

LINK UP

Rocca di Papa, 2 May 2015

"Inventing Peace"

START AND GREETINGS

Chiara's first intuitions about the permanent mariapolises.

(Music and views)

Chiara Lubich: "When 'the bulk' of the citizens at the Mariapolis had left ... everything seemed finished up there. ... Those empty roads, that sunlit valley, which (nonetheless) seemed like a corpse, made me think (again) about that sweet dream - two months of Marian enchantment and perhaps I was not looking back, but looking up and without realising it I was asking Mary to perpetuate Her city here below."

(Music)

Chiara: I remember that I was in Switzerland, at Einsiedeln. Einsiedeln is a town where there is a Marian shrine that is extraordinarily beautiful. One day, looking at this shrine from a distance, from a hilltop which gave us a good view of the whole place, the wall surrounding it, and all the fields, with cows and milk, and of the buildings where there were schools, etc. I recall having said: "We too will have a small town one day, but it will not be like this one. It will be a real city, a modern city with chimneys – back then we thought of chimneys – with factories, and industries and businesses; with schools too, and a church; with families and everyone else." That was it. This was the prediction: which then became a reality at Loppiano. Now there are 26 of these little towns in the world, each more beautiful than the other, all different."

Claudio Cianfaglioni: As we have just heard from Chiara, there are many little towns of the Movement now, all over the world, places where there is peace, opportunities to experience the beauty of unity in diversity: different generations, cultures and religions.

Greetings to everyone from Rocca di Papa and welcome to this Conference Call [link up].

On today's journey we will meet some of the Movement's communities in different parts of the world, who are witnessing to this unity in places of conflict and suffering....

This witness to a united world got as far as the United Nations just a few days ago when Emmaus spoke to the General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York.

My name is Claudio, I am Italian, and I studied literature and theology. I am now working at the Igino Giordani Centre and I am on the editorial board of New Humanity Review.

Here in this hall we especially welcome representatives from the 800 men volunteers who have their international meeting at Castel Gandolfo. Welcome. *(Applause)*

There are a few people here from Korea and from China *(applause)*.

During this live link up, as usual, you can write to us by texting N° 00 39 3428730175

Or by email: collegamentoch@focolare.org

Or posting your comments on the web page or on Facebook: Collegamento Ch.

PIONEERS OF THE CITY OF LOPPIANO

Claudio: Let's start from the town of Loppiano, a small town of the Focolae in Italy, near Florence, built on land inherited by Eletto, Vincent Folonari, Eli's brother. It is now 50 years old. Let's here more from the Piazza family who helped to build it.

Music

Agnese Balduzzi: *We have been living in Loppiano for fifty years now. We have been married 57 years and have 7 children, 19 grandchildren and almost two great-grandchildren.*

Music

Agnese goes on: *Tino had a building company with quite a few workers. After meeting the Ideal, the atmosphere in the business changed and it was really wonderful.*

Tino Piazza: *I heard at a meeting that a small town was being built in Tuscany. That was in 1964.*

From the newsreel of 1965 (man's voice): *A short distance from the motorway, on the rolling hills above Incisa Valdarno, near Florence, there is a great deal of work going on. In a region known for its olive groves and vineyards, a small town is being built.*

Tino: *We were living in Bergamo at the time.*

Agnese: *We were doing very well, and had a beautiful home. There was a woman who helped me with the housework part time. We were comfortable. But we felt very strongly within ... if it is in the plan of God... this small town that Chiara had so much at heart, why shouldn't we do our part. And Tino's partner in the business, Giommi, was happy about the idea; and so they went to Loppiano.*

Music

Tino: *As soon as we got here, I was really shocked to see how the land had been neglected, but what worried me most was the lack of water.*

From the newsreel of 1965 (woman's voice): *A new town not only because there are new buildings but also because its citizens are new, since their life together is based on the law of the Gospel.*

Music

Tino: *The atmosphere that existed amongst everyone was beautiful; the first popi [focolarini] were here too. It was impressive because they were highly educated and yet they*

were doing all kinds of work: especially digging with picks and shovels, so as to build the roads and put in the sewers.

Agnese: Every time he came back home, on a Saturday, he told me about all that was happening, and so I really wanted to go and see it. I spent some marvelous days there and the children were happy. I was expecting a baby at the time. Two days before leaving, guess what happened? I went into labour and so I called the midwife in Incisa and she came up. She saw how I was and said: "Look, there isn't time to get you to hospital." And so Maria Regina was born there. When we had the baptism, Fede put her in front of Our Lady and consecrated her to Mary and we were so happy. And later on, when the right moment came, Mary called her and she entered in focolare.

Tino: It is very meaningful for me because Regina, together with Mauro, are now responsible for the little town of El Diamante in Mexico. So the first citizen to be born in Loppiano is now bringing forward another little town. I greet them with all my heart.

