

Vatican Radio, 10th September 1997

Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Chiara Lubich: two women in dialogue

Speaker: Two women in dialogue: Mother Teresa and Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement.

Their first conversation took place in 1978. Then, over the years, there were other meetings and many letters. The dialogue between the two women best known in the Catholic Church was very deep, focused on their shared choice of God which was fulfilled in concrete works of different types.

What most impressed Chiara Lubich about Mother Teresa? Let's hear what she said to Adriana Masotti.

Chiara: I remember the first time I met her I was very struck by her determination. You could see she was someone who wanted to fulfil the mission God had given her right to the end. Another thing that struck me on other occasions was her simplicity, her constant union with God. And I was struck very much, especially now in these last few days, by her daily heroism.

Adriana Masotti: Is there something in particular about Mother Teresa you would like to mention?

Chiara: Perhaps the best thing I remember was when we met for the last time. It was in New York. She was very ill in bed and had terrible back pain. The marvellous thing was that they had said I could stay a very short time, but I stayed 20 minutes. It was almost as though Mother Teresa were saying the Magnificat, because she told me about her Work, the 50,000 dying people who had been helped, as she said, into Heaven; and then the vow she made to help the poorest of the poor. She held my hand and was so zealous and so happy and full of joy. At the end we hugged and I left her.

Adriana Masotti: Mother Teresa and Chiara Lubich: two founders of works in the Church that are very well known today. What was the focus of a dialogue among two such people?

Chiara: This is how it was. Already the first time we met she wanted to know something about our Movement. I said just a few words and she answered, "What you are doing, I cannot do. What I am doing, you cannot do". Then, whenever we met, she always said those words. Both of us had been entrusted something by God, so we understood one another very well. She wrote to me often and the essence of what she said was, "Chiara, become holy because God is holy". So I realised this was what she was always tending towards.

Adriana Masotti: Today the world is in special need of reference points. Why is it, in your view, that Mother Teresa managed to attract so much esteem and be well thought of not only by believers but also by atheists and those indifferent to religion?

Chiara: I think the main thing about Mother Teresa was the presence of God in her. She never betrayed him. She always bore witness to him. She always affirmed her union with the Church of Christ. She never stooped to half measures. But what attracts young people most of all is the heroism she showed in her life, because out of the Gospel she took the role of Jesus himself, who worked, I would say, the miracles of healing and raised people from the dead... Just as Jesus bore witness to his divinity by working miracles and healing, Mother Teresa and her sisters, through the great and heroic things she witnessed to, will continue to bear witness to the divinity of that Work.

Adriana Masotti: Mother Teresa was always called "Mother" by everyone. In your view did

Mother Teresa fulfil what the Pope calls “feminine genius” in the way she developed her Work?

Chiara: Yes, of course, because in my view feminine genius lies in what was characteristic of Mary. She had not been endowed with a ministry and so on; she was endowed with love, with charity, which is the greatest gift, the greatest gift that comes from heaven. That is how Mother Teresa was.