

CH CONFERENCE CALL

Rocca di Papa, 19th November 2016

"Our drop"

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1) **OPENING and GREETINGS**

(Applause)

RAY: Hello everyone! Welcome to this Conference Call.

MAGGI: How nice to come together and know that we are linked up all over the world! I'd like to say immediately that everyone is invited to send messages and impressions during this broadcast and we will publish them on social media.

RAY: I'm Ray, from the Philippines. (*greeting in Tagalog*) I live in Rome and I work at the International Centre of the Focolare.

MAGGI: I'm Maggi from Sweden and I live in Stockholm, though I grew up within the Arctic Circle, in Lapland. After finishing my studies, I lived an important period of my life in Cameroon, in the little town of Fontem, so I feel very much at home in Africa as well.

In this Hall, we are a very international group. For example, there is a family from the United States, and over there, a family from Congo. There are also representatives of the New Humanity Movement who are holding their international conference nearby. A group of them are here. (*applause*) Also, members of an ecumenical commission working on ethical issues are here with us today. So, there are many of us. Let's start.

We are linked up on the phone with Maria Voce, Emmaus, the President (*applause*) the President of the Focolare Movement. She is now convalescing after surgery and we are happy that all is going well.

Hello Emmaus, how nice to speak to you!

MARIA VOCE (EMMAUS) on the phone: Hello, I am glad too! I am very happy and moved at the thought of greeting everyone, the world over. I want to thank you for all the love that I have received from many, many different places, for the prayers, for all you have offered, truly for everything. And to say: yes, I'm here, I am much better and I hope to come back to normal life as soon as possible. Even though I must say, I never felt *out* of normal life, because for us normal life is life in love and we can always do that, and it is both normal and extraordinary at the same time.

So, today too with the password of "loving in the little things" I feel I can do this, just as all of you can do it wherever you are in the world and this is actually what always binds us, in this normal and extraordinary life.

So let's live this life together and continue together on the Holy Journey, and we will see one another as soon as possible. I am very, very glad to greet you. Bye to all. (*applause*).

2) **"THE UNSTOPPABLE GENERATION"**

RAY: Thank you, Emmaus, see you soon!

At the moment there is a very dynamic meeting taking place in Castel Gandolfo, with 1200 Gen, young people of the Focolare Movement from all over the world. They are part of a vibrant story, which has been going on for 50 years. It is an “unstoppable” story, as they say. Let’s hear from them now. Tamara, are you there?

TAMARA: Ciao Ray, ciao!

RAY: Ciao Tamara, ciao! Ciao Gen!

TAMARA: Here we are! And with me, as you can see, are young people who have travelled here from all around the world. Lilia, beside me here, has come from Guatemala, home to the Maya people. *(Lilia says something in kaqchikel)*

She says she is very happy to be here, she greeted us in her language, which is *kaqchikel*.

And here is Aziz from Iraq. *(Aziz says something in Aramaic)*

This is a peace greeting in the Aramaic language, his mother tongue.

And that’s not all. There are Gen who have covered half the globe to get here, with flights of more than 24 hours to reach Rome. They are the Gen of New Caledonia. *(Applause)* Including Gregory, who is 19, and comes from even further away: the island of Wallis. With a total surface area of just 96 square km, Wallis is in the Pacific Ocean, a four-hour flight from New Caledonia.

Gregory, what has this Congress meant to you *(Question repeated in French)*

GREGORY *(in French with phrase-by-phrase translation into Italian by Tamara):* This congress is one of the best things that have ever happened to me. I return home now with a new vision, a new way of looking at many things. Notably, on how to live fraternal love and build unity between different ethnic and religious groups.

TAMARA: Now we’ve prepared a little gift for you all. On Thursday morning, we decided to go in a take a look at the start of the congress on your behalf. This is what we saw.

(Music)

TAMARA: We’ve sneaked into the Gen Congress this morning because we were told that the it would begin with a special event. It’s called *Expo*, an expo of the history of the Gen Movement. Let’s find out what it’s all about...

Through various installations, theatre performances, projections and light shows, the Gen were invited to discover and personally experience the roots of the Gen Movement.

ACTOR: When it came to giving shape to the Gen Movement we did not want it to be organized in a purely human way, because it should be free.

GLORIA, Uganda: 50 years have passed, but we are the same generation that does not stop and we want to continue to live all that Chiara gave us.

DAMIÁN, Argentina (in Spanish): The idea is to take a journey through all the years of the Gen Movement. This is a time of celebration for us. We wanted to celebrate 50 years of the Gen Movement and to meet all together and that’s why there are more than 1,100 Gen here

from all over the world. We are taking a look at our history, at all the important moments and all Chiara has said to us, which we want to live to the full.