Music

Agnese: In 1967 we said: let's relive this experience. And so we came for a three month vacation. There was no water or electricity in this house, but the children were very happy and joyful... So, when the time came to leave, we said to the pope: "Well, we are going now" and they said to us: "Look, your children are praying so that you will convert yourselves and stay."

Music

Tino: Yes, it was beautiful to live here in those early days, with Chiara's visits: I remember that I used to put out tiles and flooring for her to see. She followed every detail. It was like a family.

Mario Piazza: It's not as though we saw Chiara like ... who knows what kind of person ... because she came so often that she was part of our family: sometimes she gave us catechism lessons, and she would ask us questions.

Agnese: For example, when we were at Montelfi, Chiara used to come to the house for a while. The children would play the guitar and Chiara loved the children, she hugged them and would have them sit at her table for lunch.

Tino: After all these years, I thank God that truly, whoever leaves father, mother, children and fields has the hundredfold. If I had stayed in Bergamo, I don't know if the family would have stayed united.

Marco Vannacci: We families have the same problems that families outside Loppiano have: there is unemployment here, and other difficulties, just as in the world. But we have this extra gear: which makes us, who are the children and in laws, believe it is important to stay in Loppiano, to continue to build Loppiano with this faith, the same faith as back then. That is, to believe in love.

Samuele Vannacci: With the passing of time what I think we must try to do now is to step out: to reach out because the world needs this Ideal, which was so fundamental to building Loppiano, to founding Loppiano.

Music

LOPPIANO TODAY (live)

Claudio: Let's go live now to Loppiano. Milena Bigoni is there. Hello Milena, good evening....!

Milena Bigoni: Yes, Thanks Claudio. Hello to everyone from Loppiano in Tuscany. We are here in front of the Shrine of Mary Mother of God, Theotokos with some of the people who live here.

My parents, Giommi and Esther Bigoni, were among the first couples who moved to Loppiano in the 60s. Today there are other families, other families who were "pioneers", and other families, there is Giusi, Pina, Ester, Piera, Matteo... and many many more!

At the moment Loppiano has about 800 inhabitants from 65 nations; some live here permanently, others come for a short time.

Fatima and José are from Panama and are there with their three children. Will you introduce yourselves?

Austin Arel: My name is Austin I am 16 and am going to Middle School.

Liza Maris: My name is Liza Maris, I am thirteen years old and am going to the Middle School.

Lean Marie: My name is Lean Marie, I am eight and I am in third grade elementary school.

Milena: Fatima could you tell us a bit about what brought you here, leaving your homeland and your jobs?

Fatima: We wanted to leave our comfort zone to have a deeper experience of fraternity and unity. At first it was really difficult but we felt strongly that we had to go beyond ourselves, outside ourselves to meet others, the other families here and we felt that we had to love so as to build up this fraternity. It is a real and true school of life here.

Milena: José?

José: We got a loan so as to be able to come but then a study grant arrived for me to specialise in chemistry right here in Italy and this helped a lot and it was truly a sign for us, confirmation that this was what God wanted for our family.

Milena: Thank you. We already know something about the beginnings of this Little City, but what is Loppiano like today? Mauro, you were here quite a few years ago and you have now come back, what do you think about Loppiano now?

Mauro Camozzi: It was 37 years ago and I have come back to live here and I see that it has grown a lot, even though the root of everything is the same as always.

Milena: What are you doing now?

Mauro: I am in a team with others to look after the visitors who come here. In the last few months I have seen Muslim students, some Buddhists. A thousand young people from all over Italy, the Genoa, came here for their Congress. Then there are hundreds of other visitors, including people from the local council and the bishop who often holds diocesan events here.

Milena: What do you think people are looking for when they come to Loppiano?

Mauro: It is a bit like we said before. People do find a peaceful place, they find unity being lived, a real sense of fraternity. And when they leave many say: I felt at home here. I think that they found Mary's city here.

Milena: Thank you Mauro. Here in Loppiano there's also a business park. Two days ago we went there to hear some stories and make a video.

LIONELLO BUSINESS PARK, LOPPIANO PRIMA COOPERATIVE, THE "BUNDLE"

Milena Bigoni: *I'm here at the Lionello Bonfanti Business Park at Loppiano. It was inaugurated in 2006 and currently there are 24 companies located here. I would like to ask Eva Gullo, president of the Economy of Communion: How are you managing during the ongoing economic crisis?*

Eva Gullo, EoC: *Like all Italian companies, we are facing the crisis by trying to find solutions, and these solutions can come from communion, from sharing. We feel that this is the key to facing and overcoming the crisis. Some companies have very sadly had to leave us, others have moved, but others have come and some new companies have started up; this was all thanks to the communion and sharing among entrepreneurs for the sake of an experience that we feel is important and which characterizes the life here at the Business Park.*

