

CH CONFERENCE CALL

Rocca di Papa, 24 February 2018

“Champions of unity”

1. Beyond all borders – countdown to the 2018 Genfest;

Activities and experiences from various parts of the world: the Focolare Movement's communities, including young people, adults and children – working for the Genfest. See www.y4uw.org

2. Opening and greetings;

3. Syria – an interview with Stefano Comazzi (AMU) and a greeting from Emmaus and Jesús;

And a phone call with Maria do Céu Costa, in Aleppo.

4. The RAISE project – mobilising to counter unemployment;

A practical response to the hardship of unemployment offered by AMU in Portugal, with support from AMU International and the Economy of Communion.

5. Colombia – Truth in reconciliation;

Adriana Avellaneda is from Colombia and lives in Italy. Her travel diary takes us to her own land to meet people who experience and promote peace processes in very complex situations.

6. Brazil –Melancholy merriment: Pintor's story;

An actor's career was interrupted by a sudden illness. A life re-modelled by the hand of God.

7. Gis Calliari and her priority;

One of Chiara Lubich's very first companions has died aged 97. During the last stage of her life, her rich experience was distilled into one idea: the presence of Jesus in the midst among those who live mutual love.

8. Italy - RomaAmor – to be a family with those most in need;

A caring deed by Dino Impagliazzo was the first knot in an ever widening net. Tuscolana station and other places in Rome have become settings for mutual love and solidarity towards many new brothers and sisters.

9. Chiara Lubich: Champions of unity;

Taken from Chiara Lubich's words to a group of priests at Rocca di Papa on 1st December 1981.

10. Greeting from Emmaus and conclusion.

1. Genfest: Beyond all borders, countdown to the 2018 Genfest.

*Hey... I'm here...
behind the wall...
I'm in plain sight but you can't see me...
Borders divide.
divide peoples
cultures
countries
taking you to the edge....
the edge of your city
of yourself
of your heart
letting fear, and emptiness blind you.
But.... what if...
I change my perspective taking the risk... crossing the border?
Embracing differences
living together,
working together...
breathing together,
to build bridges instead of breaking them.
A whole world is waiting for us out there,
to embrace differences to work,
to live, to breath together
because only together
we can create a more united world!
because a more united world
can only be created together!
Let's make our choice. "Beyond all borders"*

Antonella: Welcome to the Conference Call. We ended the last link up in November talking about the Genfest and now we are starting with it.

Francesco: The Genfest is an international appointment that the young people of the Focolare Movement have set in Manila in July and that will be repeated in many other cities the world over.

Antonella: At the last link up, Maria Voce, Emmaus, invited everyone to do all we can to contribute to this great event.

Antonella: We have with us Martha from Argentina and Iginio from the Philippines. We want to take this opportunity to ask how things are going for the preparations and kind of response did you have to this appeal.

Martha: Of course, the response to Emmaus invitation was extraordinary and that's why we really want to thank everyone for the support that we are receiving every day. Let's keep going!

In Tanzania for example, the local community arranged a lunch to raise funds for the Genfest. Then, in Nigeria Youth for a United World are visiting schools to invite the students to the local Genfest.

In France, the Gen 4 boys and girls set up little stalls and sold things during the carnival events. A group of gen 4 near Rome here in Italy raised funds to help young people in Greece pay for the journey to Manila.

In the USA, in Los Angeles, the whole community of the Movement organized a dinner for a cause; while in Texas, they had a "bake sale" selling cakes during the Super Bowl games this month.

In India here is a lot of activity in Bangalore and New Delhi and Mumbai. We know that young people in Sri Lanka and Nepal are getting ready for the Genfest.

There will be a Genfest in Cuba. There you can see some photos: they are preparing the event with tombolas and sports events.

And much more around the world!

Francesco: Igino, what is going on in the Philippines? How are things going?

Igino: Just this week young people and professionals from different parts of the world who are working on the programme have met in Manila. They are holding auditions and practice sessions for the band and the choreography as well as creating the scenography... The whole Movement are involved in inviting young pope and telling everyone about the Genfest: for example the national Bishops' Conference; during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and many other local events.