(Music)

JOSÉ LOUIS, Brazil: Chiara gave us a secret, which is to look to Jesus in that moment when He was on the cross. It was the strongest experience of His life. So we must look to Jesus Forsaken, who is the key to reaching a United World.

DAVID, Philippines (in English): Oh, I thought it was absolutely beautiful. I saw the hard work put into it, I saw a lot of my friends working really hard. My impressions were – it struck me that a lot of things are really happening in the world. I could see that there are a lot who want to help make a change. And I found it beautiful.

CHIARA LUBICH: Are you ready, Gen, to remain faithful to Jesus, to whatever He may want? Which means, faithful to the Ideal for the rest of your life?

DAMIÁN (in Spanish): All the Gen have signed their names on the sculpture that you can see behind us, renewing our commitment to build a united world.

(Music)

IRMA, Italy: The Gen are here to hear from us how we lived then, to know something ... So, through photographs and our experiences we have shared what we lived from the beginning.

IRIDE, Italy: I think this is a wonderful opportunity to be with the Gen of today, not only to tell them our experiences, but also to listen to them, to hear their questions, to find out what interests them.

PATIENCE, Cameroon: These young people have the strength to give joy to us adults. That is why we are here, so that we will always be Gen! *(Music & Applause)*

RAY: Marvellous, thank you!

MAGGI: Hope it continues to go well!

3) **PHONE CALL WITH BRAZIL**

MAGGI: We now want to greet the 800 focolarini of Brazil, gathered together in the city of Aparecida, from all parts of Brazil. Ciao, João Batista and Giuliana, can you hear us?

JULIANA & JOÃO BATISTA: Yes, ciao!

MAGGI: Please tell us how you're spending your time together?

JULIANA: We are taking time to talk together and to reflect on some of the many faces of suffering we encounter in our society, in which we want to recognise Jesus Forsaken.

JOÃO BATISTA: It's enough to think of the political crises, social inequalities, corruption...

Many people want to build up new alternatives to all of this. We do too. So, as well as working on the ground, we also want to be well formed in the culture of unity, which can include diversity in all areas. Here too we are receiving formation in this.

MAGGI: Bello, grazie, so important.

JULIANA: Grazie!

4) **A DARING BUSINESS PLAN "GIVE TO GROW", BELGIUM**

RAY: In Brazil, 25 years ago, Chiara Lubich founded the Economy of Communion. It was a courageous response to the problems of poverty and injustice, two of the great enemies of peace. Chiara suggested to entrepreneurs that they set up companies capable of making profits which can then be shared with the poor. It's an enormous endeavour that has encountered many challenges, economic and financial crises. Let's now see the story of two of these companies. The first comes from Belgium.

KOEN VANREUSEL, CEO EASYKIT: I'm Koen Vanreusel, Chief Executive Officer of Easykit. We sell Do-It-Yourself flat packs for domestic homes. We are also very involved in the community. This means our company shares the profit we create. We share it with our employees, but also with people beyond the company. Especially people living in poverty, both abroad and in our own neighbourhood.

Music

KOEN VANREUSEL: For example, our company supports a project in Burundi where street kids are being trained as plumbers, electricians and car mechanics. That means they're receiving training and being given the opportunity to become self-sufficient.

Music

Two or three of our mechanics gave up part of their holidays to go over there and train those young people. It's a project that involves everyone in our business community. *Music*

ELLEN VAN STICHEL, Social Economist: It started in 1991 when Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, was confronted with the enormous contrasts in Brazil. We see it on TV: skyscrapers on one side and slums on the other side. She thought to herself "how is it that we can't save people from poverty when there's so much wealth in the world?" She wanted to find a new balance and decided that rather than a socio-economic project, she'd focus on a truly economic project. The Economy of Communion follows the laws of the free market, but with a different approach to profit, to work relationships and so on.

Music

KOEN VANREUSEL: By working within the Economy of communion, we found a structural answer to the question of how to fight poverty. Because a business that works in a market economy that's doing well and yielding a profit continues to generate further work. Actually, that was what really led me to participate in the project. *Music*

MARLEEN, EMPLOYEE EASYKIT: Every year we receive a cheque for 250 Euros that we can donate to a charity of our choice.

DORIEN, EMPLOYEE EASYKIT: I thought it was really nice of them. Especially because we could donate it to the organization of our own choice, rather than them choosing for us.

Music

ELLEN VAN STICHEL: In French they say: *Je pense, donc je suis*. I think therefore I am. Today's society says you only exist if you "consume". The Economy of Communion turns that around and says: "I give, therefore I am". Giving makes you happy but you don't just do it for yourself. It makes you happy to see other people happy.

