

Chiara at the meeting of the Gen 2 boys and girls: "Questions and answers"

To live for that hour

Question n.4

"Dearest Chiara, I am always deeply struck whenever we receive news that a Gen has left for heaven, and the question that comes to mind is: 'If God were to call me to the encounter with him, would I be ready?' I confess to you that it frightens me a little. Chiara, what does death mean to you and how do you prepare for heaven?"

[...] did you hear what a serious question this Gen is asking me! On the other hand, I too have been amazed to see how many young people of our Movement leave for heaven. [...]

It's a question that has to do with young people too. So, what is death? Death is undoubtedly the most serious part of life because death is part of life, we die here, not in the next life, we die here. It's the most serious part of life. So, among all the trials that we have in life – trials like illness, accidents – death is the greatest trial of all trials. This is why it frightens us. Even the saints were afraid.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, for example, had strong temptations before dying. The devil told her: "There's nothing after this life!" And she was someone who had lived her whole life for God, for the next life, for the kingdom... She was tormented, but she managed to overcome this trial. She became a saint and a doctor of the Church.

Even Jesus was afraid if you think of what he said in the Garden of Olives: "I am deeply grieved, even to death" (Mk 14:33-34), because he foresaw all that would happen, he knew it would be a terrible death. If any of you saw the recent film entitled, "Jesus", you have seen what kind of horrendous death Jesus had.

But there is a truth that consoles us. It's a truth we must believe, and that is, that as soon as we die, as St. Paul tells us, we will immediately see Jesus. Therefore, death is experienced more by those who are assisting the person who is dying, because they see that the person isn't breathing anymore, and is motionless. But for the person who dies, death coincides with seeing Jesus.

Of course, my dear Gen, you can understand that to see Jesus will be very beautiful for those who have loved him, but it will be terrible for those who have not loved him. However, we hope to be among the first group, among those who have the immense joy of seeing Jesus and that he tells us: "You were a Gen, so come over to this side!"

In any case, as you said in your question, we have to prepare ourselves for death. Now I'm going to tell you something new, which I haven't even told to the focolarini, but which I have in my soul during these days, and so I thought, "I have to tell this to the Gen – they will understand."

Gen, we see our Ideal in Jesus, we see our vocation in Jesus; we are Christians because we belong to Christ; we have to model ourselves on Jesus. How did Jesus see death? Jesus did many things in his life. First of all, he spread the Gospel, the Good News. Then many people understood it and made it their own; they became his disciples. With these disciples Jesus founded the Church. "You are Peter..", he made Peter the head, then the apostles, then all the other disciples. He founded the Church.

But Jesus didn't give importance to any of these things during his lifetime. He looked further beyond. He said that his hour was what came later, that is, his sacrifice, his death, which is understandable, because

the next life exists, eternal paradise exists. Otherwise, with human reasoning alone, we wouldn't understand this. And he always waited for his hour, even though it would be terrible. He lived for his hour.

Now we, Gen, also the focolarini, the Gen, we must do what Jesus did. Because of this charism, we also have the vocation to spread the Ideal, which means the Gospel, like Jesus. We too, like him, meet people who accept this announcement of ours, they make it their own and they become disciples of this charism and of the Gospel. [...] We form the Work of Mary, which is like a piece of the Church within the Church. You are a little piece of the Work of Mary in the Work of Mary, which is a piece of the Church in the Church.

So, by forming the Gen units, you too form a little piece of the Church. But this is not what we should give importance to, because we must seal all this with the sacrifice of our life.

Now I'll tell you something... I told you that [the moment of our death] would be difficult, that it will be something quite hard – it will be our sacrifice. Because, Gen, no matter what, whether you want it or not, it will be a sacrifice. I often think that right at the moment when it is most difficult, we have to suffer, and I know because I've experienced that it's hard to love when you are suffering. When you are suffering, it's harder to relate to others. Suffering turns you in on yourself, on your pain, your suffering... and yet that's when we will have to endure an agony, which means a struggle, a battle that we must win.

I always think of Renata, a focolarina who helped develop Loppiano for more than twenty years and formed hundreds of focolarine. I went to see her when she was near death, and she had the desire to die alive, fully alive. She believed that was the best hour of her life. She believed that everything was love because she already foresaw what would come afterwards.

Dearest Gen, whether we want it or not, it's useless to ignore the fact that death will come for us, and there will be an agony, unless we die suddenly in an accident. It's useless to think otherwise. It's better to realize that life ends in this way, and we must keep this in mind, keep it in mind. I did this too with the focolarine of my focolare. We chose to live for the hour of our death because that is our hour. In this way, we will reach that moment fortified, full of love for God, believing in his love, happy to give a purpose to those last moments. Because it's terrible to be there suffering, suffering and to say nothing more than, "I offer this for..."

That's too little! I must do the work of God, I must spread the Ideal, I must win over many people to Jesus. I must build the Work of God, and then I must seal it with my death, with the price I have to pay, with what I give. Because it is written – it's a phrase in Latin, but I will translate it for you. It says: "Sine sanguinis effusione non... meaning "without the shedding of blood, without agony, there is no remission," there's nothing. In other words, what we do is rather [small]... it's easy to wipe it out. Instead, a seal is needed on all that we did, and we put that seal with our death.

Believe me, Gen, ever since we understood this, we're much happier than before, because we've given a meaning to the moment of our death. It will come, that's certain, it will come; no one can escape it. So then, let's accept it well, let's give it the meaning that Jesus gave it, and say, "We have come for that hour, we are here for that hour, and with that hour we want to seal all that we have done in our lifetime for the work of God." My wish is that you have the grace to understand this and, in that moment, when God wants, to accept it.

Of course, from the moment we understood the true meaning [of death], do you know what came into evidence? The "Hail Mary," because in the second part we ask Mary, "Pray for us sinners, now" – so now too she has to pray for us, so that we will go ahead spiritually – "and at the hour of our death." Now I say all the "Hail Marys" in a different way: "Pray for us sinners, now..." This morning too we said the rosary with the focolarine, and with every Hail Mary, we said: "Hail Mary, full...pray for us now," now that I will meet

with the Gen, “and in the hour of our death. Pray for us, so that we can truly be what we ought to be.” And something else that is beautiful.

I have assisted many people who were leaving for heaven, because I have taken this as one of my responsibilities.... Since I can't do many other concrete things, besides working for the Movement, I look after those who are approaching the end of this life. Well, I have seen that there is always a special grace. It's incredible how they die happy, how they sometimes die singing. So we have to count on the help that Our Lady will give us, that God will give us, and also on this grace that we will have, that we will all have!