

Marino, December 5, 1990

The taboo of death*(From an interview of Margaret Coen with Chiara Lubich)*

There are two things which I think are important for today's world. First, relationships, the problem of building relationships and secondly, the great taboo of death. What can you tell me about these two things?

Chiara: A lot is said these days about relationships. Everything is invested in relationships and how to build a good relationship.

I would say that if there is to be a good human relationship, a friendship, something which is to be envied, there must necessarily be a certain amount of sacrifice. Nothing is achieved without sacrifice. Everything we create in this world, even something purely human calls for effort, commitment and sacrifice.

And then if you go on to a higher level in terms of the supernatural relationships I have been describing, the relationship of loving others.... What do I mean? I mean making yourself really one with others, entering their world, understanding them, suffering with them, identifying yourself with them, enjoying their joys, making yourself one with them in everything but sin, of course, but in everything else. They want to go for a walk, so go for a walk. Even if you don't really want to, go just the same, become one with them.

They will see this and will become aware of something which isn't just human in your love. They will be touched by it - at some point they will be touched by it. There are hundreds, hundreds of thousands of examples of this. Then the others will begin to act like you because in the end happiness is found in loving, happiness is found in forgetting ourselves. This is what people are looking for but they don't know that they can find it in charity, in the charity Jesus brought on earth.

As for death, sometimes I've been asked if I'm afraid of death. There have been times when I have been afraid of death but right now in this period, thanks be to God, I'm not afraid of it - I'm not really quite sure why - perhaps it's because some things have become very clear to me, and perhaps, also because death is something I've thought about throughout my life.

Even though we have a lot of work to do during our lives. St. Theresa says that our lives here are an exile. Yes, an exile, but at the same time, very much a hard working exile. We have much to do, many to help, we cannot sit back... the word "development" is a very Christian word. But death doesn't frighten me. It's clear to me that death is something which is seen by those who stand on this side of the person who is dying, because we see the dying. The person who dies sees life, because death is the meeting with Christ. So it's as if you close your eyes, that is if you have time to close them... or rather they were open here, and then you open them there, on the other side. You see Christ who has saved you, who loved you and who is, of course, your judge.

So if during your life you've tried to do something for Him, in that moment He comes to meet you with all His benevolence. If you think like this, then at a certain point you're no longer afraid of death.

On the other hand, I am afraid of all the suffering which can precede death, and the terror that there might be extreme pain as I have observed in many people, and that I might not be able to stand it and that I'll cry out... but even here, the one who consoles me is the Christ I have followed, Jesus crucified and forsaken who also cried out: "My God, my God..." and so He will put up with my cries, He will bear with my groaning. I don't think He expects us to smile in certain moments.