

CONFERENCE CALL CH
Rocca di Papa, 13th February 2016

Dialogue, a must for peace

1. Opening and greetings

INDIA

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Video 2272M (Time: 62'')

1) OPENING AND GREETINGS

(music)

Maria: Hello everybody! Welcome to this global appointment!

Gianni: Good day to each and everyone, from Rocca di Papa!!!

Maria: The first images brought us to India. We'll start our journey today from this country, because Maria Voce, Emmaus, and Jesus Morán have just returned from India and are here with us. Welcome back! (Applause)

Gianni: They've lived an intense month, going to different places: but we will talk about that shortly.

Maria: We know that this is a good time for the Conference Call because it can be followed directly by people in Asia, Africa and even some of the Americas and Oceania, who perhaps are still up.

We also greet our friends from the local community in Benevento and Avellino, from the south of Italy. (Applause). We also greet the youth gathered in Lisbon, Portugal for their congress. We greet each and every one of you following our Conference Call. (Applause)

Gianni: We are Gianni ...

Maria: ... and Maria.

Gianni: We've been married for 29 years and have five children. We come from Milan and moved to the Centre of the Focolare Movement a few months ago to put our energy, resources and time at the service of the International Secretariat of the New Families here in Rome. I was a company manager and I left my job. Maria is a teacher and she was able to get a transfer to a school here near Rocca di Papa. Our two youngest children have come with us while the three older ones are in Milan finishing their studies.

This change has been a bit challenging, but the important thing is that the whole family agreed to do this, which helped us overcome all the difficulties that we have faced as we went along. Now we are here and we're very happy to start this new adventure. (Applause) ...

Maria: Now let's enter into...

Gianni: Before we go any further, we want to greet Eli Folonari very warmly. She is here with us. (Applause) Five days ago, she turned 90 years old !!! (Applause) Eli lived with Chiara for over 50 years and she and Chiara began this Conference Call.

Thank you Eli and best wishes from all over the world!!! (Applause)

2) CONVERSATION WITH MARIA VOCE (EMMAUS) AND JESÚS MORÁN

Maria: Now let's enter into the trip to India. First there was a stopover in Dubai where there was a festive meeting with the Focolare community there. Let's look at some pictures.

(music)

Gianni: Even this stopover in Dubai offered the opportunity to meet a beautiful festive community. But you came back less than 48 hours ago. You've had a very varied journey, travelling 16,000 km, taking 13 flights to get around India. You landed first in New Delhi, then in Bangalore,

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then Coimbatore going on to Trichy in the South. Then you went to Mumbai. It was a very beautiful journey. What were your first impressions, Emmaus?

Emmaus: This was the first impression: I left expecting to find a mystery, in the sense of something absolutely unknown. I came back with the impression of having encountered a mystery far greater than had I thought. But it was not a mystery in the sense of something unknown. It was a mystery in the sense of a great, wonderful, profound, absolute mystery. I feel that you have to discover this mystery little by little, and I am happy that we have our Movement there in India that can gradually discover it and they will help all of us discover it too.

Gianni: Beautiful, thank you! Jesús.

Jesús: My feelings so soon after the trip are, on the one hand, a great desire for the absolute, which this journey has left with me, a desire for the inner life too. Then I feel very strongly a love for pluralism, not being afraid of diversity. And then, the beauty of the people; there were always so many people, so many people. And in this sense, it is very clear that in India the young people are the future. We met many young people, many children. It's a young sub-continent. And then finally the pride at having received this gift of the charism of unity; it's what the Work of Mary there is proud of, as Emmaus said. These are my very first sentiments.

Gianni: Thank you.

3) SOME STAGES IN HINDU-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE (2001-2004)

Maria: One of the treasures you found in India is inter-religious dialogue. It began with the first focal points who went there in the 1980s, which continued on with Chiara's contacts that were so intense and strong. Let's see a brief video.

(music – title: Some stages in Hindu-Christian dialogue 2001 – 2004)

Chiara Lubich¹: ... I have come to India wanting above all to listen, to learn from you, and then perhaps have a friendly dialogue with you, in whom I see many brothers and sisters. *(music)*

Mrs. Minoti Aram: ... She is more a Gandhian than anything else. ...

Shri. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar: ... Chiara goes beyond religions and this is why we can meet and dialogue. Only the person who has experienced God can do so. ...

Chiara Lubich²: ... We focus on what is known as "the golden rule" present in all religions, including Hinduism: "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you." ...

