

Conference Call CH

Rocca di Papa 17th December 2016

Christmas Special: greetings from around the world

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1. GiBi and W

GiBi: Will I give him my flame? ... If I do, I'll be left in the dark. ... What shall I do?... Give it or not?

(music) Fantastic!

2. Introduction

Lino: Thanks GB and W! Hello to everyone, around the world! It's a time of celebration has come... It's nearly Christmas! As it is a big celebration we have also got a special present here: welcome back Emmaus! (Applause) And then, yet another cause for celebration, it's Pope Francis; birthday today!

Maria Teresa (Mari):

Talking of celebrations, two years ago we celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary, here in the chapel at the Centre of the Movement. We have three children and five grandchildren and some of them are here with us today. When we got married we then lived for a number of years in the USA and our house was a bit like the extension of the focolare of New York. It was everyone's home, we grew together: adults, children, we did not notice the differences. They were the early years of the Movement in the USA. It was a very exciting experience.

Lino: We often found ourselves gathered round a tape-recorder which brought news from around the world. The sentences were translated one by one and that is how we began.

3. BULGARIA: Greetings from the community

Mari: Now we are here, we are happy to be with you and travel around the world. Now we are starting with Bulgaria, a fascinating country which we don't know much about. This video will help us meet people, hear music and much more.

In Bulgarian with subtitles in Italian¹

Woman: Welcome to Bulgaria.

Music

¹ Prepared by Donato Ciampi

Woman: Boys, let's go to see Sofia.

Song

Mitko: You know that today? ...

Stavri: Yes! I know!

Mitko: Are you going on the Metro.

Stavri: And you're going by bike.

Mitko: Yes, see you there, bye.

Stavri: See you later, bye.

Song

Julia: Hello, welcome, I was expecting you.

Mitko: Hi, here we are.

Julia: Let's see what we need. Will the drummer come?

Majda: No, he's not coming.

Ildiko: I'll bring the guitar.

Lucia: Yes. I think the projector in the hall is not working.

Ildiko: Let's bring ours.

Majda: I'll put this here.

Julia: Yes, let's put it here then we'll go...

Song

Lucia: Welcome, welcome everyone. I'm very happy that we're all here together; it's always a celebration when we are together. And you came with different means of transport, in these difficult weather conditions: rain, snow, a little sun for some, and fog for the others. This is our big family of the "Conference call" gathered together. I think it's time now, yes, it is beginning.

(Applause, hello everyone, darkness and everyone speaks at once)

What happened?

Where is Kosio?

Anyone with a torch?

What shall we do without the light?

A Gen 3 No! The light was not gone. A star was born that shines on us all. To all of you of this big family of the "Conference call" in the world, from Bulgaria we greet you:

Together: Happy Christmas! Christ is born.

(Song and applause)

Lino: Thank you Bulgaria!

4. Greetings from around the world (1)

Lino: We forgot to say that her name is Mari and I am Lino.

At the end of the last conference call we were invited to send one another Christmas greetings. Greetings poured in from all over the world and we are posting them on the Facebook page of the Conference Call. . In fact if we wanted to give a title to this link up which is a bit different from usual, we could say "Global Christmas greetings". So, as families often do, let's go through these "cards" which have been made very simply as you will see but with great love. We'll start with Latin America, North America, India and Australia. We lived in Boston for a number of years, as Mari said, so I'd like to say "Merry Christmas!"

Medellin – Colombia (in Spanish)

Girl: We are here today with the community in Medellin in Colombia and we want to send you greetings to wish you a Happy Christmas.

Boy: In this city we are living through a very big experience of Jesus forsaken, a situation which challenged us both directly and indirectly. It was the death of 71 people in a plane crash, which made us think about what we are, what we do in our lives, our families and in sharing with others. This is why we are living and offering this situation for the whole Movement in the world.

Girl: We are very united in this experience of loving in this suffering and we want to send our special greetings to everyone in Brazil and all the other nations that are uniting this Christmas so that Baby Jesus/the Child Jesus can be born again in every heart. We send you our best wishes for Christmas. Happy Christmas!

Together: Happy Christmas!

Song

Mariapolis Lia – Argentina

Boy: Here in the Mariapolis Lia in Argentina we wish for our whole global family that the Child Jesus will fill us with his peace, his mercy, joy and love, a great love.

Girl: Together with all of you we commit ourselves to be builders of unity in the front line during the coming year.

