

Bern, 11 August 2002

**Chiara on the Feast Day of St. Clare:
“The Mirror – The Mirrors”**

Dear everyone, today we celebrate the feast day of St. Clare of Assisi 2002, which from the beginning of our Movement – from 1943-1944 – has always been commemorated, wherever the Movement is present around the world.

This year for the first time, thanks to the modern means of communication, the many smaller celebrations around the world become one. I learned that the news of this event brought great joy everywhere. I understood from the faxes that everyone is really enthusiastic about this.

Festive greetings then to the approximately 1,400 people present here in Bern, and to all those who are connected with us; a truly planetary embrace, and our very best wishes to all those who are named Clare, Chiaretto, etc.

Today, as in other years, we remember St. Clare of Assisi and we'll compare a detail of her journey towards God with our journey. It's always interesting, especially now that we are building this communion with the charisms born in past centuries, it's very interesting.

One concept that regards this saint, and that we have not yet emphasized, is one we could express in this manner: “The mirror, the mirrors.”

It is the image of the mirror which calls to mind precisely what St. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians: “All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever-greater degree of glory” (2 Cor 3:18).

In her letters to Agnes of Prague (which wasn't Clare's blood sister but a spiritual sister), which are part of several writings in which she speaks of her need to be radically faithful to the Gospel, Clare – in these letters to Agnes – invites the sisters to look at Jesus as if they were looking in a mirror, a mirror that in its humanity reflects back divinity.

She wrote to Agnes: “Fix your eyes on the mirror of eternity, (Jesus)... and be totally transformed in the image of his divinity.” (FF 2888)

“And since this vision of him is... a spotless mirror, bring your soul to this mirror every day and constantly search out your own face there so that you may be adorned ... with all the virtues as it should be for you as that daughter and beloved spouse of the high King.” (FF2902)

Saint Clare was inviting Agnes to look to the Spouse and also to imitate him, making the same choices he made, his same actions, his same gestures.

“If you suffer with him,” she continues, “with him you will reign; if you weep with him, with him you will rejoice; if you die on the cross of tribulation in his company, with him you will possess... for all eternity, the glory of the heavenly kingdom...; you will participate in the eternal goods... and you will live for all ages to come.” (FF2880)

By imitating him Agnes becomes that Jesus in the mirror. But then, having become such, she can in turn be a mirror for the sisters.

St. Clare says that this is how one creates an uninterrupted chain of mirrors from Jesus to the world. Of course, the first one to be was illuminated was Francis. So she says:

Jesus is the mirror of Francis.

Jesus and Francis are the mirrors of Clare.

Jesus, Francis and Clare are the mirrors of Agnes.

Jesus, Francis, Clare and Agnes are the mirrors for the first sisters who, in turn, become mirrors for the future ones.

The future sisters, looking at the first sisters, become the mirrors for those who live in the world.

Those who live in the world become mirrors of Jesus for everyone.
(Applause)

Thus, by perfectly reflecting Christ, Francis and Clare, the first friars and the first sisters, have given birth to the Franciscan Movement: one of those ecclesial realities that from time to time bring back into the Church the Gospel lived in a radical way, to give it new life, to renew it, to reform it.

Dear Everyone – I look up above thinking it will help me to see those who are far away – for us too, even though we are small and unworthy, we too have been invested with a similar task: to give life, to develop, to spread in the world a charismatic reality. It has happened to us too to perform a duty which is to live and help others to integrally and radically live the Gospel, looking at Jesus as if in a mirror.

The very first notes we have about our Ideal of life at its onset, affirm: “We need to be another Jesus.” Therefore, we are asked to mirror ourselves in him.

To achieve this we see that Saint Francis and Saint Clare were given a charism, that of poverty by the Holy Spirit. We have been given the charism of unity.

And it is precisely through unity that we can be another Jesus, be Jesus. Remember that the definition of unity given in a letter written back in 1947: “Oh, unity, unity, what divine beauty! We have no words to describe it: it is Jesus.” Yes, it is Jesus. So then we began to understand that by loving one another, we would accomplish unity and Jesus would be in our midst... and in each one of us.

To live unity was and is synonymous with living Jesus, and in this way the whole Gospel, because Jesus is the whole Gospel.

One day a small but significant light along our journey clarified this new aspect for us – this is the difficult part, this is the difficult part.