(music)

Chiara Lubich³: First of all, dialogue means to put ourselves on the same level, not to think that we come first, or are better than others, but to be open to hear what the other person has within them, to set aside everything in order to enter into the other person. Then we can ask them to listen to us. Then we can understand the points we have in common and we can agree to live [them] together. This is concrete dialogue. *(music)*

¹ Mumbai (India), 12th January 2001

² Calcutta (India), 10th January 2001

³ Coimbatore (India) 8th January 2001 – Interview of Pietro Cocco of Radio Vatican

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Gianni: You also met many of these important people in the Hindu world. And you had some very significant moments.

Emmaus: Very beautiful.

Gianni: Please tell us something...

Emmaus: I have been very impressed by this fact: how much their life draws on Chiara's words, on Chiara's thought, on the friendship they built with her, the relationship they have with her. But it is not something that they just recall, it is a living reality, in the present. Also because this relationship continued throughout this period, with our people who are there, who have cultivated and kept this reality alive. But I would say they do so with extraordinary intensity.

They know Chiara better than us in some things; they cite Chiara; they cite her constantly, even the page in the book where they read things, in a very impressive manner. And it is a reality, not something that goes over their heads. They welcomed us as they would welcome Chiara. They really felt that it was still Chiara who continued this relationship with them. And we also felt it that way, right?

Jesús: Yes yes, in fact we had interreligious dialogue on four occasions, each different from the others: in New Delhi, in Kalhapur with Didi, in Coimbatore with the Shanti Ashram and also in Mumbai. Each one was different, but they were all very valuable.

What is striking is the personal and intellectual qualities of our Hindus, because they are important people, spiritually too. Truly one had the impression of learning something profound. Then they have this unique capacity to grasp the divine in people, to grasp what is essential, thus the relationship is profound right away.

Certainly they emphasized very much that Chiara was a very strong presence of God for them, and they were able to perceive this. They often mentioned a concept which is very much their own: Chiara's divinity, which struck them. And they still draw on this.

Emmaus: I would say, if I can, I don't know, about the meeting that we had with Didi Talwalkar, the one who carries on the legacy of her father who began this great renewal movement in Hinduism. She wanted me to be at a meeting she had with a great number of her Family, which was not the whole Family; but there were about 50,000 people, all couples who did a project, to bring the God's love to the villages; and then they gathered together in a temple at the end of this pilgrimage where they had borne witness to God's love.

In front of these 50,000 people, aside from asking me to speak to them and share my experience, Didi herself shared her experience, of her relationship with Chiara and with the Movement. She introduced me to everyone as a leader who, together with them, is bringing ahead this relationship. So it was like a testimony of a leader of another movement, who made it very clear that hers is different from ours, but at the same time said, "We are journeying together towards the same path." And she said it with images, because she had prepared a video which showed her relationship with Chiara, up to the meeting she had with me, as if to point out that there was continuity, that we were going on with what had already begun with Chiara.

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Jesús: Instead, at the Shanti Ashram it is like feeling at home, like going into a little town, there is such a sense of communion and such a relationship with them, also through the influence of being in the Gandhian context. So there at the Shanti Ashram we felt very much at home. Seeing the social projects they are doing, with children and women, there is a lot of similarity with what we do. We felt the influence of the Teens for Unity, who went there. So, as I said, we felt at home.

Emmaus: Very beautiful.

Gianni: Did you visit Gandhi's house?

Emmaus: The house where Gandhi was killed. It was not his own place. It was his base in Delhi, let's say, where he met his followers and where he had been on that last day when, as he made his way to evening prayer, a fanatic killed him.

There too I was struck very much by the sense of the sacred, a sense of the divine in that place, which is a house with outhouses where they showed you where he did weaving, working with a loom, where he met people, and then there is this mausoleum built in the very spot where he fell to the ground dead after the shooting. But in a place which speaks of martyrdom and violence, because it was a violent death, everything speaks of peace, there is harmony there, it leaves you with a sense of calm which could be nothing other than supernatural, divine. It was the witness of a man who had overcome violence with non-violence. This could be seen in him but also in the people, you saw it in all those who were there. There was a feeling of peace and calmness.

Jesús: Yes, yes. I believe we received a grace in that moment, a grace which came truly from God.

Maria: Truly fascinating.

Jesús: It was very special.

Maria: What you are saying is fascinating.