Music, images

Letizia Mirri, Art & Wood Service: *Our company arose out of a painful experience – our other company had to close because problems had increased over time and the crisis was the final blow. At the end of 2012 we were forced to make a quick decision to say that was as far as we could go! We found ourselves without anything, feeling insecure, in tears, not knowing how to face the future, feeling a lack of dignity.*

Giovanni Mazzanti: *When Letizia called me to say, "Look, we have decided to close down, I was really shocked because I know them well and I know how good they are. I wanted to say we must do something so that they could start up again, or at least change track. But it had to be something sustainable.*

Letizia Mirri: *They thought of starting a new business and we were able to build up this new company, brick by brick almost– so that now after two years it's going pretty well and for us this was like being reborn.*

Giovanni Mazzanti: *We believe that during this time of crisis, it is important not to let ourselves be defeated. We must get together, work together because solutions come from the relationship amongst us.*

Letizia Mirri: *Very often on a Sunday I say to my husband. It's great that tomorrow it's Monday and we can go back to work. This gives me great satisfaction, wanting to keep going.*

Music

Eva Gullo: *The business park is an ongoing experiment working itself out in the daily life of those who founded the businesses, the workers and all the people connected with the centre. It is also a place for formation, for example with the School of Economics here, with the courses that*

are offered, the workshop-school for young people, and with the support of the Tuscany Regional Authority.

(Music and writing that says: "Do not judge each day according to the crop you've harvested but by the seeds that you have sown." Robert Louis Stevenson)

Milena Bigoni: The Loppiano Prima Cooperative began in 1973. For several years now, the management of the agricultural enterprises in Loppiano has been entrusted to Loppiano Farms.

Gabriele Guidotti, First Loppiano Cooperative: An extraordinary meeting of the shareholders' was held where a proposal was put to them to amend the Statutes in order to expand and develop new activities.

Giuseppe Bacci, Loppiano Farms: The economic crisis of 2010 created a very serious employment problem. The answer was to begin a process of sharing. This led to the employees choosing to reduce their salaries for a short period of time. They are now back to their full salaries. The company itself came up with some innovative choices like the upgrading of products, encouraging visitors, and arranging training sessions on production methods. The idea behind this was: "come and see."

Milena Bigoni: The values of the Economy of Communion – giving freely, reciprocity, the culture of giving - all of us can live them even if we are not founders of businesses. This is in a way the experience of the "bundle," a place for sharing.

Giacomo Reggioli: The bundle is intended as a practical and immediate initiative for people who are in difficulty now. It is a place where anyone can bring anything that they want to give away, and people in need can take things. Giving and receiving have the same value.

Ana Calabrò: Some very important relationships have been formed, friendships that will last a lifetime. It's wonderful and I'm amazed every day. (Music and applause)

FIRST OF MAY AT LOPPIANO

Claudio: Let's thank Loppiano with this applause and we will come back to you later. They are coping with the current crisis...

But Loppiano is also a place where many young people come to from different parts of the world. Just yesterday, May 1, as they do every year, many young Italians went to Loppiano...

(Music)

Nino (Italy): The main theme of the day is "outside," meaning go out. Why "outside"? It's because there are more than 1,000 young people here and we want to promote a culture of dialogue, a culture of encounter; in order to meet other people we must open the doors to them.

Sally (Egypt): Here we have music, a celebration, but there are also times for reflection. The young people in Iraq have sent us a video from Erbil telling us how they are trying to live in peace (very short video on Iraq with a few words of greeting in Arabic). There is a lot of suffering and violence, but there are also signs of hope and of unity in fraternity.

Kareem (Palestine) from the stage: ... Now I feel at home, I feel I have found the treasure I was looking for. I can say I have become another person.

Anna (Italy): this year the May 1st event includes an Expo made up of 13 different stands where we have set out all the social action projects that the young people of the Movement are

involved in, but not only that. We wanted to show that we are in touch with each other and support one another.

(Music and applause)

“LIVING PEACE” IN CAIRO (EGYPT)

Claudio: It's a time of great world events for young people and teens working for peace. What we have just seen, about yesterday at Loppiano, is one of the events of United World Week which is happening right now, with the main event in Coimbatore, India.

Instead, tomorrow, the young people in Wellington (New Zealand), will start a relay race for peace, called Run4unity. It will go through all the time zones, involving young people and children in 150 cities worldwide, and will finish in Honolulu in Hawaii.

Claudio (voice off) Tomorrow, “*Living Peace*” begins in Cairo, Egypt. Over 1,200 students, teachers and groups working for peace and fraternity will take part, and there will be similar events in other countries. They want to say that the time for peace is now. Now is the time to live it and learn how to build it. *Living Peace* is about dialogue among cultures, generations and religions. It will be spelled out through exhibitions of the students' work, artistic sessions, workshops and testimonies by different people.

