

## **CONFERENCE CALL/LINK-UP ROCCA DI Papa, 20th June 2015**

### **Welcome and greetings**

Ray Asprer: Hello everyone. Hello to everyone from Rocca di papa and welcome to our worldwide conference call.

My name is Ray, I'm from Manila in the Philippines. Warm greetings to all those from my country in our language. *Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat!* And greetings to everyone, all of us. (Applause)

We greet all of you who are following this conference call in different parts of the world. Here in this hall there are 50 gen 3 (applause) representing a big congress of 600 gen 3 at Castel Gandolfo. Have we greeted everyone at Castel Gandolfo? (Applause).

We also greet the 50 people from Italy who are meeting to discuss Citta' Nuova magazine. Then there are 100 or so from the local community here at Rocca di papa, Grottaferrata and Marino, our neighbours. (Applause) And then greetings to the Abba School. (Applause).

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

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### **FROM TAGAYTAY (Philippines) – “United for Peace”**

This conference call is timed to suit Asia and Oceania in particular. So let's start straight away from the place where I lived for many years, the little town of Tagaytay, in the Philippines, near Manila. I know that many people are following the conference call live. Maika, one of the gen, should be on line. Are you there Maika?

Maika: Here I am

Ray: Hello, Maika!

Maika: Hello everyone! Hi Ray. *Mabuhay!*

Ray: *Mabuhay Maika!* How are you?

Maika: I'm fine. Here in this hall we are all so happy to be linked up with you!

Ray: Hello everyone. Maika, tell us something. Have you got something to show us?

Maika: Yes, we have prepared something.

Ray: So you are ready. Let's see what you have prepared.

Maika: Let's see it together.

(Music)

Maika (in English with Italian subtitles): Celebrating differences. Building bridges, is an ongoing project forming youth leaders in peace-building skills in their respective cities.

Nikko: Last February about 30 young leaders from Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, students and professionals alike, of different religions, were invited here at the Mariapolis Peace, in Tagaytay, near Manila.

Maika: Together we spent four days practising a life-style of dialogue as a way to overcome intolerance and violence. It was for us a surge of creativity and commitment.

Nikko: It was an exercise in profound listening and teamwork and understanding the values of sacrifice and mutual trust. All this allowed cultural and religious differences to be seen as richness, contributing to conflict resolution and promoting peace.

Maika In the following months we met up with colleagues and groups from different organisations. Our goal was to share with many others the experience we had made in Tagaytay. And to understand how to respond with a personal commitment to the problems encountered in our neighbourhoods.

Nikko: In the Philippines some concrete initiatives have already begun. In Manila a day of recreation was held with Muslim and Christian kids, fostering mutual respect and awareness. Meanwhile in the central region of Tacloban, a workshop was done with kids affected by the catastrophic typhoon of 2013 to raise their self-esteem and hopefulness towards the future.

Maika: Preparing the way to peace is demanding work.

Nikko: But if we don't commit to it ourselves today, we won't have it tomorrow.

Ray: Nikko, Maika, thanks for this work you are doing for peace! (Applause)

Maika: Thank you.

## **FROM MUMBAI (INDIA)**

Ray: Let's stay in Asia! And being in Asia let's go to Mumbai, in India. I think Annabel is on the phone. Annabel are you there?

Annabel: Yes. Hello Ray!

Ray: Hello Annabel, it's good to hear you.

Annabel: We are so glad to be able to follow this link up live.

Ray: Great!

Annabel: here in Mumbai is raining a lot because the monsoon has started; there is a small group of us here but many more are linked up via the internet.

Ray: Annabel, we know that you have worked really hard for United World Week. Can you tell us about it?

Annabel: Yes. It was characterised by interreligious dialogue in action. For the first time we worked with young people from different movements and Hindu institutions, looking at the challenges of diversity. It was a big workshop on "dialogue" where the process was as

important as the final outcome. There were 150 young people from 15 nationalities and different Indian States. There were Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians with many initiatives and workshops, and we had meals in the families of the Movement. Everything was a wonderful opportunity to experience fraternity.

On the 1st May there were 3 events organised for over 1,000 young people. We wanted to share our conviction with a broader audience. The experiences of the young people from the Risho Kosei-Kai, the Shanti Ashram and Anam Prem bore witness to the fraternity that already binds us. We also installed the cube of Sports4Peace on the seashore at Mumbai, in a place where many young people go.

Ray: Great, Annabel! Then you went south didn't you, to Coimbatore?

Annabel: Yes, we were there for the last three days of United World Week, in the rural setting and activities of the Shanti Ashram. They were very full days. When we left we were so happy at having taken a step ahead together on the path of dialogue, convinced that universal fraternity is not a dream. And now we are going ahead with all of you! Thank you!

