains seated, so we should remain in the present. The train of time moves ahead on its own, and it brings us to the moment upon which eternity depends. And living the present, one moment after the next, we would arrive.

And this is what is so marvellous: we can live it now too - this is wonderful; because even now we can love God with all our heart - this is wonderful. And this is what is so marvellous: by loving the will of God in the present, now, with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength ... in every moment of our life, we would always be able to love God by doing his will - to love Him, which is the explanation of our life. How do we love Him? How? Do the will of God in the present moment... with all your heart, all your soul-and you will love God with all your heart - all your soul: it's fantastic! Don't you agree that it's wonderful? (Applause)

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To depict our Ideal, we always had before us the image of the sun with its rays. Each one of us, in life, one moment after the next, had to walk along a ray, distinct from our neighbours' ray - because God's will for me is not like his, not like hers - but always along a ray of the sun, that is, God's will. All of us therefore did only one will: God's will, but it was different for each one: in this way each one felt - because of the one will that bound us to one another, one also with Jesus and one with the Father and one with their neighbour.

And as the rays are of the sun - the rays are of the sun, but are also one with the sun, they are sun, similarly - we noticed that the will of God coincided with God: by loving his will, we truly loved God.

We had to walk along that ray always, to be enlightened by it always, to remain constantly in God's will in the present moment. And to succeed in doing this, at times, we had to use violence: to silence our will and take hold of God's, which after all, was His love for us.

And once we had become stable in His divine will for a certain period of time, we noticed that the Lord's yoke was light and easy. So everything changed in our life. For example, our relationships. Before we would go to people we liked, and we shunned those we didn't like. Now instead, we approached everyone God wanted and we loved them as He wanted and we stayed with them as long as He wanted.

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In the present moment we could not do two things, but only one: we could do only one, and we found ourselves with all this spiritual gain. And when we realized that we had wandered off for a few moments outside of God's will and we used to say - "going off our ray" - into the darkness, permitting our old self to live within us, the only way to improve was to immediately start doing the will of God in the following moment, for since we had not loved God before, we had to love him now.

In this way we were weaving day by day - but I would say moment by moment, a magnificent embroidery. The moments in which we lived "outside of our ray" were recuperated by God's mercy in which we trusted completely: to us they appeared like many knots, from underneath the embroidery. ... But this was only from a human point of view, to see the knots. Convinced that God's mercy would have filled every emptiness and mended every tear, we were certain that the embroidery, right side up, as seen by God, would have turned out to be perfect; because either God lived in us or mercy filled the empty spots - therefore the embroidery was perfect.

(Applause)

And our life would appear in heaven like one of the many marvellous stories of a child of God.

We were attracted at that time by what we read in St. Francis of Sales, who, looking to the future, with the prophetic spirit of saints, had stated something more or less like this: "True Christians will carry a new name impressed on their hearts: 'I am God's will for me.'" (Applause) It's splendid!

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