Living Peace began four years ago in a school in Cairo and it has spread to 136 cities in 103 countries. Currently it involves over 70,000 children, teenagers and adults. The peace cube and its six mottos to live by have become a way of building peace and fraternity in schools. There is the daily appointment called “Time out,” a time to pause and pray for or reflect on peace. *(Applause)*

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE – YOGYAKARTA (INDONESIA)

Claudio (voice off): An experience of the “cube of peace” took place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where 350 Muslim children from 12 villages, and about 50 teachers and parents and some Christians gathered in the pendopo (an open auditorium) at the Sultan's palace. There were games, dances and songs; examples were given of how to live the six mottos on the cube. At the end of the morning there was a “Time out” for peace. This project will go on in the different regions and villages throughout the year. *(Applause)*

BOLIVAR – A TOWN IN THE ANDES (PERU)

Claudio: Now we are going to climb up the Andes Mountains in Peru. Up at a height of 4,000 meters, there is a little town called Bolivar which you probably won't have heard of. Let's go there now.

(Music)

Speaker: When someone from the United World Association [AMU] told us about Bolivar, the question we all asked was: “Who made them do it?”

I think that you would think the same, hearing about a people who down through the centuries had established itself up there, on the mountain peaks of the Peruvian Andes, living a long way from the closest cities along the twists and turns of the mountain roads.

At that point we were looking at those twists and turns from the high mountainside, aboard some minibuses that make us feel like we were in a mixer, it seemed even more right to ask ourselves why they chose to hide themselves away like this.

Those of us who had come from Italy had already taken three flights and traveled for 15 hours, crossing the diverse and chaotic city of Lima and taking in the beauty of Peru, before embarking on a 14 hour journey at 4,000 meters above sea level.

Once we reached the town, we realized immediately that we were a curious bunch: not only because we were strangers, but because our pale skin burnt by the sun earned us the name “gringos,” the white folks from the outside.

It however did not seem to be a big problem, judging by the relationship between the Bolivarianos and Francesco, who had already been here several times to represent AMU.

(Scenery)

He was the one who introduced us to another key figure in Bolívar, Father Emeterio, who over the years had come to understand the dreams and needs of this people.

Father Emeterio: I asked the couples in the different communities: “Supposing there was a school here? One which could offer a meal and also somewhere to stay? One that could take care of your children?” “Ah! We have been waiting years for this miracle!”

Speaker: This is how the project came about to build a school in Bolívar, following a different model than the ones beforehand.

Father Emeterio: Through the Movement I got to know about AMU, about Youth for a United World, and other groups, parishes and New Families, who support part of the project. We have begun with 5 or 6 adoptions at a distance in the school.

Professor: We teachers try and work with a family atmosphere, as Fr. Emeterio mentioned: “the unity of Saint Francis of Assisi.”

Lady 1: This school was built especially for poor families and so that those who live furthest away could come and study here. This is a big project that Father Emeterio has worked on.

Lady 2: We also have a cafeteria. For me, it’s really a big help.

Speaker: We listened to what they wanted and contributed, along with many others, to fulfilling this dream. Now, having followed the journeys of these children, day after day, we can see the importance of being able to trace out different paths.

(Scenery and music)

Were we able to grasp the mystery of Bolívar? Before going back, the Peruvians told us that while we were there “we had all crept into their pockets,” meaning they had grown fond of us. Now that we have come home we feel we can say that the townspeople of Bolívar had crept into our pockets too.

Claudio: Thanks a lot Gianpaolo for the diary of your travels. Let's take the opportunity to greet the people who have got together for the live link up in Trujillo, in the north of Peru.

Now let's stay in South America, in Venezuela.

The 4th Arts Festival at Maracaibo (Venezuela)

In Republic Square in Maracaibo, Venezuela, the 4th biannual Arts Festival was held. It was led by the Chiara Lubich Chair of Studies at the Cecilio Acosta University. The subject of the event was one of Chiara's best known meditations: "The attraction of modern times.... to penetrate to the highest contemplation while mingling with everyone, one person alongside others." More than 90 artists worked with great creativity, imagination and artistic skill. It was a sign of hope in the complex social situation in which the country finds itself.

SOPHIA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, LOPPIANO (live)

Claudio: Now let's go back to our live link with Loppiano. Where are you now Milena?

Milena: The Sophia University Institute is based at Loppiano and is a centre for formation and academic research founded in 2007. This year 116 people have attended the Institute either as students, teachers or guests. Some of the lecturers and students are here with us now.

This morning we had the open day, a chance for people to get to know the programs offered and the academic methods of the Sophia Institute. It is an international institute, in which there is not only an encounter among cultures but where people experience the fact that cultures are a gift to each other. Gosia comes from Poland and is studying finance. Could you tell us in a few words what is new about Sophia?