Ray: Great, thank you. Thanks Annabel, thanks. (Applause)

## **FROM HONG KONG (CHINA)**

Ray: Time is precious for everyone, especially for people who live a frenetic life in a huge city like Hong Kong, in China. Theresa and Sebastian have sent us a story about a particular district of Hong Kong. (Music)

Theresa (in Cantonese with Italian subtitles): We have been married for 10 years and have three daughters. Thinking about our family life we asked ourselves: what is the most important thing we want to give to our girls? We understood that the most precious thing of all is God and his love for everyone.

One day we were talking to a friend who is a social worker and works in a poor district of Hong Kong. The families in the area earn very little, they are single parents or new immigrants, most of them don't have a religious faith. We wanted to do something for these families, but she explained that they don't really need "things" so much as someone to spend time with them.

Our children brought their favourite toys with them so as to play with the children.

Sebastian (in Cantonese, with Italian subtitles): We also involved the local community who were really happy to help. So every two months about 70 of us go to the community centre. The real needs are for love, support, encouragement and someone who is alongside them in life. We established a relationship of mutual love and respect and now we have really become friends.

When there were some Christian festivals we were able to share their deeper meaning by telling more about Jesus. Every time it is difficult to leave one another and we can see the joy on their faces and that they are looking forward to the next time. It might seem as though we are the ones giving, but in fact we receive a lot, we learn to love everyone and experience the joy of sharing. And... we can give our girls the most precious thing in the world.

Ray: Thank you! Thank you to Theresa e Sebastian! Did you hear the Chinese language, how nice it is! I don't know if the gen 3 at Castel Gandolfo heard this Chinese language, we heard your applause. (*There are the gen 3 at Castelgandolfo*). This is their reaction!

Our spirituality reached Asia in the 1960s, first the Philippines and from there it spread to other countries in Asia. In Burma the first person to bring the Ideal was Sister Benedetta Carnovali, a real pioneer. We remember her today because a month ago she died aged 90. From 1962 to 1966 she was first in Burma and then in Thailand and she helped many young people get to know the spirituality of unity.

### **IN DIALOGUE WITH EMMAUS, JESÚS AND GENEVIÈVE**

Ray: And now let's move on and I invite Emmaus, Jesús and Geneviève to come up here and sit on these chairs. (Applause)

We are going to have some family time in our living room.

Emmaus: Thank you.

Ray: Emmaus and Jesús recently visited two countries in Eastern Europe, Belarus and Poland. Genevieve has been to Nairobi in Kenya for an important international event on the Economy of Communion.

Let's start straightaway with your travels. The first stop was in Belarus. I don't know if we can see where Belarus is on the map. We know you went to this country for the first time, that you got to know the community of the Movement here which is numerically small but very active. You were welcomed very warmly. But before listening to you let's hear from them.

### **BELARUS – a community in action**

Andrei Papkouski (in Russian): *I have been married to Angelika for 26 years, we have five children and we live in a block of flats in Minsk, capital of Belarus. Many of our neighbours belong to different religions and beliefs. There are Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Protestants, atheists. We try to live each day in accordance with the principle of love and to reach out to everyone with respect. Our city has 2 million inhabitants but there are only 4 Catholic churches. Ours is not big at all! Actually, until recently we used to have our liturgy in a room in the Town Hall.*

Anzhalika Papkouskaya (in Russian): *But now, we gather to pray in a small chapel that was built through the offerings of the community. It can accommodate 50-60 people. So on Sundays, most people follow the liturgy from outside. Together with the families who try to live the Ideal of unity, we commit ourselves to build the living church.*

Andrei (in Russian): *We noticed that our parish priest was struggling to carry out his pastoral work. We realized that he needed help. So we asked him: What can we do concretely for our parish? He was very much moved and asked us to buy a container to be transformed into a room for catechism classes. He said it would cost \$ 3,000, a sum of money that was too much for us.*

Angelika (in Russian): *We needed to work hard in order to raise so much money: telephone people and explain the reasons. The families in our group helped us with much enthusiasm. After two months we were able to inaugurate the catechism classroom in that container. We are very happy that our action together, in mutual trust and unity have produced a result that was so concrete and visible.*

Ray: Emmaus, why did you go to Belarus? And what impression did you have on getting to know this people personally?

Emmaus: First of all I was really moved and struck by seeing these two Belarussian people who welcomed us with so much warmth and great love. We went to Belarus because it was in our programme to go to a zone in Eastern Europe, to go to Poland, and we understood, we heard that Belarus, in [the zone of] Poland was the part where people were living in the greatest difficulties, both socially, politically and economically. So we wanted to start there, so as to show that we want to start with the least. That was why.

We were very struck by our visit because we found a people - as you said - a little community but one that is alive, a community the focalini can visit only a few times a year, because of problems of all kinds, but one that goes ahead, that is open and is really wanting the spirituality, Gospel life. And at the same time, finding itself geographically speaking in the midst of many other peoples, it can act as a bridge among these peoples, even though, for the very same reason, it has been a theatre of many battles, and very much oppressed; it has had to mortify its identity on many occasions. But this also makes the people very receptive, extremely open and able to welcome both good and bad. So we felt that our community there feels the responsibility for their people to welcome what is good, to receive this spirituality, which is spreading more and more, this spirit of unity that they feel is essential to give them the true identity of Jesus, the Jesus of Belarus. (Applause).