Music

KOEN VANREUSEL: It gives a different purpose to the company and its direction. It's satisfying to see your company thriving, people working together and a good atmosphere. That's important and it's great but it is also something more: it gives our company a higher purpose. *Music (Applause)*

5) THE STORY OF TWO SACKS OF FLOUR THAT BECAME PART OF LOCAL CULTURE IN DAEJON, SOUTH KOREA

RAY: Now let's go to another continent for this news story from Korea.

CAPTION: Seoul, South Korea_

SPEAKER (in Italian): Last May, the economist Professor Luigino Bruni, spoke at the National Assembly in Seoul, Korea. The conference was on "The Economy of Communion, a new economic model for all".

On that occasion, the amazing story of the Sungsimdang bakery and cake shop caught the attention of the audience, stirring up much emotion and amazement. Let's take a look at what it's all about. *(music)*

CAPTION: The miracle of the two sacks of flour - Sungsimdang

SPEAKER (in Italian): The miracle of the two sacks of flour - Sungsimdang

In 1950 a civil war broke out in Korea that lasted for three years. Some of the people in the north, under communism, fled to the south in search of freedom. Among them, was Ghil Sun who then settled in the city of Daejeon.

Ghil Sun prayed and promised God: "*If I can be saved together with my whole family, I will live the rest of my life for the poor.*"

In 1956, he received two sacks of flour from the parish. He began producing steam-cooked bread, under the name Sungsimdang which means "Sacred Heart". Although he was poor himself, he distributed bread to the needy every day. And this has carried on up to the present day, without missing a single day.

The Sungsimdang store is in the centre of the city and about 10,000 people buy their bread there every day.

PARK KYONG A, client (in Korean): *"If you think about Sungsimdang, what comes to mind is 'social sharing and service', a joyful atmosphere, it's a nice place. You always want to come back."*

SPEAKER (in Italian): Sungsimdang bakes bread, not only for the daily sales, but also as a way to share. The freshly baked bread is distributed to over 80 social assistance centres.

IM YOUNG JIN, proprietor (in Korean): *"Every day we send all the bread that has not been sold to various different places, so there is never stale bread in the store. Customers know they will always find fresh bread in our store. We receive much more than we give."*

SPEAKER (in Italian): Sungsimdang produces over 150 types of bread. It has more than 400 employees working energetically, who are all proud to be part of this family. Despite the growth of the business, at one point, Fedes, the owner, experienced a great emptiness within himself and had problems with his employees.

In 1999 the owners of Sungsimdang attended the International School of the Economy of Communion in Tagaytay, in the Philippines, and so a new future opened up for them: to manage the company in an "altruistic" spirit to contribute to the good of society.

KIM MI JIN, proprietor Sungsimdang (in Korean): *"At that time we had a debt of 4 million Euros, and it was an overwhelming challenge for us. But we felt that Sungsimdang could become a company linked to the EoC project. When we came back to Korea, we started by giving 800 Euros to the EoC project, which was equivalent to the monthly salary of one of our employees. Over the door of our bakery we've written "Sungsimdang, EoC business". In 2001 the business took the name of "Rosso (Red) Co. Ltd".*

SPEAKER (in Italian): In 2005 a big fire destroyed the whole building, a huge crisis for the Sungsimdang Bakery. But the day after, something unexpected happened.

Using the slogan "The business is reduced to ashes. Let's rebuild it!", all the staff came to work to help restore it. After barely a week they were baking bread again! The corporate funds were almost zero, but everyone focused on the "motto" they had received from Chiara: "Try to do good in the sight of all" (Cf Rom 12:17), and which was chosen as their management philosophy, placing people at the heart of the business.

Later on, there was a 30% increase in sales, and so they decided to give the employees 15% of the profit as an incentive.

(music)

Last month Sungsimdang celebrated its 60th anniversary. With the title, "My city, my Sungsimdang", the company decided not to move to the big commercial centres in Seoul, but stayed at Daejeon as a local bakery. At the 60th anniversary celebrations, the bishop and the mayor of the city were among the guests, together with local and foreign business men and women who are interested in the EoC business philosophy they see in Sungsimdang.

PRESIDENT OKADA, Okada Food Company, Japan (in Japanese): *"Sungsimdang is*

committed to producing healthy and hygienically safe food that can be eaten worry-free, and the company continually trains their employees. These aspects struck me, there is really much to learn from them.

(music)

SPEAKER (in Italian): Sungsimdang has become an integral part of Daejon culture. It's an essential stop on any tour of the city. And every weekend, in front of the store, there's always a long queue of people wanting to buy bread.

"To do good in the sight of all" means to make everyone happy: customers, employees, partners and the local community.