Antonella Wow! So everyone is being mobilised all around the world. Let's go now to speak to Mariana in Rio de Janeiro. Hello Mariana, how are you preparing for the Genfest there in Brazil?

Mariana: "We are doing various fundraising activities to help young people go to the Genfest. We organized a traditional "Festa junina" here in Brazil, and a Botekokê, a meal with aperitifs, snacks and karaoke. After the Link up last November, we received help and support from everyone! Donations arrived and we are planning many more activities until June: cinema nights, guided tours of the city centre, another edition of Botekokê, and a bazaar. So far we have covered the costs for one representative from Rio in Manila. We will use the rest of the money to help other young people come to our local Genfest at the Mariapolis Ginetta, near San Paolo."

Antonella: Thanks Mariana, thanks to you all! Let's remember that there are only a few days left in which you can book for the Genfest. If you want to go and need more information go to the website of Youth for a United World¹, or see our social networks. Thanks to Martha and Igino! (Applause)

¹ www.y4uw.org

2. **Opening and greetings.**

Antonella Bianco: We have not introduced ourselves!

Francesco Tortorella: Let's do it now.

Antonella Bianco: You start!

Francesco Tortorella: My name is Francesco and I am from Bari, a city in the south of Italy. I am married to Anna and the happy father of three children: Maria, Marco and Martha. I work on international cooperation projects for AMU the Association for a United World, and my wife Anna works in AFN, Action for New Families, in the section dealing with international adoptions. For both of us, our passion for social action became our daily job.

Antonella Bianco: I'm Antonella and I too am from Bari. I have been working in Rome for the last 15 years as a civil servant in the Ministry of Justice but I started work as a teacher in a correctional facility for young people in the south of Italy. In that way I was doing something I had wanted to do since I was a child. I had asked myself whether the Ideal of a united world, which I had discovered, could bring some light into a prison, behind bars.

Francesco: The Conference Call is different every time, the presenters, the people in the room. Among the many people here we want to greet a group of religious sisters, who come from different parts of the world, there they are. (Applause) Then we have some members of the Abba School who are meeting here at the moment. (Applause) There is a very special welcome for Professor Adam Biela from the University of Lublin, which was the first university to award Chiara an honorary doctorate in social sciences. (Applause)

Antonella: And welcome to a group of girls from the Castelli Romani! (Applause)
If you want to send us greetings and impressions, please use the following addresses, email, Facebook, or our WhatsApp number 00 39 342 873 0175.

3. **Syria**

Francesco: Yesterday was the day of prayer and fasting for peace, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, a day Pope Francis asked all people of good will to take part in. But we immediately think of Syria too and other parts of the world where there is conflict and war.

Stefano Comazzi is here with us, he is the President of the Association for a United World that, together with Action for New Families, has been helping families in Syria since 2012 through the communities of the Focolare Movement. Recently we experienced a very special journey. In fact, a few weeks ago you were in Syria to see the projects and the people we are working with. What was your impression?

Stefano Comazzi, Action for a United World: Well, let's say I found a country where there is great suffering, but which is alive. I met Mustafa, a Muslim and his wife Denise who is a Christian, and their daughter Naya. When the crisis began they received death threats and had to leave their home in a hurry' the house was then attacked. They had a workshop where

they created furniture accessories according to longstanding and refined Arab tradition. The whole place was destroyed.

We went back to their home to see what was left. There was a weird silence, yet despite this, with a few respectful words, we saw that was left. Nowadays, Mustafa and Denise teach their craft and their skills to children and young people who have been evacuated. In this way they heal the ills of war and hatred with beauty. This and give these children a chance to work when it comes to re-building the country.

I met Jalal too, who worked in the market in Aleppo, one of the oldest markets in the world. Aleppo was one of the first cities in the world to have this extraordinary market holding 20,000 people. Jalal had a fabric shop, with clients who came from all over the world. We went back there with him and saw the way, certainly filled with suffering, with which he handled some samples of cloth, or held a register from the shop which had been left behind. Now Jalal gives a hand to a small team of those in the Movement in Syria who run the aid projects.