Emmaus: We also went to a Baha'i Temple, accompanied by the director, Dr Marshan. He too was a great friend of Chiara's. There too he wanted one of us to recite a Christian prayer in this enormous Temple, where everyone goes to pray. We too prayed. We said the Our Father together, in an atmosphere of deep spirituality.

Jesús: In Trichy we visited a Hindu Temple. That day was the Indian Independence Day, so it was very crowded and we saw the Brahmins, the priests, really up-close, because we could not go into their Holy of Holies, but it was an experience that truly impressed us.

4) INDIA – THE CHALLENGE OF DIALOGUE

Maria: Good, so now we can show a video which helps us enter into this interreligious dialogue, which is so essential to India.

(music)

Speaker: On leaving India you have the impression of a modern that is looking to the future but rooted in thousands of years of tradition. The Christian Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist minorities are in dialogue with Hinduism, the faith of 78% of the population.

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Meenal Katarnikar, Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai : *Religions, particularly in India, have a very important role because [the] Indian psyche is dominated by religion. We are very close to our religious faiths and because of this important place of religions in people’s lives, religions can concentrate on the values that they are preaching.*

Namita Nimbalkar Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai : *India is one of the oldest civilizations and again India has the process of assimilation of culture (...) Over a period of time fundamentalism is rising. We have to do something to stop this fundamentalism. Interreligious dialogue, interfaith dialogue becomes important.*

(Song)

Speaker: *Interreligious dialogue contributes to mutual understanding and the promotion of peace and justice. The Focolare Movement and the Shanti Ashram at Coimbatore, (a Hindu movement inspired by Gandhian thought) have been working together since 2001 on development projects and on educating the new generations in peace building.*

Namita Nimbalkar Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai : *The youth has a major role to play in it (...) And they are aware that they need to be united. So if the youth are channelized in the right direction – for this we need a good leader – (...) definitely the youth will be able to play a very positive role in the making of the nation.*

Laxman : *We are so focused toward the same Ideal that I feel that somewhere along the way, for me at least I feel, we forget that we are from different religions. It doesn’t really matter to me if I am a Hindu, that my best friend is a Catholic, if my best friend is a Muslim. The unity is what matters (...) Every time we have to do something, every time we have to take an initiative toward making something or bringing some change in some place, we all take the step together.*

Meenal Katarnikar, Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai : *The Focolare also has a very special approach to religion because I think that the majority of them belong to Christianity, but they (...) are for humanity and they are for unity of the world. So particularly when we look at them from the Hindu perspective, I think that concern for humanity (...) is common between Focolare and Hinduism.*

Raul: *I am Raul from Mumbai, India and this is my wife Mitali. We have been married for 15 years and we come from very different backgrounds. I am from a typical traditional Roman Catholic family in Mumbai and Mitali is from traditional Hindu family.*

Mitali: *For me Focolare has been like an extended family. All Raul’s friends, I think they are more like my friends. That’s what I feel. Any problem I have, I just call and they are there for me any time.*

Namita Nimbalkar Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai : *When we interacted we find that below the differences, there is a unity. There is a thread which is passing through and that thread is love. When we talk about love, it is the language understood by people all over the world, though it may be spoken in different languages, in different words.*

Speaker: *Chiara Lubich, founder of the focolare, during her journeys to India in 2001 and 2003 started something which still today helps people of different religions to understand one another*

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and build fraternity.

Prof. Sureshchandra Upadhyaya : *In the last 16 years I have been coming closer and closer to the Focolare and particularly with Chiara. And I feel more and more peaceful within me (...) I always read about Chiara, I attended seminars in Rome and I learnt more and more and I am more and more deeper now in Chiara's philosophy of love. And I have realised that Chiara's philosophy is not Chiara's philosophy. It is human philosophy. It is meant for every human being (...) Chiara belongs to all, to all humanity. And when you talk to her or when you read her books you feel you are reading yourself.*

(Music)

(Applause)

Gianni: Beautiful words from Dr. Upadhyaya which are impressive. You were able to meet people from the Hindu academic world in Mumbai, I believe.

Jesús: Yes, yes.

Gianni: What interest is there today in Chiara's message in those circles?

Jesús: Upadhyaya is a man of extraordinary spiritual and intellectual calibre. He is a prophet in the most beautiful meaning of the word. There is a phrase we heard from one of the professors there which says: "The core of Hinduism is the divinisation of the human person and the humanisation of God". Now, a great deal of work could be done on this. We have already made some concrete plans, in continuity with all that happened in Chiara's day.