Ray: Thank you.

Jesús: To give an example why Belarus can be strategic for dialogue too we can say that relationships between Catholics and Orthodox are very good, something that is not easy in that context. They emphasised this to us. So we think that it could be very fertile ground

for dialogue between the more Eastern and more Western parts of Europe. These people's capacity to love is truly great. For example the last Mass there was celebrated in a little church, among the few that are there, and they celebrated it in Belarus, because it is mostly in the churches that people speak Belarussian, and they said it in Latin as an act of love for me, so that I could follow it, because Belarussian...

Truly they are people who made a big impression on us. They won our hearts.

### **POLAND – EKa: the story of an EoC business**

Ray: They your journey went on, into Poland. We heard that among the many things that happened while you were there you visited two businesses of the Economy of Communion. The first is called "Complex Project", these businesses are close to Krakow. "Complex Project" designs bridges, roads and infrastructure, and has about 50 employees.

We have a short film about the second company.

According to you what could pliers and soup have in common? Let's see, it is a great experience.

Boguslaw Musiolik, President of the EKa Company (in Polish): In 1991 the Economy of Communion came to Poland. At first we had negative ideas about it, thinking that it was a return to communism. But quote soon we realized how different it is. It's an idea that makes you look at the other person. It had a great impact on us.

Shortly afterwards we met two young men from Silesia who are food distributors. They were also attracted by the concept of the Economy of Communion. We decided to work together, founding a shared company. Even if our respective sectors were very different, the EoC idea united us so strongly that it brought about a great synergy. And the firm has grown rapidly.

Speaker: After the end of communism, foreign capital poured into Poland. Shopping centres and large supermarkets sprouted everywhere, competing with the local trade. Many companies went bankrupt.

Robert Szczepanski, CdA (in Polish, with Italian subtitles): The crisis at the time was very difficult. Several companies EKa did not pay what they owed us. We had considerable losses. Unfortunately, during that same period, I had a stroke and was absent from work for a year and a half. I could only pray, as my colleagues went on with the business as best they could

Alojzy Lazar (in Polish): One of the companies that failed had to pay us tens of thousands of zlotys. We had two choices before us: to claim the debt through the courts or begin a dialogue with them to address the very difficult situation. We chose the second option.

Speaker (in Italian): They took in 4 employees and transferred the ownership of the business to EKa, including the characteristic Zurek soup, made from rye flour, which the company produced at a cottage industry level.

Alojzy Lazar (in Polish): This change made it possible for us to produce Zurek and Smalek and these foodstuffs are our main products.

Robert Szczepanski (in Polish): Now we have almost 40 employees. We have 6 partners in Poland and one in Germany. We have a turnover of 9 million zlotys a year. I think it is worthwhile to keep going with a company that is founded on the values of the Economy of Communion.

Ray: It is great to hear these languages, all these different languages.

I don't know if you tried the Zurek soup.

Jesús: Yes, we did, several times.

Emmaus: Yes, yes, it is very good.

Jesús: The fact is that the day we visited the business an article was published in the newspapers saying that this soup had been awarded a prize as the best food product of the year in Poland. You have seen that it is really impressive: and it all started from an act of love. These three volunteers were gen, and this means a lot. As Chiara always said: the new culture will be brought about by the new generation. What they said is very important too, that on the one hand this is very significant for Poland, which wants to leave behind the times of soviet communism, which were very hard, but on the other hand is careful not to go in, not to adopt liberal capitalism in an uncritical way, as this goes on creating people who are marginalised and people are still forced to migrate.

So the Economy of communion is truly the solution. These are two companies, and it is something small, but they are two fairly substantial businesses, with 40 employees each and there is also the new culture. What is more, in the other company the people working there are of different Christian traditions, not only Catholics. When we went there we met them all, one by one, and it was very impressive. They stopped working and spent an hour, an hour and a half with us talking, greeting us one by one.

Ray: What was your strongest impression in Poland?

Emmaus: This can be seen a bit in what Jesus said and what we saw. Truly you feel that there is a people with many treasures, in values, energy, creativity, imagination. They are a people who want to defend all of this. So it seems that what the ideal can give, that the culture of the spirituality of unity can still give to this people, is that of overcoming the temptation to defend themselves so as to be completely open and be able to share their gifts.

So we said: don't close yourselves in to fight against people who are coming in and bringing things that you don't like. Defend the things that you like, of course, but give what

you like because certainly it is better than what the others are bringing you. And the others will be able to receive and appreciate this.

So it was an invitation to openness, which I think was well received.

Jesús: We also saw that the Movement there is very Polish, so very proud of what it is. And we encouraged this inculturation in a culture which is so rich and has such a strong sense of national identity, cultural, political and religious identity. At the same time there was this challenge of being able to dialogue with the other Europe which is struggling to recognise its Christian identity. So it seems a great gift for the whole of Europe, Poland is a great gift for the whole of Europe.

