

(Transcription)

Rocca di Papa, 6 November 1996

Message for the 40th Anniversary of the Birth of the “Volunteers”

To all of you who are gathered in Budapest to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the birth of the “volunteers,” I send my most cordial greetings.

It is not by chance that you chose Budapest, the capital of Hungary, as the headquarters of this important meeting. This nation lit the first spark of that reality - one of the most flourishing branches of the Focolare Movement - which would soon burst into flames in Italy, in Europe and all over the world.

It was our answer to that longing for freedom, suppressed in blood by those who wanted to uproot God from society and from the hearts of men and women.

It was also our echo to the heartfelt appeal which Pope Pius XII launched to the world on that occasion: “God! May this name, source of every right, of every justice, of every freedom, resound in parliaments, on city streets, in homes and workshops....”

It was then that women and men of all ages, nationalities, races and conditions, linked by the bond of mutual love, united in order to form an army of volunteers: “the volunteers of God.”

You know the story or it will be told to you during these days. Perhaps there are some among you who lived “that story” personally.

“Volunteers,” your vocation is splendid!

Following the example of the first Christians, as free persons, out of love you made yourselves slaves of Jesus, who awaits your witness in the world, precisely there where He is not known or not loved.

You are “volunteers of God,” therefore nothing is impossible for you because He is with you. Take advantage of this circumstance to ask Him and yourselves for great things. Ask Him to be able to continue unleashing, through your life, that evangelical revolution based on love, which the world awaits.

And do not look upon your vocation only as something spiritual and individual.

The spirituality of unity already makes you open to your brothers and sisters! But you are called to bring into the structures of society around you, the divine leaven that can make humanity new in its various worlds, in the world of the family and in the ecclesial world.

Let whoever is not prevented from doing so because of age or other reasons, launch themselves then in this splendid lay vocation, for it is entrusted specifically to the laity. Ask God that this world may change also through you and do not be satisfied until you notice in it lasting fruits.

All of us in the Movement are with you on this anniversary in remembering, in making proposals, and in launching ourselves.

Just as Mary assumed into heaven with her body brought creation into heaven, you too, do not long to enter heaven without a renewed world.

Hurrah for the men and women volunteers, pillars of the Work of God in its most beautiful expressions!

I am with you,

Chiara
(Chiara Lubich)