

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 18 February 2004

Fr. Luca Pellegrini of CTV (Vatican Television Center) interviews Chiara Lubich

Journalist: The Holy Father describes the men and women focolarini as apostles of dialogue: dialogue between Christians and Christian churches, dialogue with other religions, dialogue with those who do not believe in Christ or perhaps even in nothing, and let's not forget the dialogue within the Church because that is also important. But Chiara, how can we dialogue in a world as it is today?

Chiara: Look, I'll explain what we do and how we are able to dialogue, and how we are able to do it all over the world because we are spread everywhere.

We have learned to live the Gospel; the essence is evangelical love. It is quite a special love, it's not the love that the world speaks of. It makes you love everyone, everyone. It makes you love always having the initiative: being the first to love and it makes you love in a practical and not in a sentimental manner.

The focolarini in the world are now in contact with Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, as I had done some time ago. And we love everyone as if they were, already were our brothers and sisters. They feel that there's something new in our relationship and they say, "But who is making you do this? What is behind this?" So we say to them, for example, in this dialogue, it would be the third dialogue with other religions: "I have learned to love, to love all my neighbours. But isn't it perhaps also true that it's written in your doctrine: 'Do not do unto others what you do not want done to you?' And this is a sentence that is present in all the major holy books. ... So you're also called to love." And they say, "Yes." "So let's love one another, in this way we're friends and let us build brotherhood among us."

And that is when this friendship begins and then little by little ... the dialogue. ... We have portions of humanity, for example in India, Thailand, Japan or in North America, portions of humanity where brotherhood truly reigns, so much so that we say, "If the whole world were like this, peace would be assured."

Journalist: Chiara, you felt – let's say – you sensed the need to found the Movement in 1943 and they were difficult years for humanity. They were terrible years; all the tragedies that we passed through during those years were discovered later. Was there a relationship between what you were living at that time and also the prophetic need to begin a journey that would lead humanity to consider their fellows as brothers and sisters?

Chiara: I think that there was in Heaven, we were not aware of it. We were a few girls and we saw that everything was crumbling under the bombs. To give you an example, I wanted to continue my university studies in Venice, but the war hindered me ... That was my ideal, philosophy, right? Another friend wanted to decorate a nice house, she already had a beautiful house but it was destroyed and so she no longer had it ... Another wanted to get married but her fiancé never came back. And among us girls, we thought: "How come all our ideals - we were young, very young - how come all our ideals crumble? Is there an ideal that does not pass away?" And there, perhaps because of that charism that God gave us, I felt deep in my heart: yes, there is this Ideal: God.

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I think there is a link between our Movement and the external circumstances, because they were circumstances of hatred. War is the result of hatred, instead through the Movement God made us discover love, the love that is in God.

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There we said, well, if God is love, then we must do our part; we, in turn, must love him. And how can we love him?

We would always go to the air-raid shelters even 11 times a day because the war was terrible. We could not bring anything with us except for a little Gospel. And we said, "Here, we find the way to love God ourselves." And we began word for word, determined to live it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." "Give and you shall receive." "Whatever you did to the least, you did it to me." And then every so often, for I don't know, perhaps two or three days, we would live one word more profoundly ... And the evangelical revolution, who does so in the world? Who loves their neighbors? Who believes that they will obtain, who...? And others around us saw that we were always happy amidst the war. They asked, "What's going on? What do you have?" And we shared our ... adventure. Indeed the Lord answered all that we asked him. I don't know, if we asked for ... something, he would send it to us, it would arrive amidst the war... I remember that we had a corridor filled with bags of flour, jam, milk powder which we then brought to all the needy because we had learned to love the poor. We saw that the promises of Jesus were true. For example he said: "Give and you shall receive." They came to our door in the small center where we were staying, a poor man would ask. Perhaps we had only an apple, but we gave this apple and behold, that same day a bag of apples arrived. We gave away even that bag of apples and in the evening a suitcase full of apples arrived.

So, the Gospel with the promises of Jesus were true. We shared these stories to people and after two months we were already 500.

I remember there were men religious, nuns, but especially lay people. We were many lay people, entire families, fathers, mothers, children ... all 500 of us lived this evangelical revolution which then became this Movement: spreading the revolution of the Gospel in the world.

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Journalist: Chiara, in our present time, this period we're living now, I repeat, this tragic reality also for us with all the anxieties, violence, with all – I'll use a strong word – but also the obscenities of the world, what do you think is the most timely promise of Jesus for us today?

Chiara: His testament when he prayed, "Father, that all may be one." There is also terrorism now, among other things, which is terrible and we know that it's caused by many factors. One of these is the gap between the rich and the poor, rich countries and poor countries. And this is what should be solved, but it can be resolved ... Goods do not walk on their own. We need to change people's hearts, change the hearts and put in them love of neighbor, love one another, being united as Jesus wants, have Christ in our midst so as to have unity; and then also goods will circulate. And we could really reach the point of at least healing this which is one of the main causes of terrorism, even all the rest, also of obscenities ... then in the Gospel we also have all the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart..." Everything is in the Gospel! Everything's there. We have derived from the Gospel ... also our faith in the Pope, our faith in the bishops, our faith in the Church; we have drawn it from the Gospel. We had learned it since we were small, but there, through the charism, it was, so to speak, a whole new revelation.

Journalist: What is your greatest concern regarding the world today?

Chiara: Nothing. All because I see the evil that exists, and it's also nothing because I know where to find resources, how to go against these evils, and it is so for my friends and all those who are with us ...

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Journalist: What is the most beautiful gift that Jesus has given you in your life?

Chiara: The Eucharist, because it is he himself who is with us. He remained with us on all the points of the earth. He did it because he was just in one place in Palestine. He thought that in leaving, it would be better that he stay among everyone, so he remained throughout the earth.

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