5) INDIA – THE ILANTHALIR PROJECT ("TENDER SHOOTS")

Maria: You were able to see the great contrasts in this country, going from research and technological innovation in Bangalore to the rural environment at Trichy in the State of Tamil Nadu to the south east of the country. You saw one of the many ongoing projects there, called Ilhanthalir. Here is a report from our correspondents.

Jennifer (in Tamil):

This is my mother and she does manual work. This is my sister and this is our house.

(Music)

Our father abandoned us. Thanks to Ilanthalir I was able to study without problems. Since our house is very small I go to my teacher's house after school to study. I work hard at my studies to get good marks.

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(music)

S. George Albert – manager Ilanthalir Trust : I am Albert, a retired bank officer. (...) When I retired I asked myself what I could do for society. It was then that I came into contact with Fr. Susai.

So with the help of the Focolare Movement,(...) Fr. Susai Alangaram started the Karungulam centre with this orphanage and he accommodated the 50 children and gave them food, education and everything (...) The New Families through their 'adoption at a distance' programme they increased the numbers of adoptions and we started more centres.

(music)

Fr. A. Susai Alangaram – Director Ilanthalir Trust : I was parish priest of one village parish soon after my ordination (...) It is a remote area with a lot of huts around and a lot of poor people. (...) When the tender shoots of a plant are fed well, it grows up well. Similarly, if the children in the family are well taken care of, with food and education and everything, they grow up well and take care of their family and society in the future. That is why we have given the name Ilanthalir to this project (...) because Ilanthalir in Tamil means "tender shoot" which also stands for the children in the family.

S. George Albert – manager Ilanthalir Trust : There are 3 kinds of accommodations for the children: 1) they are coming from home, studying in the school, then after their studies in school, they sit for evening tuition in one centre, study and go back to their homes. 2) The children are put in schools where there are hostel facilities and our children are enrolled in the hostel and we pay their school fees, meal fees, etc. 3) Our children are accommodated in our Karungulam centre (...) The children grow up here up to the age of 10 to 12 years. Then they are transferred to some other schools where they have better education, higher education (...) We also indirectly support the families and the children. The students are asked to save a little money every month so that it may be useful for them for their higher studies.

(music)

Fr. Susai Alangaram – Director Ilanthalir Trust : When I started my ministry as a priest, my plan was totally a different one. I wanted to become a scholar in Scripture, so I asked my Bishop to allow me to go for Scriptural studies (...) The Bishop said, "yes", but later on, he appointed me to a remote parish. (...) Then I said, "maybe it is the will of God" (...) Now, when I look back, maybe my idea, I did not succeed in my plan, but I realize that God's plan are always better than our plans.

(music)

The Ilanthalir project has enabled 35 young people to become engineers, 150 have done post-graduate studies, 300 have a degree; 150 are nurses and 200 have become teachers or technicians.

90% have permanent jobs and contribute in their turn to the Ilanthalir Project.

(Applause)

Gianni: For sure, in this great Hindu world, Christians make up only 2% of a population that is over one billion. What impressions have you come back with?

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Emmaus: The Church is small but it is alive, very alive indeed. You can already see this in all that this priest is doing. I was also invited by Archbishop Machado to share my experience at the conclusion of the Year for Consecrated Life in a church filled with people. Archbishop Machado himself translated what I was saying because he realised that English was not enough, it was necessary to translate into Marathi, the local language, so he was the translator. He also wanted our call to holiness to be emphasised, our vocation as a call to holiness and the spirituality of communion which helps us to live it out.

Then, when he welcomed me, he did so saying: "We welcome the President of the Movement and her whole delegation in the name of our entire community, made up of Catholics, Christians of other Churches, Hindus, Muslims..." in the name of everyone, didn't he?

Jesús: It is enough to think that over 90% of people are practising their religion so if you have 100 people on a place 99 of them go to Mass on Sundays and practise their faith. This applies to other Churches too. We know that the Orthodox Church in the South is thriving and other churches too.

A very good thing is that the Movement is very much part of the Church and is very much appreciated. We saw this in our contacts with the bishops we met.

Maria: Now we must finish this very interesting journey that you have truly helped us to be part of. We would like to ask you for a final word. What do you think is India's gift for the world today?