Ray: Thank you for these things which are precious to us.

### **CAMEROON – an Economy of Communion business raising chickens**

Ray: We have Geneviève here with us. Geneviève, you are from the Central African Republic and a few months ago you came to work here at the Centre of the Movement. At the end of May you went to Nairobi, in Kenya, where there was a conference about the Economy of Communion.

Speaking of Economy of Communion, of the poor, of money, we cannot forget Pope Francis' encyclical presented to the public two days ago, which he entitled: "Laudato sii, Praise be to you, my Lord", on the care of our common home". It is about ecology and the future of our planet. Right at the beginning, Pope Francis quotes extensively from Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople.

During the presentation of the document to the press, many tweets were sent from Pope Francis account. I'll read two of them.

The first: "Every community has the duty to care for the earth and guarantee its fertility for future generations".

The second tweet "There is a profound relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet".

Let's go back to Nairobi. You were there with entrepreneurs and young people interested in the Economy of Communion from many countries in all continents. But why Africa? You will be able to tell us why shortly. First let's see a report and hear from Mélanie who is from Yaoundé in Cameroun.

Mélanie Njonou (in French with Italian subtitles)

My name is Mélanie Njonou from Douala in Cameroun. I'm an Economy of Communion entrepreneur. We raise chickens; we buy one-day old chickens and sell them after 45 days.

We had many difficulties but we tried to live according to the spirit of the Economy of Communion. And it works: we come together when we have problems, we share the difficulties, we carry them together, we encourage one another and we start again to work. After the original 1,000 chickens, we are now going towards 4000. After four years, 32 families benefit from our activities. In fact because of poverty, many of our families don't have animal protein in their diet.

Since these are people who really lack basic necessities, when we sell a large number, we then give each family 1 or 2 chickens depending on the size of the family. We are not even at a loss because at the end of last month, our profit enabled us to bring electricity to the entire company and this facilitates much work.

The Economy of Communion is something very strong in our culture because "sharing" is already part of it; now we want to see how to build on our relationships with other companies.

(Applause)

Ray: Thankyou Mélanie.

#### **KENYA – The Fifth International Congress on the Economy of Communion**

So, Geneviève, this conference on the Economy of Communion, why did you take all these business people to Nairobi in Kenya, why didn't you go to New York, or London, or Tokyo, or Beijing?

Geneviève: I think that when Chiara launched the Economy of Communion in 1991, immediately there was a lot happening in Africa. Then we realised that there were many difficulties and these realities almost disappeared.

In 2011 there was the first pan-African congress on the Economy of Communion in Africa. After that we saw a great deal of new life in Africa. Now, after four years, there are 25 businesses in Africa that are part of the Economy of communion. There were also a lot of requests from universities to teach more about the EoC. There is a university which has declared itself as a university of the Economy of Communion, there are meetings that bishops invite us to everywhere.

Recently, the Synod of the Reformed Churches in Congo asked for the EoC to be presented.

Starting from this life we saw it was important to have another congress that would give greater depth to this life.

The most important aspect, of your question, I think is this: talking about economics, starting from the African continent was something new, but even more so talking about the contribution that Africa can give to the whole of humanity. This was something that had never happened before. (Applause)

Ray: Geneviève, great, it's wonderful, this contribution from Africa. What contribution can the EoC give to Africa?

Geneviève: this question has two sides to it, because I have seen that Africa can bear a very strong witness in truly living fraternity, because it was visible: despite the fact that people have very little, to live communion gives a legacy of wealth that was not known before. On the other hand, talking about the EoC, it was very clear in this congress that the EoC brings the whole of the charism of unity with it. Starting from this light of the charism of unity I think that Africa can give a very important contribution to this journey towards fraternity. (Applause).

Ray: Grazie, Geneviève.

### **A BED & BREAKFAST AT LASTRA A SIGNA (Florence - Italy)**

Ray: For many people, at times for entire populations, survival or basic well-being are a dream. Every day 42,500 people on average become refugees or are displaced. According to the Annual Report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, if the 59.5 million forced migrants in the world formed one nation, it would be the twenty-fourth largest in the world by population.

And very often the only reaction States made was to build walls; walls that are growing, to stop the flow of migrants, and in some countries in Europe in the last few days, some more walls are being planned. Then the boats in the Mediterranean. It is an unstoppable phenomenon, which is a challenge for us all.

Let us see what has been done by a family in Italy, near Florence.

Slide: *Lastra a Signa, Firenze (Italia)*

Carla Santetti: Sometimes it really seems to be like in Babel because you hear a thousand languages all together, don't you? You try to say something... then one understands and tries to explain it to another. This is very nice. For them to learn Italian is the most important thing because in that way they can integrate better. It is not easy because not everyone is able to get the same level.