YOON HYUN DON, employee (in Korean): *It's true that bread is a simple thing, but even a small thing can touch people's hearts and a small act of love can warm our society. I work with this belief! (music)*

CAPTION: Through its various shops, every month Sungsimdang distributes bread to the value of 25,000 Euros to 80 social assistance centres. (Applause)

RAY: Where are these paper planes heading? Let's ask Rebeca Gómez. Rebeca is Spanish and she is the coordinator of one of the international projects of the Economy of Communion. Rebeca, can you give us a picture of the Economy of Communion today?

REBECA GÓMEZ: The 25th anniversary has been marked by many events: a Pan-Asian Congress in the Philippines, a meeting of European entrepreneurs in Switzerland, the national Forum for Brazil, a meeting for all Latin America in Bolivia and many other events.

At the moment, the Economy of Communion is going through a generational change. The original generation of entrepreneurs and professionals who replied with such generosity to Chiara's proposal 25 years ago, are now passing on their experience to a second generation of business people, and are making themselves available to other young people in order to help them set up new enterprises with the spirit of the Economy of Communion.

This kind of support on the part of our business people has always existed, so what new developments are taking place now? We have created an international network of business people, professionals and academics willing to accompany, offer formation and advice to young people who have valid business propositions. 11 countries are so far involved, linked to an international office, based at the Lionello Bonfanti Business Park in Loppiano, which provides support to the network. More details are available on the EoC website.

Another exciting piece of news we received just a few days ago: next year, on 4th February, the Pope has invited a representation of the Economy of Communion to meet him in the Vatican! 400 people including business women and men, students, researchers, members of the various commissions, associations and business parks related to the EoC around the world. This opportunity is a great cause of joy and encouragement, confirming to

us how much today's world really does need the Economy of Communion. (*Applause*)

RAY: Thank you Rebeca, great news.

6) COMMEMORATING THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION (LUND, SWEDEN)

MAGGI: Our goal is a united world. And to build it, the wounds of history also need to be healed.

In this photograph, we can see the leader of the Roman Catholic Church with the leader of the World Lutheran Federation. Behind this photo lies a painful 500-year-long history of misunderstanding and prejudice, conflict and even violence and wars. This was most definitely *not* what Luther intended when he began what became known as the Reformation.

So real positive signs are needed in order to move towards forgiveness and reconciliation. As a Lutheran myself, I was very moved by the events which took place at Lund and Malmö in southern Sweden less than three weeks ago. Many of us were there, including quite a few who are present in this hall now. Friederike Koller and Ángel Bartol here work closely with Emmaus and were there to represent her.

Friederike, you grew up in Germany, where perhaps the division between Lutherans and Catholics is felt most acutely, did you ever imagine that you would experience an occasion like this?

FRIEDERIKE KOLLER: It has been a dream and now that dream has come true. Therefore I was immensely grateful to be present at such a historic moment when for the first time the highest representatives of the Lutheran and Catholic Churches asked God for pardon for the past, for the many offences and wars. And not only this, they also celebrated together, celebrating Christ Jesus.

What also gave me joy was a deeper understanding of the person of Martin Luther. The Pope himself expressed recognition of and gratitude for Martin Luther's role in placing the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures more at the centre of the life of the faithful of the different Churches.

It was clearly a new step, a historic moment from which there will be no turning back. We ourselves felt that we were representing all the many people who over the past 50 years have believed in unity, have prayed for it, lived and worked for it. In ways such as this, the ground was prepared for God to give this new grace, which shed a new light on the past, together with a new atmosphere in the relationship between the representatives. A relationship of real respect and of Jesus in the midst, as the Pope himself described it a few days ago. There was also a new commitment for the two Churches to collaborate and a joint declaration was signed to act together on an international level.

Now it must continue, and they launched a powerful appeal to all Lutheran and Catholic communities and parishes to continue with courage, creativity and a lot of hope along the journey towards full communion among the Churches.

MAGGI: Beautiful. And you Ángel? As Friederike was saying, you really could sense the light, the grace, and, I would say, the hope. Where do you think this came from? What is the source of this light?

ÁNGEL BARTOL: In the first place, I think that our hope springs from the fact that Jesus himself prayed for unity. Then we ourselves, as the Movement, came into existence precisely to give our contribution to unity. It was so moving to be there and realise that 55 years ago the Movement, the charism of unity began to spread in the Lutheran world. And being there had the effect of strengthening our understanding that we are born for this; we were born to give our contribution to unity. So this too is our hope.