Boy: Next time we will tell you more about what we are doing to care for the environment and transform this Mariapolis into an eco-city.

All together: Happy Christmas! Happy continuation together!

Mar del Plata, Tandil e Balcarce – Argentina

Together: From the mountains and the seas, Happy Christmas everyone!

Manaus – Brazil

Man: A special greeting from Amazonia!

Little girl: Feliz Natal!

Together: Feliz Natal!

El Salvador in Spanish

Little girl: ... To remind us that God is not far away, the angels keep on singing, "peace on earth to people of good will". Let's ask God who is all powerful to soften and change the hard hearts of violence, to remove hatred from our hearts and fill them with love, so that very soon all nations in the world will forget what

war is. The Focolare movement wishes you a Blessed/Good Christmas and Happy New Year! Thank you!

Mariapolis Luminosa –USA in English

Woman's voice: Welcome to Mariapolis Luminosa, where every Christmas for almost 30 years people from near and far have come to visit an international display of nativity scenes.

We started with just a few but now the collection holds more than 200 from 60 different countries. The display has become a much anticipated tradition for the more than 1.500 annual visitors,

Looking at all Nativity displays from different countries we think of all the Focolare communities all over the world celebrating Christmas.

And we want to say from all of us at Mariapolis Luminosa to you

Together: Merry Christmas.

Toronto – Canada Song

Montreal – Canada Happy Christmas

Sydney – Australia Together: Merry Christmas from down under

Bangalore – India in English

Annette Costa: Hello, my name is Annette Costa and I am a Gen 4. We make Baby Jesus for Christmas and offer them to people, and they take them home. The money we collect goes to the poor children and in that way, Jesus enters into the heart of Christmas.

Bangalore – India in English

Brett, Gen 3: Hi, my name is Brett. I am a Gen 3 of Bangalore, who (Gen 3) organized the Christmas party for the school of Satya Sevam. These children are not children who are that well-to-do. We should care more for them and organize more stuff. We should help children. So... God has given us, so we should help the other one as well.

Mumbai – India in English

Boy: We, the Gen 4, have prepared statues of Baby Jesus because we want to give Him for Christmas, to everybody. It is His birthday and we want to tell everyone that we celebrate Christmas because of Him.

Written words: Making it happen

Girl: We took some...

Woman: Plaster?

Girl: Yes.

Woman: Oh, did you? Okay, and then?

Girl: And we mixed it and we slowly poured it into the Baby Jesus moulds, and we left it to dry. The next day, we took it out of the moulds and He was ready. *music*

Boy: With the contribution that we receive, we want to help children in their countries where there's no peace.

Written words: Wishing you Peace and Joy of Christ among us – love Mumbai

Mari: Beautiful, thank you.

5. VICTORIA SALIZZONI, ALETTA: ²

² From an interview by Margaret Coen – Charisma Productions 25 March 2005

Mari: On the 22nd of November, Aletta, Aletta Salizzoni, one of Chiara's first companions in Trent, left for the next life. We can't tell her story now, but let's see just one minute of a video in which Aletta spoke about when she lived in Lebanon during the long years of war.

... During the war our little community was one, all one. ... In the war we were all one family, like a family. Truly war is a sermon on how to put God in the first place, like it was for us in the early times. You know that only God remains. There too we were always in danger of dying, because the bombs fell without any warning or siren, because the first thing you knew was the bomb itself, the first bomb that fell and so everyone died... just to say what it was like... But we were not deeply affected by it, no, because we were a family, a community, we were all living the Ideal. ... We were always connected among us, despite the war. The war did not hinder us at all. You could say that it formed us, because it truly did.

Mari: Pierre, you are Lebanese

Pierre: Yes

Mari: You met Aletta when you were very young, can you tell us about it?

Pierre: I remember when Aletta came to Lebanon. There were a number of us young people who met so as to live the spirituality of unity of the focolare. Pascal was there too and a few others who are here now. Once I went to the focolare to see her and I drove her to the Gen centre, the Gen house where we met with all the young people to organise activities. She came and spoke to us about how she had lived, how she had taken up this Ideal of Chiara's and how she was putting it into practice. There, just by her presence she gave us God, I saw her there in front of me, so full of God, because she truly lived the words of the Gospel "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". And at that time, even during the war, many young people felt the call to follow Jesus in the focolare, and I was one of them.