The words of the Gospel seemed like newly sprouted plants on a large plot of land – one here, one here, one here. We realized that each plant’s little root was set deeply in Jesus’ last will and testament, which was beneath the plot of land, in the unity which lay beneath the whole plot of land. And every word received life from the testament of Jesus, and from unity.

It was a 3D image of how we should consider Jesus’ last will and testament and its relationship with the other words of the Gospel, and how to live one concept, unity, and all the others.

I’ll explain what I mean.

We better understood that unity is not a particular virtue. In fact, it’s not listed among the virtues. It is not only Jesus’ highest word. It’s not just the fundamental theme of his testament. Unity is the soul of the whole Gospel, of the

whole of Scripture. It is the finish line that the whole Gospel tends toward. And, because unity is the effect of charity, we could also say that it's the summary, the synthesis of the Gospel.

As St. Augustine says: every word is charity.

Unity is charity consummated so we can say that every word is unity.

The soul, the true reality of the Word is unity. Yes, because it is not evangelically correct to live poverty for the sake of poverty, but for the love, love of others, that leads to unity, or obedience for the sake of obedience, but in order to be one with God. The whole Gospel needs to be lived in view of unity. The same could be said for every beatitude, as well as for the ten commandments, and for that which the first Testament requires, the testament Jesus said he had come not to abolish but to complete.

And now we understand why the Holy Spirit urged us to put a different sentence of the Gospel into practice each month so that in time we would make it to live them all. They open up unity like a fan. If you close the fan, you see unity. If you open it up, you see: poverty, chastity, obedience, which are expressions of unity. If you close the fan, you understand what they are. If you open it, you understand how unity is expressed.

And now we understand why the Holy Spirit urged us to put a different sentence of the Gospel into practice each month so that in time we would make it to live them all. They open up unity like a fan. And we can mirror ourselves in them so as to become like Jesus, another Jesus, and in this way reflect him to others.

We could ask ourselves today: are we in some way a mirror of Jesus? We, *popi*, are we? Do we mirror Jesus also for the others?

In this regard I'd like to mention one of our dreams from the early days.

We used to say: "If, for some absurd hypothesis, all the Gospels were destroyed, we would like to live in such a way that people, seeing our actions, would see Jesus in us and could therefore re-write the Gospel."

For example, they see that we love our neighbor as ourselves, and they write: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 19:19); they see that we give: "Give and gifts will be given to you" (Lk 6:38); they see that we love our enemies: "Love your enemies" (Mt 5:44); that we love one another: "Love one another" (Jn 15:12);

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

Well lately we realized, with gratitude to God, that if we haven't yet reached this goal of being another Jesus, at least we are on our way.

Now I'll explain it to you.

I could tell this was true last May, when we were working on collecting the so-called *fioretti* for the book the St. Paul Press asked us to prepare to present some evangelical episodes of the life of the Movement. They reveal the effort we have made to align ourselves, to look at ourselves, we could say, in the mirror of the Gospel, and how the Lord consequently intervened just as he promised. We do what he said and he answers.

It was a source of great joy for me and for us there in Rocca di Papa – as we collected these episodes that came in from all over the world – to see that it's a beginning for defining our Movement as an incarnation of the Gospel, another Jesus.

For this reason, the preface to the book says – we wrote it: “This book reflects an important and indispensable aspect of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement which, during World War II, was born, we could say, with the Gospel in its hands.

“Right from the beginning, in fact, we lived the Word of God intensely. Actually, that alone was our guideline, our rule of life, so much so that we could not imagine having any other, even in the future.

“In this way we re-evangelized ourselves in our hearts and minds, and our will acquire new strength.

“These small episodes, these *fioretti* of everyday life, are experiences lived by Chiara and by members of the Movement all over the world.

At times they are simple episodes which, however, are extraordinary. They strike you because of their obvious light, their child-like candor that is touching and makes you rejoice.”

Then, the preface continues, “Above all they show that God exists because as we Christians give, he gives in return, so he exists; when we ask he responds, so he exists; he comforts us and others in their pain, therefore, he exists; he

clothes us like the lilies of the field; we are in need of everything and he fills us with goods; we ask for something impossible and it comes; we cast our concerns onto him and he takes care of them one after another; he thinks of us much more than he does of the sparrows; we call on him and he is there at our side; we believe in him more than in anything else in the world and he is present in every circumstance of our life.

“He is always there, faithfully. He might intervene immediately or after a while, but he never fails us. [...]