Gosia: the most interesting thing is that here life and study are inseparable from each other. What we study becomes part of life, our daily life. The discovery of the other person has been my big discovery during these last two years.

Milena: Thanks Gosia. So let's "discover" who else there is. Here is Noemi from Paraguay. She got to know this university because she went to the Sophia Summer School in Argentina. Here is David from Mumbai who is doing a course on The Culture of Unity; he plays the base in the Loppiano youth band. This is Ivan from Ukraine, doing his first year in Political Studies. Your days are quite full...

Ivan: Yes! We work really hard but it is very interesting. As well as the lectures, study periods and exams three times a week, we meet with the Sophia staff for a time of deep sharing and dialogue. Because there has been so much war and violence in the last few months we set up a workshop so as to understand more about conflicts and to work for peace ... through an interdisciplinary approach.

Milena: Thanks Ivan, very much. Gloria, you come from Bujumbura in Burundi. We know that there has been a crisis in your country. Can you tell us something about it?

Gloria: Yes, I want just to say hello to all my people and say that we are living and praying for you. I heard about the Economy of Communion at a seminar in Burjumbura, as a new way of doing economics and this is what brought me to Sophia. When I came here, I realised that before changing the economy I must first change myself.

Milena: Thanks Gloria. I would like to end with Declan. He teaches in the Department of Theology and Philosophy. Declan...

Declan: I see that after two years at Sophia the students leave with a new way of being, a new outlook on the world and a new way of understanding current affairs, so they can offer solutions that are different and which the world really needs.

Milena: Thank you. Now back to you in Rome, Claudio.

Claudio: Thanks Milena. *(Applause)*

PLACES OF CONFLICT AND SUFFERING

From KENYA

Claudio: As with any family our hearts go out to those who are suffering the most. Current affairs show one tragedy after another; it almost takes our breath away. There was the terrible earthquake in Nepal, the boats that sink in the Mediterranean, the political crisis in Burundi.

In the midst of all this suffering and destruction we can try to see the signs of hope, like the two little children who survived two tragedies: the first, only 4 months old, brought out alive from the rubble 22 hours after the quake...; the second saved from drowning when a boat sank in the Mediterranean. They are like icons of hope.

We were shocked by the massacre of over 140 students at the University of Garissa in Kenya. Now let's hear from two people who were there. First Professor John Nyambega and then Mary Mutungi, a gen who helped prepare the bodies of the dead so that they could be returned to their families.

DR. JOHN NYAMBEGA (SHORT VIDEO) IN ENGLISH

For me as a lecturer in a university, I share the pain of the parents and others. It's as if part of me has died. This came as a surprise. No one ever thought that educational institutions would ever be a target.

This incident drew together people from different walks of life, different religions. They came together to share with those who lost their loved ones and brought in a new sense of unity and a questioning: what has gone wrong in our society?

As members of the Ideal we came out strongly and participated with the families. The Gen went to visit the affected families at the mortuary and those that were in the hospital. The volunteers and others collected what they could give materially to give it to the families and we were very united to them at this tragic time.

Mary Mutungji: (in English) We went to offer consolation to the families that were affected by the Garrissa terrorist attack. I never imagined or dreamt to find myself there.

In coordination with the Red Cross team we were taken to one of the morgues to help in the identification of the victims. Oh my God, it was a hard test for me! I could not imagine that all the bodies before me were human beings. All my thoughts went to Jesus Forsaken, the disfigured One! And this experience left me with a change.

Inside there I witnessed the dressing, the cleaning and even the painting to try and give the faces of the corpses at least an original look. This act of charity was of the best form in that the families, would have a chance to see their loved ones for the last time in a better state...

In all this I am grateful to mother Chiara for teaching me how to love, love without measure. Thank you. (Applause)

Claudio: We should be linked up with Kenya now, with the little town called Mariapolis Piero, near Nairobi, where people are following this link up. Lili Mugombozi is the director of New City, Africa. What is the situation like in the Country now Lili?

Lili: Ciao Claudio, hello everone. First of all we want to thank everyone for being close to us through your prayers and through the many messages that came from all over the world during that terrible time. There is still a great deal of fear, people lost confidence, but they also picked themselves up after the initial shock and had the courage to go forward. Life goes on. And then, despite new threats of every kind, we still believe that universal fraternity is possible. That is what I can say just now. Thank you. Ciao too everyone.

Claudio: Thanks Lily! Greetings to everyone there.

Lili: Thank you. Greetings from Mariapolis Piero.

Claudio: Ciao.

NEWS FROM SYRIA

Claudio: A few days ago Pascal was here in Rome. He lives in the focolare in Aleppo with two other focolarini. The focolarine are based in Damascus. They stayed in Syria despite four terrible years of war... The official figures tell of over 220,000 deaths (of which at least 70,000 are civilians, and 11,000 are children). Let's hear what he has to say.