I remember that she gave life to the family of Jesus amongst us, even when there were difficulties amongst us, among the Gen boys, the young people, or between the focolares. Once she said to me, "Pierre, we are just one family and we must live like that."

Recently I was able to see her again here, in October. She recognised me immediately and said "Come, come here beside me!" Then I went to greet her and I wanted to hug her but she came to give me a hug, like this... It was truly marvellous.

Mari: Thank you. Aletta's was a long life, with many fruits and many years in Lebanon.

6. CAMEROON – FONTEM:

Lino: In Cameroon there is the Bangwa people who have been celebrating for a year now. It is the 50th anniversary of the meeting between the Bangwa and Chiara and the Focolare Movement. Four days of celebration are coming to an end now. They too sent their greetings for the whole world.

H.R.H. Joseph Njendem, Fon di Fonjumentaw (in English): Hello mamma Emmaus Maria Voce, accept our immense greetings (applause)! We are very happy with you and the entire Focolare Movement for what you have done to us since the last 50th years. Thank you immensely, carissima!

Rt Rev. Andrew Nkea – Bishop of Mamfe:

Hello Emmaus, we are having a very strong experience here in Fontem. Thanks to everyone we are living Paradise here on earth and thanks to this Ideal that Chiara brought to us: the Bangwa people in Fontem. Best wishes for a happy Christmas, a happy new year "Bun bun Chrismi e bun bun guadesso" Emmaus!

Jesùs Morán: Hello Emmaus, hello everyone. Happy Christmas from the heart of Africa! I am here surrounded by the most important people in this marvellous place and we have been living days of special grace on this 50th anniversary of the coming of the Ideal. Here we feel there is a new Africa. Happy Christmas!

All: MERRY CHRISTMAS

Mari: That is wonderful. Thank you! (*Applause*)

7. SECOND GROUP OF GREETINGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD *Captions of greetings from all over the world*

Mari: The greetings have kept coming in. Let's hear now the ones from countries in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia and ... last of all, Chiara's house here at Rocca di Papa!

Ivory Coast – in the local language – Subtitles in Italian

Child and other children: Let's go and see, Jesus is born! (3x)

Music and song with a Live Manger

Rise up! Let's go and see – Jesus is born!

Shepherds, go and see God in your midst.

Wise Men, go and see Jesus in your midst!

Let's go and see, Jesus is born!

Togo (north) – in the local language subtitles in Italian

Song

Man: We're in the north of Togo, in Kara, and we come from the different Focolare communities of Sokodé, Kara and Dapaong. In unity with our brothers and sisters from all over the world, we wish you a Happy Christmas, in our Moba language.

Woman: We're happy to be together from various Focolare communities, to greet and wish you Happy Christmas.

Man: And now our greetings in Kabye language.

Man 2: Greetings...

Man: And certainly greeting in Kotokoli language.

Woman: Greetings.

Song

Togo (south) – in French and in the local language Subtitles in Italian

Woman (in French): I'm Sylvie; we're here in Lomé in Togo. We're happy that we can greet you all Merry Christmas.

Greetings in Ewe language!

Merry Christmas in Kabye!

And finally in Mobague language! (*3 persons say Merry Christmas in their language*)

Estavayer le-Lac – Suisse

Written in Italian: Happy Christmas *Visit to a home for the aged. Music only*

Cluj Napoca- Romania – in Romanian Subtitled in Italian

Together: We wish you a happy Christmas!

Agrigento – Italy

Together: Happy Christmas from Agrigento!

Cuneo - Italy

Together: Best wishes from Cuneo! Happy Christmas!

Lampedusa - Italy

Together: Happy Christmas from Lampedusa!

From a district in Rome – Italy

Together: A huge hug to everyone. Ciao. (Applause)

Assisi - Italy

Together: Happy Christmas!

Malta in English

Donna: We want to live this Christmas as a family. We have visited the elderly in a home; we have assisted refugees in their needs; we are looking for a job for a person who is soon to be released from prison. We are all doing our bit. Together: in Maltese Happy Christmas!

Lebanon – Together: Happy Christmas!

Mariapoli Mariënkroon – Holland, (In Dutch with Italian subtitles)

In this Christmas scene there is Joseph and Mary. We will invite the schools from round here to come. So the birth of Jesus is something real for everyone.

Happy Christmas a tutti!

Belarus – Minsk

Song

Boy:

I hope that the bright fire of God's love may be re-born in all your hearts and through all of you may kindle that love in many other hearts. Happy Christmas!

