

Rocca di Papa, June 4, 1987

**The Marian spirituality of the Focolare Movement**

*From an interview with Chiara Lubich on Vatican Radio – for a Brazilian radio programme directed by Tavares Manoel: how can one live a Marian spirituality?*

**Question:** Chiara, in what way does Mary help Christians, especially the youth, to fully respond to their vocation?

**Chiara:** One of the problems today for Christians, which means all lay people, is that they don't know how to reconcile their spiritual life with life in the midst of the world, with being in the midst of the world. And so they don't feel the call to holiness – as it says here. They don't feel it because maybe no one has ever told them about it, has ever explained it to them, or maybe because they don't see it as possible, outside of the convent, outside of a particular environment, to reach their sanctification. Often they have few models before them, so they say: "Fine, sanctity is fine for those who have consecrated their lives to God, its fine for friars, for nuns, but for us..." They question this.

By saying, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord may it be done to me according to your word," according to the word of God; "may it be done to me," Mary highlights something that is very important: doing the will of God.

Now all Christians need to convince themselves that in order to become holy they don't need to look so much at other saints, for example, at those who scourged themselves all their life, or at those who said many prayers all their life, or at those who fasted all their life. Rather, they need to do something else that the saints did, the will of God.

If Christians understand this and they understand it from Mary, they will find the way to reconcile these two things which seem to be opposites: spiritual life on one hand, and being immersed in the world: in the world of the family, of politics, the arts, sciences and culture. Because there, they can carry out the will of God, and by doing it well in the present moment, with all their heart, soul and strength, they are loving God, they are loving their neighbours, and by loving God and their neighbours, they become saints. So they fully respond to their vocation by looking at Mary and at this particular aspect of her life.

**Question:** Now a very personal question, perhaps representing all the youth of the world: Could you, during this Marian Year, launch a message to all the youth of the world?

**Chiara:** We are now beginning the Marian Year with much enthusiasm, with much joy and happiness, I would say, in our soul because, needless to say, for us Catholics, Mary is who she is; she is in our heart, in our veins. We are beginning this year and we would like to do all we can to honour her in the best possible way, to praise her, to glorify her.

There are many ways of doing this: we can paint pictures of her, as in the painting that we have here in front of us; we can sing to her, we can go to visit her in shrines, we can go to basilicas, we can bring flowers to her altars; we can do many things for Mary.

But there is one thing that I believe she likes more than all the others and that we can all do, especially young people. That is to imitate her.

Now Mary can be imitated in many respects. I said before: in doing the will of God, in living the word of God, in many ways. But if we look at who Mary really is, she is the "Theotokos," the

Mother of God, and she is also our mother. She became our mother in John, when Jesus entrusted her to him. She became our mother, so she is the Mother par excellence.

This is why she embraces all humanity, not only Catholics, but also Christians of various Churches, also people of different religions and people without religious beliefs. Perhaps she is not loved in return by these people, but she loves everyone, because wherever the Redemption of Christ has reached, the spiritual motherhood of Mary is there too.

Now, it would be wonderful for us to decide in our hearts this year to imitate her by acting towards all the people we meet during the day as she would; that is, acting as mothers, as fathers.

We would see that our relations with everyone would change radically, because a mother is always ready to forgive, to cover over everything, to hope in everything. It doesn't matter to her that her son might be a delinquent or bad, or a terrorist. She is always ready to help him.

A mother's love is very similar to the charity of Christ, the charity that St. Paul spoke about, which covers over everything, hopes everything, believes everything....

If we act in this way we will be fully in line with the Gospel which asks us to love and to love one another. This is the heart of the Gospel.

So by living Mary we will be living the Gospel, by living the Gospel, we will be living as another Christ. And it seems to me that this could be the best way to honour Mary during this Marian Year.