And we saw how in all these years, many people have given their life for this and continue to do so. For us, it is a matter of living – also of course of study, reflection and theology - but primarily of life. In fact, the two of us can witness to that. We found ourselves there and there was no difference between us. The difference was that we still have a way to go to rediscover full unity under certain aspects, but there was no difference because we love one another, because Jesus was in our midst. Even the Pope himself, in a recent interview, said that his relationship with these leaders of various Churches is a relationship of Jesus in the midst.

Then in the cathedral during the liturgy there was a special moment of recognition of Chiara, and we are sure that from Heaven she was celebrating with us.

So our great hope is based on life, on experience and above all on the design of God.

MAGGI: I agree. Thank you! (*Applause*)

7) A PATH TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN MYANMAR

RAY: In the world today we see what Pope Francis often calls “a piecemeal world war”. But now we want to give voice to world peace that is also being built ‘piecemeal’, in small segments, often painfully. We see it as peace which needs to be “reinvented”.

Myanmar, with Aung San Suu Kyi as leader, is a country emerging from 50 years of military dictatorship. It’s a great struggle to build peace, but many are actively engaged in this process. Here in the hall are three of them, three young people, alongside others from neighbouring countries. Let’s watch this news item with them.

MYANMAR: Story of a community

Footage of Myanmar

Speaker (in Italian):

September 26th 2016. The Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, gave her first, historic speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

Almost a year earlier, she had won the elections in Myanmar, after being under house arrest for more than 20 years, in the centre of Yangon. *music*

After the assassination of her father Aung San, now a national hero, and after more than 50 years of international isolation and oppressive military dictatorship, the "Lady" is struggling to guide the former Burma, a country with 14 states and a hundred different languages, to peace and democracy.

Gennie (in English):

When I was young, during the 1980s, life here in Myanmar was extremely difficult. We lost many people and I lost my father, because of this political situation.

But, I always had hope that things will change.

And when I finished my studies in the University of Sofia in Loppiano, I got a job. I work for the return of and the successful re-integration of the refugees,

Because of these 20 years... more than 20 years of conflict and civil war, there are nine camps in the border, with people still there as refugees.

Another thing is to forgive and reconcile. In Myanmar, this is a huge task that each citizen has.

Chiara said, see the person as new. I try to see the different people that I meet as new.

And to reconcile is something very challenging, because this is not only me who can do that. It is a country wide thing. But, from me and my own small world, I want to start with that.

Valentina Soe Myint, Medical Doctor (in English):

I came to know the Focolare Movement through my elder brother. He invited me to a meeting at his professor's house.

Later, we learnt that the professor was a focolarino. But, after a few years he left the country. But the spirituality remained among all the young people who attended the meeting. Maybe about 10, more than 10 years, there was no contact with Focolare, but we had communication through the Word of Life.

And we do the translation into the local Myanmar language and we distribute it to all the people who know this Movement for many years, until the Focolare Movement opened in Myanmar, back in 2003.

The focolare family in Myanmar is still very small, but we have a bigger number of family members and we are now connected to all over Myanmar.

Christopher Sai Mon Shan (in Italian):

Finally we now have a men's focolare in Burma. Hopefully other focolarini will come, because there are just two of us at present ... Hopefully!

RAY: And the third focolarino did arrive. Now there are three of them. Here they are. (*laughter and applause*) These images help us get to know Myanmar, which is so little known about.

8) MOUNTAINS OF PLASTIC BECOME LITTLE TREASURES IN YANGON (MYANMAR)

RAY: Peace is also made up of small concrete gestures, as Sabrina and Rebecca from Yangon tell us.

SABRINA (in English):

We're going to bring these plastics and other materials to CHU CHU, where they will recycle them and make them into art and what not.

REBECCA (in English):

We're trying to pick plastics and trying to do this is as monthly action so that it will bring them...

SABRINA (in English):

Because Yangon has a plastic and pollution problem. So, it would be a great help for youth to clean up the trash and recycle it. And do something that can be used again. (*Music*)

CHU CHU Manager (in English):

We put a metal sheet, then we prepare for the plastic, so we lay it up layer by layer on top and cover it with another metal sheet and run it through these two machines, the laminators. So then, all the plastic has melted ...So, we can get a sheet like this.

Then we cut into pieces the kind of product models we need. So we can make many different things – there's pencil case, and this is phone case, and different models. We have shopping bags and dustbins, in two sizes. This is a candle shade, we can put a candle inside and light it, when the light is inside, then the colours shine through. Like this!

Our group is called CHU CHU. CHU CHU is an NGO. It part of a pilot project. And the funding is from the EU and the techniques come from Italy. The roof is made from car tyres! And the walls are made: some parts are glass bottles and some parts are plastic bottles. And the floor is broken tiles. So, all recycled things and materials!