Youth (in English with Italian subtitles): I tried to run away ... life is not easy in Libya. We are mistreated; often they beat us for anything, so when one sees a boat, they climb in to escape and come here.

Youth (in English with Italian subtitles): My boat had problems during the crossing, many people got drowned, and then Italians have rescued us and brought us to Sicily.

Youth (in French with Italian subtitles): In the sea, we thought we would die because the boat was overloaded, I thank very much the Italians. I would ask, if you have the time, to teach us various trades that we can learn to increase our knowledge.

Davide Santetti (in Italian): We have a Bed & Breakfast activity. It started from the idea of welcoming these guys - I call them boys – migrants, refugees from Libya. Now most of the activity we have is made available to them, of course with enormous economic sacrifices. We now have 68 young people, divided into four small groups. What we always try to do is to give importance to the person.

(Music)

Woman – social worker (in Italian): The residence permit that you have is a residence permit for asylum seekers.

Davide Santetti (in Italian): There is a regular contact with the institutions. The officials of the Prefecture of Florence came to inspect. The local health service and the deputy prefect who visited the buildings considered the place suitable. They were happy to see that there are human relationships: when these guys see us, their eyes light up. In the same way, we receive so much from them.

Carla Santetti: It's not all roses, in the sense that there are those who say: "Well done, go ahead." And some say: "Well, there are so many black guys here, but why did they come? Why are they here? Perhaps you are making money out of them..." Well, it is not nice to hear this, knowing why and how you do these things, right?

Davide Santetti: There were neighbours who at the beginning were asking... "Who are these people?" So I invited them to come in, to look into their eyes and understand that behind those eyes there is a story; and like everyone else, they have so many stories. From that moment on, a new relationships began with these neighbours, they collaborate with us, bringing whatever is needed...

Their first needs, more than anything else, were winter clothes, sweaters and jackets, and we received them all from the community of the Focolare Movement.

Lorenzo Santetti: I think it is something essentially normal. Regardless of skin colour, white, black or blue, whatever you want. A person is a person. When I see them, it's like seeing a friend, an acquaintance, someone I know. It's not that I see ... as many people perhaps think: "A monster, they have come to steal our jobs!" No. It is not true. They do not steal anything from us, just the opposite!

Girl (in English): When we reached Libya, I took a boat to Italy ... I got pregnant. Faced with this difficult situation I asked Carla to help me. Now I'm happy because they regard me as a daughter and they are like my family.

Francesca Santetti: Since my family started this adventure, my family has grown more, because some boys and girls we have got to know through this experience, I was able to establish a relationship like brothers and sisters. And this is really a fact.

Davide Santetti: We remembered the story of the hummingbird. When a fire broke out, the hummingbird thought that he could go to get a drop of water from the nearby lake and throw it on the fire. The lion grumbled and said, "But you will never put out the fire!"

The hummingbird replied: "I am doing my part." It's true, we will never put out the fire. But perhaps we can do our small part,

Caption: Last year, the Santetti family welcomed and accompanied 817 migrants.

(Applause)

Ray: Thank you Carla, Davide, Francesca, Leonardo and Lorenzo. Thanks to everyone in the world who has brought their drop.

From this story, Emmaus, we realized that it is possible to live together and accept diversity, even in the midst of difficulties. Two months ago you were at the United Nations, now two days ago you came back from the European Commission, an institution at the heart of Europe, in Brussels. You had been invited to Brussels together with 15 other religious leaders. The theme of the debate was "Living Together and Accepting Diversity". What contribution were you able to make, Emmaus? And what was your impression?

Emmaus: The contribution that I was able to give I believe comes from this experience that we have seen, and from a thousand other experiences that are being lived in the Focolare Movement, because I felt that what these institutions really want is to have concrete examples, concrete examples of good practice in co-existence, because there are so many words circulating. And it is not that the words circulating about peace are unwilling words, they are in favour of peaceful living, in favour of dialogue, because they are underpinned by the principles and ideals which were the reason for these noble institutions in the first place, where people are working with these aims. But they are realising that their efforts bring little fruit, they obtain few real outcomes. They are realising that something is missing. And this seemed to me important, that they should notice this and seek what they need in religion, in the religions, in religious principles. This is a very good thing.

Can I add something else...?

What seemed to me, above all in this most recent meeting that you will have seen in the press what happened, and the talks that were given, how in all of these people there is a strong desire to reach peaceful co-existence. I asked myself the question too. Why don't they manage it? Why don't they manage it?

Just think that the European Commission, this Europe which was born as the unity of Europe, came about to put minorities together in various European states. And for a while it managed to establish peace, to create treaties; but why didn't it manage to have this open soul towards all, to welcome outsiders too? And it seemed to me that it is because they have lost universality, they wanted to be together, they wanted to work in synergy among all; then the differences prevailed, the interests of one State prevailed over the others; greater wealth, more political power, greater social cohesion. And so by becoming divided they can no longer have this one soul which would allow them to face the new problems, which are

of course the problems of these refugees who are coming, the migrants who need to be welcomed. But if they don't find this intrinsic unity first of all, it is difficult to be open to others.