Pascal Bedros: The situation in Syria differs from one place to the next, so in some areas the situation is calm, although they do feel the effects of the global scenario. In some places like Aleppo where the focolare is (...) the situation is very fluid and constantly changing (...) you can go out of your house without being sure of getting back. (...)

We live in the midst of danger, so psychologically we are always on alert, and even our whole being ready to spring because something bad could happen any time and this creates tension and, in the long term, exhaustion. (...) Because we have water once a week for two hours, and we get electricity for an hour a day when all goes well, let's say. Our lives have been in

danger very often (...) But, living with others, sharing in the sufferings of others, we then find the answers, we find the right reasons to remain in this country. (...)

Its not that we want to live in suffering all the time. I can say that in Aleppo, despite everything, we and the families, with the young people and the children, we always try to find something to celebrate. Why is this? To remind ourselves that the sole fact of being together is a reason to live.

We know that many people now want to share the experience of the focolare with us, that is, the spirituality. If we think of the material help we have received and that we still need because people have lost everything; we know many people who have literally lost everything (...) so economic aid is still very important. But above all, I would say, the main way to help is that we must work hard for peace, and give peace a voice, because it seems to have become normal that there is a war in Syria. (...)

The people there are grateful to Chiara because they have experienced that love, which goes beyond all self-interest, is the most beautiful thing, is the most real thing; and that this love, perhaps by seeing that focolarini and focolarine staying there, or seeing all that the Movement, that all of us together are doing for them, they feel that it is true, that love is the most authentic reality and so is worth the most.

It was wonderful when we saw the Conference Call, the link up, because for many of them, seeing how the families in Mexico are living, or the people in Nigeria, or seeing the presenters here at the link up - these are all real stories, our stories that we are part of, and our suffering is part of this whole, we are a family that [has its]... And this family is not closed in on itself, but is open to everything that is going on around it. I think this is a really beautiful family! (Applause)

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Claudio: Thank you Pascal. We heard everyone was so happy you got back to Aleppo safe and sound.

They are not able to follow the link up with us because of the lack of electricity. A short while ago Pascal sent a What's App message saying that things are extremely difficult there and that some families now have to make very hard decisions: whether to stay or to leave their beloved country. These are "life and death" decisions, yet, he says, there is joy too.

We want to greet the 65 young people from different cities in Syria who are meeting together after very dangerous journeys. They write that they are days of "deep joy and light." The communities in Syria and Iraq have asked us to thank you all for the ongoing financial, spiritual and moral support.

MARIA VOCE AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UN (22nd April 2015)

Claudio: The urgent need to find new ways towards peace and reconciliation, as a deterrent to violent extremism, was the subject discussed at the United Nations on April 21 – 22,

2015, where Emmaus was invited to speak, along with other religious leaders. Let's hear part of what she said.

Maria Voce (Emmaus): [...] It is clear that our times do not require half measures. If violent extremism exists - while accepting the need to defend oneself and especially those who are weak and persecuted - our response must be similarly radical, but one that is structurally different, by which I mean "extremism in dialogue"! A dialogue which requires the highest level of engagement, which is risky, demanding, challenging and which aims to sever the roots of incomprehension, fear and bitterness. [...]

Shouldn't the United Nations perhaps reconsider its own vocation, and reformulate its own fundamental mission? What does being a "United Nations" organization mean today, if not an institution which truly works towards unity among nations, while respecting their strong identities? It is certainly essential to actively maintain international security but, although security is vital, it is not necessarily the same thing as peace. [...]

"There are many signs that a new awareness may finally emerge out of this serious international situation. Awareness of the need to work together for the common good, among more or less wealthy peoples, with more or less sophisticated weaponry, believers or not, but who have the courage to 'invent peace'." [...]

Religions want to be themselves and not a tool used by other powers, even for the noblest aims; or precepts studied so as to resolve conflicts or crises. They want to be a spiritual process which can be lived and becomes a community able to share and give meaning to the joys and sufferings of people today, channelling everything towards the realization of one universal human family.

DIALOGUE WITH EMMAUS AND JESUS

Claudio: So, dear Emmaus and Jesús, let's try and go to the heart of what took place at the UN, to try and grasp its significance.

For example, Emmaus, what did you experience when you stepped into a place which is so crucial to international relations?

Emmaus: To be honest, I felt a great joy and I realised when I went into that place that these people - who are heads of State, or at any rate political leaders from different countries belonging to the United Nations - that they really needed help and that at last they were courageous enough to say so and to ask for this help from religious leaders, to ask for help from ethics, to ask for the help of spirituality. They said it clearly: "We need all of you, we need your wisdom." And I felt, on hearing this cry for help from that particular assembly, that it was the cry for help from humankind today, and that we had to respond somehow. I felt this was our place and that we bring into it something that is already a reality, because we were already bringing an example of a united world. And all we have heard up to now in the Conference Call shows that this is true.