9) MAY HAN: WITHOUT LOVE, HOW COULD I FORGIVE? (MYANMAR)

RAY: "Re-inventing" peace! Re-inventing peace requires loving your enemy, forgiveness. But is it always possible to do this? For the first time, May Han has agreed to share her story on camera. Let's listen to May Han:

My story starts in 2007, in September. That time was, what we call in Myanmar was *Saffron Revolution*.

(*pictures and audio of demonstrations*)

My husband was one of the participants of the *National League for Democracy*. He was also part of the *Human Rights Defenders and Promoter network*. And then he was working for

human rights in the remote area, especially in the Shan state.

The government (Someone that works for the government) grabbed him from home: it's a kind of special agent police, specialized in political espionage. They sent him directly to Yangon into prison. After the trial they sentenced him to ten years and sent him to Central Burma, the very hot zone. The name of the town is Myingyan. And the Myingyan prison is the cruellest prison in the whole of Burma.

On the 17th, I think, 17th of May around 8:30 p.m. there was a call and a voice I was not familiar with said: "Your husband is not very well. If you want to see him for the last time, come straight to Myingyan." There were no reasons, no excuses.

As soon as I found my husband, I knew that these were his very last seconds. He could not speak at all; he didn't even know that I was there. He was sitting behind the bars... *(pause)* I called out to him in a loud voice and he heard me and then he shook his head and I said: "I'm here. Don't worry." And then: "You will be safe." And then his body shook and two seconds (later), he took his last breath.

The reason I requested to transfer the body is that I'm a Catholic Christian. We have religious funeral service to do. I begged to transfer my husband's body. The prison guard immediately wrote a letter, signed the paper and gave it to me. Then they asked me to sign another paper. That paper was to say that I would never ever cause trouble [about his death]. If I caused trouble, I would be arrested. I had to sign that text. I had to sign it so as to be able to hold a funeral service for my husband.

And then the prison officer said that he would do my husband's funeral himself. And then I asked him: "Do you have any tradition to do for the dead person in your religion?" And then he just, was surprised and he just looked at me. And then I said: "If you do not know, don't interfere!" He just stepped back and then I put my husband's body into the funeral van and I went to Myingyan church. The funeral attendance was around 300. I never ever expected that.

I knew the Focolare spirituality before my husband died, but I've never ever explained it to him. And then the spirituality teaches how to do things well, how to live with our family and also how to live with our neighbours and how to love our neighbours as I love myself. That's why I can manage. Otherwise I cannot manage. So many things happened to me. How... if I don't know the spirituality, how can I forgive them? The ones that hurt me? How can I forgive? Now I know how to forgive. But till today I don't know how to forget, even though I know the spirituality.

MAGGI: Wow, how powerful. Thank you May Han for your precious gift. We know that you and your family, together with the Focolare community in Myanmar are watching now and we want to assure you, with all our heart that we are with you too.

10) THE COURAGE OF MERCY OPENS PATHS TO PEACE IN BANGUI (CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC)

MAGGI: Now we go to the heart of Africa, the Central African Republic, a nation of extraordinary beauty, but also severely affected by unfinished war and conflicts. We went there to listen to some stories.

(Music)

CAPTION: Central African Republic

Patrick Moulo (in French)

We are on the Oubangui River which is the largest river in the Central African Republic. This country is located in the heart of Africa. It became independent on August 13, 1960, but since then, it has always been unstable.

From 2012 this country has been going through the most difficult crisis in its history. There was destruction everywhere – you could call it total destruction - of the economic system, of health and educational facilities; everything was destroyed.

Eliane Tondo De Dongo (in French)

There were bombings, explosions; people were fleeing to seek refuge.

I went out to look for those most vulnerable people, especially the children. This led to founding a school, which today cares for more than 200 children: we take in orphans and those most in need.

At one point, the children were mimicking the adults, and playing war games. Some pretended to be the “Balaka”, and others the “Seleka”. All this caught my attention. We asked these children to give us the toy guns in exchange for notebooks and pencils, and I'm very happy about that.

Music

Abbé Justin Nary (in French)

I took in over a thousand Christians in my parish who had taken refuge there because they felt they were safer.

After the Seleka group left, there was huge anxiety that the anti-Balaka would come, so it was the turn of the Muslims to panic. Then when the Balaka actually came I then found myself with more than a thousand Muslims in the parish.

Those against the Balaka disturbed us all the time. They were obliging me to release the Muslims so as to kill them, but I stood firm and opposed them. Then came the day when my brother priests and I had to make a big decision: to leave or to stay with them; because at a certain moment the anti-Balaka group gave us the ultimatum and brought 40 litres of petrol.