And this intrinsic unity won't be found if they don't open up to universality. And they are discovering that universality comes from God, that you can only be universal if you recognise that we have one Father. And so they are asking for help, asking for help from religion.

I saw this as a sign of the times and despite the difficulties it brings, we are witnesses that it is possible and we must go ahead with this witness. I felt this very strongly, but the others felt it too, so much so that at the end they said: "Now that we have met, we must go on working together". (Applause)

Ray: So let's go on.

Let's thank Emmaus, Jesús and Geneviève. It was a very special moment. Thank you.

Emmaus: Thanks to you all too... (Applause)

Ray: We are a big family but always a family. And like all families, we rejoice in the arrivals and are sad at the departures. And in recent days, there have been several departures, almost at the same time.

## **OMAR DÍAZ AND CLAUDIA GISLER**

Omar Díaz died of a heart attack, in the little town of O'Higgins, Argentina. He was the focalario responsible for the formation of young people in the little town, where many young people from around the world go. Anita and Abraham too.

Anita: Yes, for those of us who knew him, the news of his death last Sunday was a blow. He was not only someone involved in the formation of many of us, but he was a friend, a brother to all those he had spent time with, and all those whose formation he had contributed to: everyone can say that his love was very concrete. And loads of people remember him and say that he was like a father to them.

Abraham: If you just look at the social networks you can see what he meant to many people. There were over 1,000 young people from Argentina at his funeral and they represented the young people who had been accompanied by him. From those who knew him and those who didn't a big thank you Omar. (Applause)

Ray: The following day, Claudia Gisler died after an illness. She was a focalarina from Switzerland who had accompanied and loved communities of the Movement in different cities.

## **GRAZIELLA DE LUCA**

On the 9th May Graziella de Luca, one of Chiara's first companions, died. Chiara saw she had a gift, a special zeal for communicating the Ideal of unity. We have chosen two short experiences which allow us to get to know her, almost to meet her.

Graziella: A personal experience.

I was working in Trent in the local government finance office and it was still wartime. ... Just beside my desk there was the desk of another employee who whenever the sirens sounded for the air raids was so frightened she could not take a single step. I ... had no problem getting to the air raid shelter, or I would not have had any problem getting there but in that moment it seemed very clear to me that God wanted me to be ready to die for this lady, for this colleague. So I linked arms with her and we set off together towards the shelter. ... This happened two, three, even 10 times a day.

We felt very strongly that first we had to do and then speak. So I had said to myself that if God did not really push me into speaking, I would never speak about our Ideal to this colleague in the office. Only that this lady asked me at some point "But why are you doing this for me?" And I said "Well, look, if you were my sister you would certainly do it for me and if I were in your shoes or your sister I would do it for you." "But I would not do it for all the gold in the world" she said. "So tell me, what makes you do this?"

At that point it seemed clear that the time had come to tell her about our big discovery of God-Love. But I did not expect the reaction I got from her. As soon as I finished speaking she told me all her sins. And so I suggested she go and speak to a priest and tell him all she had told me because I was not able to give her absolution. But I said to myself: wait a moment because we need to be sure about this, so I said. "Listen, start loving now, straightaway, not waiting until you go to see the priest... so start now to love all those who pass you by." And it was for that reason and in that moment that she started a new life.

We had understood from the Gospel what we had to do to love our brothers and sisters: to be ready to die for them. ...

Good. Now let's fast forward a bit in time to about 1964. I was in New York and a Brazilian lady who worked for the TV in the US phoned me. She was the mother of a young man in Brazil who had been won over by the Ideal, so much so that he was threatening to enter the focolare. She was totally against it, but because she was not in her own country she wanted to get to know these dangerous people.

I invited her to dinner and, considering the type of places she was used to, I tried to arrange everything to suit her. So it was an elegant dinner, in a comfortable place with soft light and music in the background. Before she came we agreed amongst ourselves that we would not say anything about the Ideal ...

It was a delightful evening. We spoke about music, the latest records, then as she left she gave me a beautiful necklace that I put on straightaway and we said we hoped to meet again.

Was it a flop? A wasted evening? No it wasn't. It could not be wasted because Jesus was amongst us and he has an effect wherever he is.

In fact the next day the phone rang. It was her. She said: "I really like your Movement. In fact I think you are just the right people to be on television and I have already spoken to my friends in New York to make a programme about the Movement. Do you like the idea? And that's not all. When I go to England I will open a few doors for you. (Applause)

### **PASQUALE FORESI – "On earth as it is in heaven"**

Ray: Graziella was the first person who met Pasquale Foresi in Pistoia (Florence), who was just twenty then, and she fascinated him with the Ideal of unity. It was 1949.

Six days ago, Pasquale Foresi, whom we know as Chiaretto, passed away. He made a unique contribution throughout the long history of the Movement. He had a very special relationship with Chiara, as special as that of Igino Giordani, Foco. So much so that Chiara said that both of them are co-founders.