Seville – Spain in Spanish

Together: From Seville, Happy Christmas

Vienna – Austria Song Fund raising concert

Hungary song

Hong Kong – in Chinese

On behalf of all members of the community in Hong Kong, we wish all of you Merry Christmas. On the 18th December, we will be organizing an event called "Baby Jesus Birthday Party" in collaboration with International Social Service and Sant'Egidio. We will invite new migrants, ethnic minorities and low-income families to join us that day. Several of the participants are Muslims, while the majority has no religious background. Through Christmas drama playing and games during the event, we hope to share with them the message of love and peace that Jesus gave us, so that everyone all of us can feel the warmth of the family atmosphere in love and in communion. [...] One thing for sure is that every day can be Christmas if we love one another and Jesus will be present among us."

Mariapolis Peace - Philippines

Together: Merry Christmas to all

Bujumbura – Burundi will have subtitles

Girl: At Christmas you have many different experiences. One day my mum asked me to help her make my bed, but I did not want to. I had a bit of a headache, but I helped her because I saw Jesus in her.

Song

Boy: We Gen 4 send our best wishes to the Gen 5 and the Gen 4 all over the world.

We are preparing a Christmas party for the Gen 5 so that they can be happy too.

Together: Best wishes.

Rocca di Papa

Music and pictures of the shooting star at Rocca di Papa

Focolare with Eli and Gis: Happy Christmas a tutti

8. MARIA VOCE (EMMAUS)

Lino: Thank you! Thank you! Now the time has come to open our present, so to speak. Welcome back among us Emmaus! We are so glad that you are fully well again. Can you tell us how you are, how you feel?

Emmaus: Thank you! I am truly happy, happy and moved to be here for these Christmas greetings, this Christmas celebration, this conference call which for the first time – I believe – is being led by the whole world, the united world, Chiara's family. Because we have seen North and South, East and West, without any differences, and all with this family atmosphere, this beautiful Christmas atmosphere.

And I am happy to have come back just before Christmas. It is three months I've been away from the Centre, as you know, having quite a serious operation, so I had to be away from the Centre for a long time. But if I were to say what these three months or so were like for me, would you like to know? They were three months being immersed in a sea, indeed I would say an ocean, of love: God's love first of all, and the love of Chiara's family which reached me in the most diverse ways. It has been a time in which I can say I have experienced true reciprocity, in which you give everything: first of all to God, because of course I gave him my life, my health, my body entrusting myself to the doctors, my thoughts, any worries I might have had, the little physical discomfort. So first of all to God. And God gave me back everything, everything, and he also gave me the fullness of health, as you can see, thanks to everyone's prayers, all those who are listening to me and all of you who I must thank especially.

And then reciprocity with my neighbours, because I found true brothers and sisters everywhere. So now, coming back, I can say that in a symbolic way, at this Christmas time which is so significant, what was this time for me? It was a period of gestation, a time during which something was born; indeed Someone was born: Jesus was born in a truer and deeper way, because of mutual love amongst all of us.

So now we are here together to celebrate Jesus who has been born; Jesus who can now go to love everyone; who can go out; Jesus who will continue to grow because Jesus grew in age, wisdom and grace. And Jesus in our midst too will continue to grow in age, wisdom and grace. So we are celebrating a birthday. This I think is the most beautiful thing and it is a chance to say how thankful I am to you all. And Happy Christmas to everyone. This is the first thing. (Applause)

Lino: So this is what this “story” that is ending meant for you. But we see that there is new strength, the word “rebirth” that you said.

Emmaus: Yes, I feel a renewed strength which is a strength that comes first of all from God, of course, but which also comes from this family, because we have truly experienced this real family. You cannot imagine how many greetings, how many messages I got from all over the world, not only from people who are celebrating Christmas now, but from people who perhaps don’t celebrate it, because I received messages of closeness and support from people who do not have religious beliefs but who assured me of their “lay prayers”. They know what that means. But they said it. And I felt they were with me, that they were living with me.

There were Buddhist Movements, the President of the Rissho Kosei-kai who sent a message.., and from other Churches, from the World Council of Churches, Pastors, ordinary people, friends from the great religions. Truly I was enveloped by it ... Vinu Aram from India, but everywhere, everywhere, people were praying for me. Patriarch Bartholomew of Istanbul – who knows me personally, with whom there is a personal relationship - sent me several messages; everyone who met him gave him news of how Emmaus was ...; because he had heard. To show how it was.