If we would not release the Muslims, they would burn us all, massacre us, and burn the parish too.

We were forced to decide and say our last Mass. During this Mass, I was reminded of Chiara's life, the founder of the Focolare Movement. I saw her relationship with the Muslims and I wondered, if Chiara were here right now, what would she do? I realized that the Lord was asking me to give my life for these people; to stay and protect them.

After having made my decision, soon after, I received a call from the head of the military forces of the African Union informing me that there was a military contingent that was passing through the town of Carnot. I went immediately to meet them and I went back to the parish with those soldiers 13 minutes before the ultimatum expired. We were saved, thanks to their presence. Thank you.

Fidelia Mupungu (in French)

After all the madness of the war we have been through in Central Africa, we must also say that we have experienced a great event that changed our lives: the coming of Pope Francis. Since he came to Bangui, everything changed.

Right here in front of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, he asked us to cross over to the other side, to start a new life with reconciliation, mercy, love, peace. We have to change

our hearts, because violence comes from people's hearts.

And it was here, in front of the Holy Door, that the Pope [officially] opened the year of Mercy. This marked a new life, a new beginning for the Central African Republic.

Amadou Yalo (In lingua Sango)

Many thought the Pope would not go to "Kilometre 5", [a Muslim district where there are violent clashes] - But we prayed to God that he would come to us. And he did, along with the Imam, so the Christians and the Muslims came together. You could not see the differences between all these people gathered together.

We had goose bumps meeting each other again after a very long time. I did not know how to express my joy, it was a great celebration. The Pope left, but from that time we continue to live in harmony, with much joy.

Music

Naomie Lonigba (not in French)

I want to thank you all for your prayers and for the providence we received. Peace has returned to our country. Thanks to Pope Francis who brought us peace. In some provinces, peace has not yet returned. Let us pray together for peace there too, and for the Gen3 who are still living in refugee camps, that God may help them go back to their homes.

**11) “RE-INVENTING PEACE” AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS (FRANCE)
20 years after Chiara Lubich was awarded the Unesco Prize for Peace Education**

RAY: We have seen many examples of forgiveness and peace. Twenty years ago, UNESCO, the United Nations body for Culture and Education awarded the “peace education” prize to Chiara. On 15th November in Paris, exactly a year after the massacre in Paris, in Bataclan, one of the horrifying terrorist attacks that are shaking our world - another event was held at UNESCO: Re-inventing Peace.

We have Jesús Moran here with us, Co-president of the Focolare Movement. You were present at that event. Can you briefly tell us something about it?

JESÚS MORÁN: It was powerful there at Unesco. 20 years after Chiara was awarded the prize, it was impressive to see how much life there has been. The experiences we have just seen are potent signs of the culture of peace that is present and spreading in the world, despite all the violence that we can see around us. There is such action for peace, such reflection and dialogue!

So, first of all, we witnessed what a lot of life there has been. Secondly, we can draw new energy from this to reflect even more deeply, to intensify our efforts at dialogue where there are conflicts, and take more effective action.

Without doubt, peace-building is a skilled job, as we have seen. Someone has said that “active patience” is required. Actually, with all the patience in the world, we want to be very active working for peace, because there is such a terrible urgency for it in the world. But I think that our true hope lies both in these experiences and in the 1200 Gen over in Castelgandolfo now. Courage to you all, Gen! *(Applause)*

12) ALGERIA

MAGGI: In the Unesco event, it was stated that religions are a “resource” for peace and not a problem. This is just the opposite of the impression created by the violence, death and destruction we see unleashed in the name of religious fundamentalism.

We want to hear more from you on this, but first let us see two experiences from Algeria. Fifty years ago, the spirituality of unity gave birth to the Focolare Movement there that is composed almost entirely by Muslims. Let us listen to the story of Mourad and Samira.

(Music)

MOURAD BRIXI, (in French): We were a group of young people who did not really know what we were going to do; we had fun and nothing else. One day we met Gérard who invited us for tea in his house. We did not know that it was the focolare.

We talked a bit; they were people, a group of people who were really fantastic. Among them was Ulysses, someone I will never forget.

We went back "to that house" often. We talked, we sang songs, and they were beautiful songs that talked much about life. We got to know more and more about the Ideal and in this way this Ideal filled us and taught us much about life.

Those were our first contacts with the Focolare and we were glad and happy. We wanted to know how to live this Ideal and we tried our very best to live this Ideal. That was more than fifty years ago.

Music

SAMIRA RADJAA (Student) (in French): I'm Samira and I'm 21 years old. I'm very amazed, grateful and encouraged by the sound ideas of the Movement. I liked especially its commitment to build bridges among peoples and to communicate moral and human values, to unite us all together among brothers and sisters of all kinds and unite us especially to Allah, our Lord, who is one.