Two days ago we said goodbye to Pasquale in this very room. And now he is resting in the little chapel at the Centre of the Movement together with Chiara and Foco.

Let's hear directly from them about some key moments in his life

#### **(Music and title: *Sharing the responsibility of the Movement*)**

##### **"On Earth as it is in Heaven" Music and title**

Chiara: Father Foresi went through a period in which his spiritual life matured in an extraordinary way. ... The Holy Spirit worked on him also... through suffering. So we find in him a wealth of spiritual life which cannot be found in others. ... (Music) He's a bit like the personification of unity. He knows how to make true unity, he brings it, he incarnates it.<sup>1</sup>

Chiaretto: [We were] in Ostia, in January 1950; I can still remember that Chiara was cleaning a room and the door was open. I was walking past, along the corridor and Chiara stopped me and said: "Would you like to share the responsibility of bringing forward the Movement with me?" On the one hand I was shocked, on the other, I was happy, but also hesitant.<sup>2</sup> (Music)

1

.From Chiara's greeting to the focolarine. Castel Gandolfo, 5 January 1992, p. 4.

2

.Father Foresi to the focolarini and focolarine of Montet: Questions and answers – Mollens, 21 September 1991, (from answer n. 11).

Chiara: This was already "in embryo" ... the idea of God's design for a person who, in the future, would share responsibility with the President. So the idea of the Co-President was already there back then.<sup>3</sup> (Music)

Chiaretto: I think an important stage in the contribution that the Lord wanted me to give to the Movement... came when... on two occasions the Holy See had decided to dissolve the Movement but the Pope had not agreed with this decision. ... I suggested that the Pope appoint a trustworthy person to inform him about the life of the Movement and its possible approval. He accepted this suggestion.... This decision... was then upheld by John XXIII, and it gave us the possibility of being approved....<sup>4</sup>

(Music and title: *The Pact*)

Chiara: I remember I made a pact like this with Chiaretto, saying. "We will see what God wants; if [in the pact with] with Foco... there was an outpouring of light... who knows what will happen now! ... So we made the pact with Chiaretto...and we expected another Paradise. Instead, ideas came out to incarnate the Paradise we had seen."<sup>5</sup>

Chiaretto: I remember that Chiara had left the church after Mass and, being quite pensive, she said to me: "You know, I understood that you come from the earth, I come from heaven, and in the unity that we made during Communion, there is the incarnation of the life of the Movement on earth." I was very disappointed, because I was really expecting a new Paradise. Later on I understood that the incarnation of that Paradise was important too, which was a certain way of living the Paradise.<sup>6</sup>

Chiara: Chiaretto had to be preceded by Foco because the Paradise we had seen, which had also outlined the design of the Movement as well... had to be embodied on earth. .... So Chiaretto's design is the practical application.<sup>7</sup>

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3

.Chiara to the participants in the Assembly: "On the Statutes and Regulations of the focolarini" (History of the Statutes). Castel Gandolfo, 30 September 1990, p. 7.

4

.Father Foresi to the persons responsible for emerging zones and focolares: Questions and Answers, Mollens, 14 August 1998 (from answer n. 30).

5

.Chiara to the intern members of the little town of Montet: Questions and Answers. Montet, 11 September 1987, p. 4.

6

.Father Foresi to the School of the Focolarine from different continents: Questions and Answers, Castel Gandolfo, 16 January 1992 (from answer n. 11).

7

.Chiara to the Schools of the focolarine and focolarini (with the whole city present): Questions and Answers. Loppiano, 13 May 2003 (from answer n. 2).

(Music and title: *Incarnation*)

Chiaretto: I felt a special grace... when the first little *Città Nuova* magazine began. ... I remember we were in Fiera di Primiero putting together this little magazine which we called *New City*, a title which derives from the Book of Revelation, where it says: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rv 21:5). We began by making 70 copies, with a duplicating machine we had in Fiera di Primiero, and we distributed them. I remember that the response was good, as if a very small work of God was coming to life. (Music)

We also felt the need to have a building where we could hold meetings. ... At that time we didn't have anything. ... Then, at a certain moment... Enzo Fondi inherited a piece of land... and we said: "The Mariapolis Centre will be built here." And each time we had a meeting at the *Villa Maria Assunta*, we would take the people attending the meeting there to see the land and say to them: "This is where the Mariapolis Centre will be." ... Here again, I felt that God was helping me with his grace. (Music)

Then there was another grace for Loppiano. ... Eletto Folonari had inherited the land at Loppiano, and I was always looking for money for the Mariapolis Centre. Then one day someone offered to buy the land at Loppiano. So before selling it, I said to Chiara: "Look, I'll go up to Loppiano, at least to see what it is like." I remember I went and at the time there was no motorway, so it took us five or six hours to get there from Rome. ... When I got to Loppiano, I said: "We could build the Work of Mary's School of Formation here." When I was back in Rome I said to Chiara: "Look, Chiara, let's not sell it, let's try to move the Schools there." First the men's School went and were based at Villa Eletto for a year. By the following year, other accommodation had been built and so the women's School moved there too. Once again I felt there had been a special grace. Certainly, I never imagined everything would develop as it has, especially this spreading throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