Claudio: You used some very direct expressions. There is one in particular that almost all the media picked up: the extremism of dialogue. What do you mean by those words?

Emmaus: When I went in there, what I felt was that my message should be a stimulus to achieve change, a radical change of mentality, that is, to flip the paradigm on which it has been based up to now, because for the most part it is based on a paradigm aimed at procuring security and in order to have security it promotes tolerance and peaceful co-existence for its own interests. Instead, I felt that I had to risk everything, and that to counter fundamentalisms that are extremisms, to counter fundamentalism in general, only another type of extremism can successfully win out. And that is the extremism of those who are able to make themselves one with others right to the end, those who are ready to risk everything in order to build relationships of dialogue. And only those who love can do this, only those who love, not those who try to defend themselves, but those who try and conquer others with love. So I felt that by flipping the paradigm: not the united nations but the unity of nations, not the alliance of civilizations, but the civilization of alliances, so that everything would be flipped around and it would become clear that it is possible to build a united world, that there is already the beginning of a united world, but that it is only possible if we start from love and that only love is the secret to doing it. (Applause)

Claudio: Jesús, do you think that this occasion, this event, important as it was, might just be an isolated incident or do you see something more coming from it?

Jesús: We spoke about this right afterwards, because it seemed to us that it was a very important moment for the Movement as a whole, but also for religions, for the all that faith communities do in the world, and for politics itself.

Personally I think there are two aspects. The first is the event itself. It was a time when the charism of unity had great visibility in the most suitable place, because if we think that we are the charism of unity and that our ideal is *that all may be one*, there is no better place for this ideal to be proclaimed than the United Nations. From the point of view of giving visibility to the charism, not so much for ourselves but really as a service to humanity today. In this context, giving visibility is putting the charism into effect in a way that reveals all its power as it is now, so it gives us strength to work harder.

To tell you the truth I find it difficult to speak today after having heard the facts, because we could say many things; but let's speak as Emmaus has always said: I am not bringing myself but the whole Movement is behind me, and this gives us strength to keep on working.

The other thing that is important is Emmaus' talk itself, what she has just said, this overturning of the paradigm. According to me – I read it like this and I said it straightaway to Emmaus and the others – I think Emmaus brought about a radicalization of political discourse, a radicalization in the sense of bringing it back to its roots. When Emmaus said not a united nations but the unity of nations, not the alliance of civilizations but the civilization of alliances, she highlighted a pre-political framework which is unity and civilisation; and this is what politics is short of today. That is the main reason why politics has lost its way, and lacks clear ways forward,

because the foundations are missing. If the foundations are not laid then politicians can't hit the target as they say, they will...

In this sense and for this reason it seems to us that it will not be an isolated event, but that we have to go ahead working on all fronts.

Claudio: So is it something that involves all of us?

Emmaus: All of us.

Claudio: So what steps do you see us taking now to work towards this goal, to build peace from this point of view?

Emmaus: I would just say two things. First: do not stop believing, because it is very important, at least for us, to be convinced that it is possible. And if someone begins to doubt a bit, that someone can be alongside them who says: no, it is possible, and I believe it. Don't stop believing it. We must strengthen our faith.

And second: we must do all we can, the "all" that is possible for each one, to talk about peace, to promote peace with whoever we meet, to create public opinion which says that peace is possible. And look, it is obvious that most people want peace, most people want to build a fraternal world. They are a silent majority, and then there is a minority that talks about and wants war, which tries to build the antidote of peace.

We have a gift that allows us to mobilise the silent majority, to be in the front line of this vast number of people who want peace and to say: we are with you, we all want peace together. And I think that we can do it. *(Applause)*

Jesús: We want to talk things over here at the Center, and we thought of bringing together as soon as possible all the people in the Movement who work in politics and this pre-political field, which is cultural too, so as to enable a grassroots effort, which is real but also aiming to create public opinion, to speak in parliaments, to speak to public opinion through the mass media. So we must take this opportunity fully.

Claudio: Thank you.

Emmaus: Thanks to all of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

CHIARA LUBICH AT THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION (28th May 1997)

Claudio: What is being said here is very interesting and brings us back to how relevant the talk Chiara gave at the United Nations, 20 years ago, still is today. Let's listen to part of it.

Chiara Lubich: *The Focolare Movement ... seeks to build unity among individuals, among groups and peoples and in this way it brings peace into the world. It dreams of a future reality which could be expressed by the words: a united world.*

It calls for peace, promotes and builds peace not so much at high-level meetings, as happens at the UN, but among ordinary people of every language, ethnicity, nationality and belief. (Applause)

But what is the bond of unity that brings peace?