Jesús: I would like to say one thing I feel very strongly. India is a great gift. They truly love pluralism and tolerance. But the interesting thing is how they live these. They live these in an inclusive way, which means they give people space, so that each person can show their faith very explicitly, with its symbols and actions.

This is a gift for the Western world, which instead lives pluralism in a way that is almost excluding of others. Here pluralism means that you must not show what you are so as to be tolerant. You must renounce what you are, your symbols – we saw this recently – so as to be tolerant. It is just the opposite for them; their way of being tolerant is that they give you the space in which to express yourself. This is a huge gift for the Western world.

The one thing that Upadhyaya emphasised very much is silence, the silence which is fundamental for any kind of dialogue. Without inner silence and also interpersonal silence – because we can live silence in the relationships among ourselves, dialogue is not possible. This is a gift from India to the West.

Emmaus: This silence also reflects the religious soul of the Indian people. That is why at a certain point I said: "The gift you can give to the whole of the West is to help us rediscover the meaning of God, being aware of God."

Gianni: Thank you Emmaus, thank you Jesús for this wonderful journey you had in India.
(Applause)

06) SYRIA – ON THE PHONE TO DAMASCUS

Gianni: These are decisive times for the "ceasefire" in Syria. After 5 years of war the situation has become extremely difficult and filled with suffering for the people. The Focolare

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Movement wrote to us recently saying that during Christmas they went two by two to see the people most in need in their own homes. They asked the children what they would like from Baby Jesus for Christmas. "We did not have money", they wrote "but we decided that each of us could do without something being sure that providence would come". And it did. The community in Trent and a local community in Milan, in particular, sent generous donations.

Maria: In Damascus they prepared a Christmas dinner for 250 people and a party with games, songs and dances. They gave gifts to 133 children and financial assistance to 47 families. In Kafarbo, a Christian village at the centre of the country, the Gen 3 together with the adults visited 62 families. They bought clothes for the children, food baskets and installed new batteries that ensured electricity. We also celebrated two Christmas parties in Aleppo and helped 90 families and 150 children. These are like drops in the ocean but many said: "This is the best Christmas of my life."

Gianni: We hope to have a phone call with Radast in Damascus but there are still some technical difficulties so we might have it later ... Here we are. Is that you Radast?

Radast: Yes, I can hear.

Gianni: Hello Radast! We can hear you.

Radast: Hello Emmaus, hello Jesús, hello everyone throughout the world and thank you for your prayers, for the concrete help you are sending us from many different places.

The situation remains tragic here but we thank God that he is protecting many people. We are saddened hearing news every day of people who have died or been wounded in the fighting, when different areas are bombed and in the suicide bombings by terrorists in the midst of innocent people... There are also unbearable electricity and water cuts, and people who lose their jobs or homes.

It is hard to see the way to peace, because there isn't the will to do it.

But what makes us suffer the most, which makes the people, the Church and us too suffer the most is the constant outflow of our people, mostly Christians, who would be extremely necessary so as to rebuild Syria. They are leaving because after 5 years of an absurd conflict which has killed nearly 300,000 people, the men are no longer willing to be conscripted into military service or as reservists often sent to a certain death.

It is so painful to see many members of the Movement leaving and to see the anguish of those who stay and wonder whether they are making a mistake by staying.

Despite all this, the Ideal of Unity is still light for many people who have met us. We meet regularly with them to deepen the spirituality and support one another. Last week, Pascal a focolarino who lives in Aleppo met 11 members of the movement who had stayed in the ruined city of Homs. They were so glad to meet up after such a long time.

We went from Damascus to 2 cities to the north of the country on the coast and met 14 young people. Yesterday there was a meeting for children and one for families in Damascus and today the youth for a united world in Damascus are spending the whole day deepening the spirituality, mercy and their relationship with God. They prayed for peace and for all the young people who are in danger on all fronts. New people are getting to know the Focolare in various cities. People want to live and their only need is to live in peace, more than anything else.

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Truly, we are praying intensely, with the Pope, as he said in his appeal, and with all of you that God may stir the consciences of the leaders of the powerful nations involved, to put aside their own interests and work for the peace the Syrian people long for.

Thanks for everything and goodbye everyone.

Maria: Thanks. Thank you all.

Emmaus: Thank you Radast. We are with you. You feel this, don't you?

Radast: Yes. Thank you Emmaus. Goodbye.

Gianni: Goodbye Radast, thank you.