There are so many needs, for example many schools are without teachers, as they have fled the country. Classrooms are overcrowded, so people in our community set up a number of after school classes, in an atmosphere of love and respect that helps the children overcome the suffering of war. There are also programmes helping families, especially concerning health which has become a serious problem for Syria. These activities are carried out in different cities: Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Kafarbo and Damascus.

Francesco: How can people contribute to the projects in Syria?

Stefano: In recent years we have collected about € 900,000 in donations for Syria and were able to fund the projects you have seen and that you can also get to know better. Recently, aid has decreased, perhaps because Syria is not talked about so much, except for the last few days. But the people continue to suffer and the needs are great. We had to reduce our activities because of fewer donations. But we want to continue to be alongside the Syrian people.

Francesco: So let's take advantage of this Link-up, this opportunity to invite you all to continue supporting the Syrian people. I invite you to visit the websites of AMU² and AFN³, where you will find the information you need to make a contribution. It does not matter if it is small, but will go to show our support for the Syrian people.

Thank you, Stefano and we thank everyone for the help received so far, and for what we will be able to do together in the future.

Antonella: Stefano reminded us that the situation in Syria is in the news; it is getting worse and worse.

We hope to have with us on the phone, Maria do Céu, a Brazilian friend of ours who has been living in the Middle East for many years. She is Portuguese, they are correcting me!

Maria do Céu, are you there? Can you hear me?

Maria do Céu Costa: (laughs) Yes, yes, I can hear you. Ciao!

Antonella: Good! Ciao, Maria do Céu, that's good!

² www.amu-it.eu

³ www.afnonlus.org

Maria do Céu Costa: Hello everyone!

Antonella: How are you all there in Syria? What can you tell us?

Maria do Céu Costa: Look, I am speaking to you from Aleppo where in recent times the situation has improved. Here we always try to keep in touch, to support one another and share our lives with all our people in Syria, but especially those in Damascus where the situation has really got worse. People are living under a barrage of mortars that fall everywhere. They are tired under this cross of violence. They are afraid and don't know what will happen next. They are tired on this cross. Many workplaces and schools are closed to avoid people walking through the streets that would increase the number of victims. There is a lot of pressure.

However, life goes on. The people in the Movement's community are grateful for the messages, prayers and unity that reach us and know that many are thinking of them. In Damascus they have intensified the Time-Out prayer inviting everyone to do this.

The Pope's invitation to all people, of different religions and of good will, to spend yesterday in prayer and fasting for Peace moved us. Messages went round so that everyone could be united in this worldwide prayer to obtain the gift of peace from Heaven. We thank all of you and continue to believe and pray together. With this faith, with all our faith, so that God may hasten the day. This is our experience now.

Emmaus: Céu, hello, it's Emmaus. We will certainly continue to live and pray together. Not only that. I want to ask you to take this message to everyone, especially those who are suffering so much in Damascus, to thank them. Every suffering they experience, every suffering they offer serves to build a united world, it serves to bring ahead "may they all be one".

So they should all feel they are in the front line with us. We are one. They are us and we are them. We are all of you. I'll hand you on to Jesús.

Maria do Céu: Thank you!

Emmaus: Bye Céu and to all of you.

Maria do Céu: Thanks, thanks.

Jesús: Hello Maria, I too want to thank you for all that you are and all that you do, for your faithfulness to God and the charism and to all people. You can be sure of our solidarity, as Emmaus said, and our prayer. Recently when we were all a bit calmer, we then saw what happened in Ghouta and we are once again overwhelmed. We are truly there with you and you must feel you are on the front lines for "May they all be one", because it is true.

Maria do Céu: Thank you, thank you Jesús, thanks Emmaus and everyone. We feel you are here with us. We feel part of one family spread throughout the world. Truly thank you!

Emmaus: Thank you!

Antonella: Thanks. Goodbye!

Maria do Céu: Bye! (Applause)

4. Portugal: The RAISE project – mobilising to counter unemployment.

Francesco: Even in countries that do not experience such dramatic situations of conflict, difficulties are not lacking. One of these is unemployment: lack of work, lack of hope and of a

future. It's a complex challenge that must be faced with care and courage. That's what they are doing in Portugal. Let's watch this story.