(Music and title: *The root*)

Chiaretto: I really got to know Jesus forsaken in 1967... when I looked back at my whole Ideal life and realized that everything had been a mistake. I felt it had been wrong to start *Città Nuova* and the publishing house; I had done wrong in setting up Loppiano.... This view of things was not false, because certainly in doing all those things, which later proved to be works of God, there had been a lot of merely human motivation in what I had done. And in 1967 I saw everything from that point of view.... But Chiara was always there helping me to overcome that trial. I remember that precisely in 1967, while I was in the darkest night, she said: "You'll see, the day will come when you will see even this trial as blessing..." And that day came.<sup>9</sup>

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8

.Father Foresi to the meeting of focolarine: Questions and Answers. Castel Gandolfo, 8 December 1990 (from answer n. 4).

9

.Father Foresi to the Mariapolis Araceli: Questions and Answers. Mariapolis Araceli, Brazil, 18 May 1991.

(Music and title: *Studies*)

Chiarretto: In September 1950 I had just had my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Some focolarine and I, and I think one or two other focolarini – at that time there were very few of us focolarini – this small group of us were walking along the road to Siror, from Tonadico to Siror. At a certain point Chiara turned around – I was behind her – and said: “I must study theology.” And then, turning to me, she said: “No, I must study theology in you.”<sup>10</sup>

(Music)

Chiara: It was then that our studies, seen as a support to wisdom, actually began.<sup>11</sup>

(Music)

Chiarretto: Chiara always wanted to compare her charism with my small theological charism throughout all these years. Chiara told me to tell you this, because I would be embarrassed to say it.<sup>12</sup>

(Music and title: *The priesthood*)

Chiarretto: One day I said to Chiara: "Chiara, I have something to tell you, but I'm waiting for you to say it to me." And Chiara said: "I too have something to tell you, but I'm waiting for you to say it to me."

This went on for two or three days, until at one point, Chiara said: "I am the person responsible for the Movement, I am the person responsible for the focolare, so you have to tell me." I was hoping that what Chiara wanted to say to me was the same thing, but it seemed impossible. I said to her: "Chiara, I feel a vocation to the priesthood." For a second Chiara didn't say anything, and I was terrified. Then she said: "That's what I felt too: you must become a priest."<sup>13</sup>

(Music)

Chiara: Well, Chiarretto's role ... has really been to be... the father of everyone, because he was the first priest. So... although he was young... he was put in the position of not expecting anything from the Movement, also because something is always expected of the charism and so on, but he also helped everyone in the Movement: he helped me too, he

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10

.Father Foresi to the meeting of focolarini: Questions and Answers. Castel Gandolfo, 23 December 1990 (from answer n. 3).

11

.Chiara to the meeting of the Zone Delegates of the Work of Mary: Inauguration of the Marian University. Rocca di Papa, 15 October 1980, p. 3.

12

.Father Foresi to the meeting of the focolarini: Questions and Answers. Castel Gandolfo, 23 December 1990 (from answer n. 3).

13

.Father Foresi to the meeting of focolarini: Questions and Answers. Mariapolis Luminosa (USA), 19 May 1990, (from answer n. 1).

helped the focolarini. So I would say that this father figure is really characteristic of Chiaretto, it's his characteristic, perhaps like no one else in the Movement, no one else.<sup>14</sup>  
(Music)

Chiaretto: So we could say that my contribution has really been minimal, but everything came from the vitality of the Movement and from God himself.<sup>15</sup>

Everything happened spontaneously.... If we had made our own plans we would have never imagined such a rapid and profound expansion. And we are still at the beginning. I think that God's plan will continue to develop until we are able to say: "*Ut omnes unum sint.*"<sup>16</sup>

(Music and title: *Thank you Chiaretto!*)

### **Final Greeting**

Ray: So we greet all of you. Thank you for this hour when we were all linked up. **The next one is on September 26 at 6 in the evening.** But... we will not have it in this room which for years has been our home. In a week's time, the much-needed renovation will start ... so many years have passed from when it was built.

Meanwhile, the Conference Call will come from other places and they will all be a surprise ... For us too! Thanks for all the messages we have received from different parts of the world, from north and south east and west, which we can't read for lack of time. Goodbye to you all! See you in September!

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14

.Chiara to the focolarini: Questions and Answers. Loppiano, 14 May 1987, (from answer n. 17).

15

.Father Foresi to the city: Questions and Answers. Loppiano, 6 May 1995 (from answer n. 20).

16

.Father Foresi to the focolarini and focolarine of the "Fifth Year School": Questions and Answers. Montet, 12 August 1995 (from answer n. 15).