07) SWITZERLAND – “BASEL, A CITY GOING AGAINST THE FLOW”

Gianni: Now let's go Basel in Switzerland, a city with 34% migrant population. Here the St Joseph's parish community set up a reception centre which was at first against the law and which has now become a model of integration between cultures and religions.

Ruedi Beck, Pastor of St. Joseph, Basel - Switzerland (in German): *I had only been here a short time when in the winter many asylum seekers were refused help and were left on the streets. We managed to take in many immigrants, which was against the law. We were reported and accused, We should have paid a heavy fine but we refused to do so and were taken to court. In the end we were acquitted because it was seen that what we did should have been done by the State.*

Yvonne, Jamaica : *once they have come to us here in Saint Joseph, there are no distinction, no distinction because with and without papers they are welcome here. ... when they reach here they think 'okay now I have made it, I am out of trouble. I'm into a safe place' ; but in reality that is where the problem starts and this is where we are - as church - to stand up for them, to fight with them, to get their rights, to take them to places, institution and places where we can fight for them, you know, to help them that they can become a normal legal person.*

Alexander, Germany (in German): *Seeing so many refugees we asked ourselves what it means to "welcome" people here, inviting them to come to our homes. Now we have met 15 people from 12 different countries.*

Michel, Switzerland (in German): *We wanted to create a space, a bridge between the parish, the area we are in and the different cultures, a cafe where relationships could grow. We have been here six months and it's always full at lunchtime... From the start we involved women refugees and migrants. They are better than the Swiss helpers I had before. Besides working we have many conversations about integration.*

Robertina, Switzerland (in German): *My family comes from Kosovo. When we are travelling with the children and young people we help them to see that going to church is 'cool' too. They don't need to be ashamed of religion, because it's not something young people are interested in or talk about.*

Ruedi Beck (in German): *Of course, the people who have always lived here were against them. They felt pressurised and were afraid of foreigners, but the more we asked the asylum*

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seekers to come to our place the more the Swiss discovered the worth of these people and their faith.

Michel, Switzerland (in German): We were warmly welcomed by the community. There is a real fraternal spirit here. We have made many friends. Bijoux and Sola and their family even honoured us by asking us to witness their marriage.

Ruedi Beck (in German): Our district here has the same number of Catholics and Muslims. We have made friends with Imam Mohammed.

Muhammed Tas, Turkey - Imam First Mosque, Basel (in Turkish): Our youth have come to visit this Church today. They wanted to know how Christians pray and have seen how they pray. We were very happy. They found that the Christian way of praying is really good. Let's hope we can go on with these visits in future. The Christians come to our mosques too.

Guy Morin, President of the Canton, Basel – Switzerland (in German): St Joseph's gives a huge contribution because the new immigrants there, and the ones seeking political asylum and other people in difficulty, find a place where they can offload their burdens, meet other people and build a network... What touched me particularly was that they take cultural and religious differences seriously.

Maria: This story gives us great hope. Thanks for telling us.

Gianni: Also because what this community did helped to change the law so as to respond better to the challenges of today.

08) USA – RELATIONSHIP IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

Maria : Let's change focus and go to the USA. As we know from the news the electoral campaign is in full swing. We went to meet Dick and Shirley who live in Tucson in Arizona. She is a democrat and he is a republican.

Speaker: Dick and Shirley Marquis live in Tucson Arizona. They have 9 children and 22 grandchildren and have been married for nearly 60 years. An impressive milestone given the fact that just before getting married they discovered something about each other that risked changing their story completely.

Dick: In the parking lot of the grocery store one time this woman approached me and she says: "Why do you have both Republican and Democratic signs in you back window. Can't you make up your mind?". And so I said: "No! My wife is a Democrat and I'm Republican and so we put both signs up."

(music)

Shirley: We didn't talk about politics and being from Massachusetts, which is a strong Democratic state, and I thought Maine was - where Dick is from - and I just assumed that he was a Democrat. [...] It wasn't until after we became engaged that I realized that he was not of the same political party and I thought... hmm... OK. It was really too late to turn back at that point.

Dick: It wasn't a big deal at first. I wasn't active. But then after we were married I became active in

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the Young Republican Club in Maine. [...] It wasn't till after that that I realized - and she let me know - how strong a Democrat that she is!

Shirley: So we had some wonderful conversations and at that point in our lives, I think, we were really strong in trying to convince the other to accept the party that we were involved in.