MAGGI: Jesús, recently you were in Algeria. What was your experience?

JESÚS MORÁN: Yes, I was there...

MAGGI: in Algeria, just recently.

JESÚS MORÁN: Yes, I got to know Samira and Mourad personally.

MAGGI: Please tell us about your experience being there.

JESÚS MORÁN: My experience in Algeria is the experience of witnessing a prophecy becoming reality, the prophecy of unity between religions. I saw it there. In that sense it was one of the greatest gifts I've ever received in my life! Because there (in Algeria) we don't "dialogue" with Muslims, rather we are "one" with Muslims: one in God and one in the construction of a new culture, of a culture of peace. It is a unique experience, which gives such hope. So, at the end of our Muslim Focolare congress, we all left with a renewed commitment to intensify our unity and to "use" it at the service of peace in the world.

MAGGI: How beautiful, thank you!

RAY: Thank you, Jesús, thank you! (*Applause*)

13) CHIARA LUBICH: ONE DROP AT A TIME

RAY: "Dare to forgive, reinventing peace". We have heard many testimonies which drew their inspiration from Chiara Lubich and her ideas. Let's listen now to a brief dialogue between her and a young Brazilian man and a priest from Ecuador.

Loppiano 16th May 2003

Junior: Ciao, Chiara, I'm Junior from Brazil.

Chiara: Are you a Gen?

Junior: Yes, I'm a Gen.

Chiara: Yes.

Junior: "The wars and conflicts around the world cause many young people to lose hope that there will ever be peace in the world. How can we Gen concretely bear witness to the fact that peace is not a utopia and that unity is possible?"

Chiara: First of all, by living it ourselves, by being an example of peace, and you know that with Jesus forsaken we can always achieve peace, as long as we... do not use him, but love him for himself. So peace in ourselves. Then peace among us with Jesus in our midst.

But we must also speak about peace. When there was the war in Iraq, remember, I sent a letter to all our people around the world, and very many events and demonstrations and projects happened, to promote peace, many different things. Stacks of faxes came, with everyone saying: "I'm doing this, I'm going on a pilgrimage, I'm giving a talk, I'm doing something else." We must not stop talking to everyone about peace, about the need for peace, peace, peace. This is what I would do.

And also, show where there are places of peace. ... When you spoke earlier about Loppiano being an oasis of peace, it is not only the song. I wrote here that we have to show the world oases of peace, like this little town. But we will win, you know! (Applause)

Fr. Patrizio: I'm Patrizio from Ecuador.

Chiara: From Ecuador.

Fr. Patrizio: "Hunger, illness, war... injustice, poverty, violence, drugs – these are many painful aspects of today's society. How can we always love and embrace Jesus forsaken in these sufferings?"

Chiara: All these sufferings: drugs... here you will go mad yourself! Hunger, illness, wars, injustice, poverty, violence. What can be done? We must go with what happens in the present. Today I meet someone who is dependent on drugs, and I'll devote myself to him or her with all my heart. One person is enough to love Jesus. Tomorrow I hear about a war somewhere. I'll pray, say Mass, perhaps, for peace in that nation, that the situation will change. Another day you see a situation of poverty, so you try to take a collection, also with your parishioners if you have a parish. One thing at a time, one thing at a time, with great peace.

Mother Teresa had before her an ocean of poverty; – I saw for myself what Calcutta is like. an ocean of poverty ... So she had this ocean of suffering before her, which is your situation and question too, and seeing this ocean of suffering, she said: "What I do is only a drop, only a drop," but hers was a big drop, because I saw the works of Mother Teresa! They're fantastic! For lepers, for this, for that... houses here and houses there, all over India, and yet she said: "It's a drop...." And she's right. It's a drop, a drop. But she added: "It's a drop, but if I don't give this drop, my drop will be missing in the ocean...." It will be missing in the ocean.

So we should learn from her to live our daily drop... because if we don't, it will be missing, and if we can't do more, the Lord knows. He doesn't expect us to be, I don't know, giants, people who work miracles. He wants us to do God's will. Let's do this then. (Applause)

14) CONCLUSION

RAY: "Giving my own drop, our own drop": we end with this commitment.

MAGGI: The next Link-Up will be on **17th December, at 12 noon** (Italian time), so just before Christmas. If any of you would like to prepare a short video clip in your own language, or photos to share your Christmas greetings, please send them to us **by 10th December**, using "WeTransfer" via the "CollegamentoCH" webpage. We'll use them to create a global Christmas greeting!

RAY: So, we'll meet again on 17th December.

RAY & MAGGI: Ciao to all!