It is love, love that dwells in the depths of every human heart. For the followers of Christ, it can be called agape, which is a participation in the love that is the life of God. This love is strong. It can even love those who do not reciprocate it but who attack, who might be enemies. It is a love that can forgive.

For those who follow other religions, this love is often called benevolence and is expressed by the Golden Rule which enriches many religions: "Do to others what you would have them do to you. Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you."

For people who do not have a religious faith, this love can mean philanthropy, solidarity, non-violence.

So love is needed, a love that is both human and divine and does not exclude purely human love, and which unites men and women, children and older people, from all kinds of backgrounds, making them all one heart. This has consequences at both the spiritual and material levels: sharing in different ways, but always in an atmosphere of peace. ...

Mutual love and unity give great joy to those who live in this way, but they also call for commitment, daily application and sacrifice.

For Christians, this is where one word comes into evidence which is both marvellous and awesome: a word the world does not want to hear because it is considered foolish, absurd, and senseless. This word is the cross.

Nothing good, nothing useful, nothing fruitful for this world can be achieved without knowing how to accept difficulties and suffering; in brief: nothing without the cross.

A commitment to the cause of peace is not to be taken lightly! It takes courage, knowing how to suffer. ...

Certainly, if more people accepted suffering out of love, the suffering that love requires, it could become the most powerful means of giving humanity something to be truly proud of: no longer being a collection of peoples living side by side and frequently in conflict with one another, but being one people, enriched by one another's diversity and safeguarding each other's identity.

...

Furthermore, there is a general consensus on the part of leading figures on the world stage concerning the need to re-read the meaning of reciprocity, which is one of the cornerstones

of international relations. Reciprocity is the basis of our spirituality and of all that we do; it means we have to go beyond old or new style alliances so as to establish relationships with everyone, which is what true love requires. It means we must take the initiative, without pre-conditions and expectations. It helps us see the other person as another me and to consider all that we are working towards in those terms, whether it concerns disarmament, development, or cooperation.

It is not enough to put an end to war. We need to create the conditions in which all peoples can love the others' countries as their own, in a reciprocal and unselfish exchange of gifts.

Certainly, wars will continue to happen until there a new spirit takes hold, because all kinds of excuses to start wars can be found. We need a change of heart, we need a spiritual renewal.

*Nowadays there are so many discoveries, new things, developments in communications and new technologies. What has not progressed in the world is the spiritual aspect. We need a spiritual boost, a supplement of love in the world and this is what we must bring.
Applause and music*

CONCLUSION

Claudio: That happened in 1997, and yet those words seem more relevant than ever: *to bring a spiritual boost, a supplement of love.*" This is the commitment that we want to take on and that we want to live in our environments, wherever we are, especially in the places and situations that are most difficult, as we have seen in this Conference Call.

Now we are about to finish. But please allow me to do some advertising. Our Publishing House, Città Nuova, has published the book *L'Unità si fa storia (Unity, History in the Making)*, which helps us get to know Pasquale Foresi, our Chiaretto, better. He is here with us now. *(Applause)*

Another new publication is *Story of Light*, Chiara's story as written by Iginio Giordani, Foco, which you will find published in instalments in the "New Humanity" review. It was his masterpiece, Iginio Giordani used to say, and he wanted it to be published only after his death.

A last link with Loppiano, and this time you are in the Auditorium, aren't you Milena?

Milena: Yes, Claudio, we are all here together. A big greeting and thank you from the whole town. I think I can say on behalf of everyone: we believe it, we want peace and we will do all we can to bring it about. Ciao! *(Applause)*

Claudio: Good-bye to all of you in Loppiano!
I think this applause means that we too want to live for peace together with you.
During this live live link-up, we received some messages that we would like to share with you.

"We are 40 priests from different countries in East Africa gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, for our annual retreat. The local community is with us too. We declare our unity in bringing the Ideal into the world. It is a huge joy to be connected with Chiara's large family throughout the world. Good-bye."

And another greeting from Imam Allal Bachar at the Mosque in Marbella, Spain: *"I am following all this splendid news, may God bless you." (Applause)*

From Tenerife Eva, Maria Chiara and Marigi write: *"Thank you for helping us see the whole world so that we can share deeply in the life and, above all, the suffering of each one. We are journeying together towards that all may be one. In this CH we have understood how to live the terrible events happening in the world in these days."*

Good. Now we can say good-bye, reminding you that you will find the whole Conference Call on the website, to watch it in one of the 13 languages available and the individual clips can be downloaded and shared on social media.

Thank you also for the donations that make this Conference Call possible.

The appointment for the next Conference Call will be on 20 June, at 12 noon, Italian time.

Thank you and good-bye to all of you! *(Applause)*

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you for the donations that have been made directly through the site, or via a bank. Even if these are small, they are what make the Conference Call possible.