Dick: Well I think that we both realized very strongly that the important thing is our relationship. And because of that importance that we place on our relationship, we can listen to each other and accept each other. (We) don't have to agree with each other but we accept each other for who we are.

Shirley: Now Dick likes to watch a certain news channel and I like to watch a different news channel. His news channel is very Republican focused. Mine [...] Democrat focused. So what happens is we watch both. When we're watching the channel he prefers, I've stopped, you know, groaning or you know going, "Oh my goodness." And you know, and because it's not really being respectful and it's not truly listening to what the other person is trying to say and to try to understand.

You know, it's the case of trying to walk in their shoes and the way that they're thinking. And I'd like to say that it's still, it's easy to do that but sometimes it isn't. I feel so strongly about issues but I realized that issues isn't the main focus in our relationship. It's really the relationship [...] to give up my ideas sometimes; I'm not saying to water down what I believe but not to make it an issue. Relationship is what it's all about.

(music)

9) DORI ZAMBONI – PLAYING the “GAME” OF GOD’S WILL

Maria : In recent weeks two of the focolarini from the very early times of the Focolare Movement have died, Dori Zamboni and Giorgio Martelli, known as Turnea.

Dori was taught by Chiara and was among the very first group of focolarine with her in Trent. Here she tells an experience she had.

Dori Zamboni: Someone asked me on the way here, what might I say now, in this moment. Perhaps the fact of my not being well, this illness that is lasting such a long time, ... I found myself facing the reality of the will of God, that we all know and which I thought I was doing, but perhaps I was often doing it my own way. But recently, due to circumstances, having to do what the doctors want, having to do what my body wants and not being able to do what I want, even in the smallest and least things. Saying “I’ll do the will of God” is a real effort at times, because I have seen that I still have to learn how to do it. I must make a start, because the fact that Jesus said, “Not my will but yours”, is something to be done in every present moment. Truly, it gives me the impression that loving means doing the will of God, because Jesus says so, but it is like a pendulum which says, “I would like to do this”. “No, I must do the will of God”. It is exactly like Him, “Not my will but yours”. It is Jesus who said, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” and then said, “Into your hands...”. Loving means continually going out, outside of ourselves and entering into the divine; and most

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likely it is the Holy Spirit who makes the pendulum able to do it.⁴ (applause)

10) **GIORGIO MARTELLI (TURNEA) – THE DAY THAT CHANGED THE LIFE OF THE TRADES UNION REP**

Gianni: Giorgio Martelli was a trades unionist who got to know Chiara in 1950 at a meeting which changed his life. Let's hear about it from him.

Turnea: ... I came to work in Rome. At that time I was the trades union representative and I came for the meetings of the Italian Worker's Union. Graziella told me there was a meeting with Chiara; Chiara was in Ostia and wanted to meet with the men and women focolarini ... I was not one of them... but as I had not yet met Chiara, Graziella took me to Ostia. ... All that day Chiara spoke about the Trinity.

I was a Christian ... well, the Trinity was a part of Christianity, and certainly a very important part of it. ... For me that reality, of Chiara speaking about the Trinity, or rather, enabling us to live it, understand it and enter into the life of the Trinity, stayed with me as the central point of my life.

Also because I had a problem, which was about with my relationship with God ... I was seeking... I had had a Christian education and so on, but for what I was doing in life - I was trades union representative - I was always in conflict with my neighbors. These neighbors were mostly the owners and employers. I used to bang my fists on the table, I argued; in short, there was no [connection] between these two realities, union with God and with neighbors...

There, something happened. In my soul, love of God became fused with love of neighbor. Moreover, I realized that the Gospel, the life of God, the Trinitarian life, could solve the problems of humanity and create society. That was a revolution for me. ...⁵

Gianni: Heartfelt thanks to Dori and Turnea.

11) **THAILAND – a conversation with the Great Master Ajahn Thong**

Maria: Now let's go to Thailand and to Chiang Mai in the north. We have a special interview with Ajahn Thong, a Great Master of Buddhism in Thailand. Chiara had a deep friendship with him for many years which is clear in what he says.

Roberto Signor - Chiang Mai Thailand : We are coming close to the Chom Thong where the Temple of Ajahn Thong is located. Ajahn Thong invited Chiara to Thailand in 1997. And Chiara came to talk to the Buddhist monks, nuns and lay Buddhist in Chiang Mai.

⁴ From a talk given by Dori Zamboni to the focolarini gathered in the Mariapolis Center at Castelgandolfo, 7th December 1993, during the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Focolare Movement.