President Mattarella phoned me, while I was still in hospital, to give me his best wishes, to say he hoped I would get well soon. As I was very surprised because I was not expecting anything like that of course, he said: “But I have known the Movement a long time, I have esteemed the Movement for a long time. I got to know it at the time of Iginio Giordani”.

So I felt that this tide, this avalanche of encouragement and support was not only for me, and it was proof that we were living all together. I must tell you this because it is about you, because I am sharing. I too must make the communion of goods. This is a communion of goods and this whole avalanche of encouragement today is said to this new born Jesus in the midst and once again encourages us to go ahead. So it is not only for me, it is for the whole Movement throughout the world that this has happened.

Here is the last one, but not least. I received encouragement on several occasions from the Holy Father, Pope Francis. First he heard that I was having a operation, so he wanted me to know he would pray. Then he heard that I was better. This letter came when I was already better, so I will read the last bit where he writes, where he asks “convey to Miss Voce a word of lively encouragement and best wishes for a quick and full recovery in view of a renewed commitment for the sake of the whole Movement”. So he is encouraging me to get back to work. *(Laughter)*

The funny thing – if I can tell you a funny thing – was that the surgeon who operated on me and whom I saw the other day, the day before yesterday – also said that I am well, that I can go back to my activities, being a bit careful, little by little, but that everything is fine, and at the end he said: “Go back to your work, which is very valuable ”.

So everyone is telling me to get back to work, so I must obey all this encouragement.

Then the Pope added: “He is happy to accompany these good wishes with the invocation of the protection of the Holy Virgin, on Maria Voce – that’s me – and on every member of the Focolare Movement”.

I had to tell you this because this encouragement is for each one of you, and also the blessing from the Holy Father. Since it is his birthday today, I think that you would all be happy if in the name of the whole

Movement I say “Your Holiness, a very happy birthday! Best wishes from all of us. We love you!”.
(Applause)

9. CHIARA LUBICH It’s Christmas,

Mari: Now, at the end of this Conference Call, we would like Chiara herself to give us her Christmas greetings. We are going to listen to a message recorded at Christmas 2005 for the link up then. It was one of her last greetings. And Emmaus will say with us to see it.

“It’s Christmas”.

The store windows are all decorated with golden ornaments and little Christmas trees, with offers on precious gifts.

At night, the streets sparkle with hanging lights, stars and comets; the trees lining the sidewalks are laden with red, blue or white lights, creating a surreal effect as you walk along.

There is an atmosphere of expectation. Everyone is taken up in it...

Christmas is not just a traditional feast day: recalling the birth of a child long ago... Christmas lives!

It lives not only in churches with manger scenes, but among people in the atmosphere of joy, friendship, and goodness that Christmas brings with it each year.

And yet the world is still troubled by huge problems: poverty and hunger, ... dozens of wars, terrorism, hatred between ethnicities, but also between groups and individuals...

We need Love. We need Jesus to come back powerfully.

The Child Jesus is always the immense gift from the Father to humanity, even though not everyone recognizes him.

We should offer our thanks to the Father for them too. We must celebrate Christmas and renew our faith in the infant-God who came to save us and create a new family of brothers and sisters who united by love and spread all over the world.

Let’s look around us... Our love should reach everyone, but especially those who are suffering and those most in need, all those who are alone, poor, small or ill.... May our communion of goods and love with them make a family of true brothers and sisters shine out, a family which celebrates Christmas together and continues beyond it.

Who can resist the power of love?

In preparing for Christmas, let’s do something practical and concrete, things which are answers to problems that may seem small, but which when applied on a large scale, can bring light to and solve the serious problems of the world.

Happy Christmas to you all!

10. Conclusion

Emmaus: We share these Christmas greetings from Chiara to everyone. We can say with Chiara “Happy Christmas Everyone”. And we can assure Chiara, who is looking down on us and hearing us from Heaven, that yes, Jesus has returned and he is in our midst and that we will bring him to everyone with love, with the love that she wished us to have.

Lino:

So we can say goodbye standing beside this Christmas scene which is the one Chiara had in her house.
So best wishes to everyone around the world and a happy New Year!
Our next link up is on the 11th February 2017 at 8.00 p.m.

Bye everyone!!! *(Applause and song)*