⁵ From a talk by Turnea to the focolarini at the Mariapolis Center of Castelgandolfo, 14th December 2008.

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(music)

Today here at the Chom Thong Temple, it's the day dedicated to Buddha. One day a week all the Monks and the faithful of the village here in Chom Tong they come to pray together. And the same happens in the whole of Thailand. So we can witness the pray together.

(voices in prayer and music)

Ajahn Thong (in Thai): *Yes, I'm very glad to share a short message with everyone! The world will be in achieve peace when the 4 points of the Dharma (Buddhist Teaching) are put into practice:*

- 1) *"Meta" (Mercy) = We have to be merciful to one another.*
- 2) *"Karuna" (compassion) = which helps people go beyond suffering. We should have a heart for those who suffer.*
- 3) *"Mutthitha" (Sympathetic joy/kindness) = which means supporting and motivating good people.*
- 4) *If any of the above 3 points of the Dharma are not achieved then we should "let go everything" and that is the 4th aspect, "Ubeka" (Mental calmness)*

If we practice these 4 points of the Dharma then the world will attain peace. Otherwise the world will suffer. I always think of the Focolare, especially Chiara. The world doesn't smile; it up to us to spread mercy; Chiara is always here.

13) CHIARA LUBICH – THE CREATIVE POWER OF LISTENING WHICH LEADS TO DIALOGUE

Gianni: *If this link up has a title it is Dialogue. But how do we do dialogue? Let's listen to Chiara telling her experience.*

Crusana (Colombia): *"Dearest Chiara, you are truly a teacher of inculturation also in the particular aspect of making ourselves one, in silence and deep listening to the other. Can you tell us your experience about this?"*

Chiara Lubich: *This is my experience: ... Gandhi's grandson, whom I met in Switzerland, told me: "... the way is 'to listen'. Perhaps he also said it for this reason: there is such a wealth beneath, such a contrast, that you must know about, before uttering a word. I remembered this. In Coimbatore, ... my talk began like this: "I have come to India to listen, so here I am. But you have asked me to speak so I will speak, then there will be time ... Anyway I have 18 days in which to listen." So we should always have this attitude. I have seen over and over again that it is an amazing help for all the dialogues, just going so as to listen; because first of all you inculturate yourself, you enter the other person's culture, you understand it; you enter into the other person's language: they speak in this way and that way. Like Jesus who spoke in parables. He spoke about the vine and the branches, and about flowers, the lilies of the field, because this was the culture of that place. Hence they understood him. So by listening and listening I felt ... that without even trying, I was inculturating myself, I was entering into and understanding their language. I also understood ... They had prepared some written information for me so that I could learn more; but more than that I understood their proverbs. **There's one proverb, for example, that I think is really special. It's a proverb about loving our enemies, which is typically Christian. But they have***

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adopted it too. I don't know if they took it from us or if it came from the Holy Spirit. But I know that they have this saying. There is another proverb about a perfumed wood, sandalwood and the saying goes: the axe cuts the sandalwood and the sandalwood takes revenge by leaving its perfume on the axe. It's the revenge of love, it means loving enemies. So by listening you understand, and afterwards when you speak, you refer to that language or those proverbs, those topics you learned about, in order to say what you want to say. Listening has another advantage. I listened for hours, and the advantage of listening is that after you've listened, they feel obliged to listen to you, even only out of politeness, because it's logical. They say: "What about you? What can you say?" So you speak, "Well, I really came to India to listen." "Yes, but what about your spirituality, your spiritual life? You are a guru. What kind of guru are you?" Then you explain your guru, see? This is just to say. But this applies to all dialogues: interreligious dialogue, ecumenical dialogue because we don't know the other churches, and also among Catholics because we don't know the other institutions, other Movements and other realities. We know the world in which we live. This is what you need to do⁶ (Applause)

13) CONCLUSION

Maria : Listening so as to be able to dialogue. "This is what we must do", Chiara says. We would like to say that we are all committed to this, to doing what Chiara said, wherever we are in the world.

We have reached the end of our conference call.

So we greet each one of you in a special way, wherever you are. Special thanks to each one of you!

Gianni: See you at the next link up which will be on the 9th of April at 6.00 p.m.

Maria: Goodbye!

⁶ Answer n. 6 - Chiara Lubich to the citizens of Loppiano, 7th February 2001.