Francisco Maia, President AMU Portugal

This project began in 2015 when Portugal was going through a very difficult time that affected the lives of many families. Many people became jobless and this led to great instability, both on a personal and family level. It is a situation that can happen to anyone. So it is necessary to create a network of mutual help that mobilizes society, motivating people to find job again.

Margarida Rodríguez, Social worker in the RAISE Project: *RAISE, in English means to raise up and it is the acronym of our project - Alternative Response of Social Integration and Entrepreneurship. The project is characterized by an approach to each person which allows their personal and professional development and opportunities for the person's integration in the job market or to start their own business. We collaborate with public and private institutions, providing unemployed people with complementary services such as: psychosocial support, development of human skills and reintegration into the labour market. And all this is done with the support of the Economy of Communion and Action for a United World. During the first phase of the project we accompanied 50 people, 21 of them have now entered the labour market.*

Fernando Maurício Lumberjack and timber merchant: *There was not much work, I was unemployed, and my wife was jobless too. It was a rather complicated situation, I cannot explain it, I was very down ... not being able to earn the money for food, and for various needs.*

Verónica Bento, Businesswoman, organic farming: *It was a stage in my life when I had much energy for my work, and a great desire to do new things. But not being able to find work, I was dismayed.*

Célia Faria, Assistant in a care home for the elderly: *I was unemployed for over 3 years, almost 4 years. I could not find work, so I was very down. I was very sad, so I gave up.*

Fernando Maurício: *Considering I had nothing, the project Raise gave me a lot. I started to work and see light at the end of the tunnel.*

M. C., Police Inspector: *My apologies that I cannot show my face. I work in the field of national security, so there are some restrictions. The main difficulty that I faced was that of managing my frustration, deriving from the fact that I did not get any replies to the many job applications I made.*

Verónica Bento: *Personal accompaniment is very important, first of all in preparing the project, then in the search for funding, then the implementation. Having someone with whom I can talk about difficulties and doubts is always very important.*

M. C. *I understood what I wanted to do professionally, I evaluated the alternatives and, at the same time, I helped other people. This made me feel more fulfilled.*

Célia Faria: *Words cannot express my thanks to AMU for what they did for me and my family.*

Fernando Maurício *They did not let me give up.*

António Pires President of the Districts of Abriqada and Cabanas de Torres: *The project has been important and I hope it will continue to be important in the future. Whether it's me or someone else in this position, always counting on AMU's collaboration, it would be fantastic.*
Margarida Rodríguez: *We have a Portuguese poet, Sebastian da Gama, who wrote a poem which we thought expressed all the feeling with which we got this project:*

*The dream is why we go,
Moved and silent.
Will we arrive? We will not?
Whether there are fruits or not,
The dream is why we go.
It's enough to have faith in what we have
Enough to hope in what
We may not have
It's enough to give our soul
with the same joy
To what we do not know
And to what is everyday
Will we get there? Will we not?
Let's start. Let's go. We are.*

Francesco: Thank you Margherida, thank you Francisco. All our unity for your work!

5. **Colombia: truth and reconciliation**

Antonella: Let's jump now from Portugal to Latin America, to Colombia. It's a country that is coming out of a very long civil war and is experiencing a difficult process of reconciliation. Let's see Adriana Avellaneda's travel diary, she is part of the Link-up production team.

Adriana: *I'm leaving for Colombia. It's been 23 years since I left my country. I'm going back to celebrate my dad's 80th birthday with my family, and to rediscover my past and my roots.*

(Music)

From when I was a child and hearing the story from my parents and grandparents, I know that Colombia has experienced unending war, with no truce. Even though all Colombians want peace, the process towards achieving it is still very complex.

Truth and reconciliation (Diary of a journey)

On November 24th, 2016 the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the FARC, signed a peace agreement to end over 50 years of civil war, a war that has left more than 220,000 dead and 6 million displaced people. It was a complex and difficult path that led to reconciliation.

The desire for social justice attracted me from a young age. For this reason, with some of my friends I shared the ideals of the guerrillas, until I met the Focolare Movement in Bogota and decided to give my life for peace and universal brotherhood, leaving my country, my family and my job. My brothers and mother, like many other Colombians, left the country in the 90s looking for a better future.

During this trip I will see some people whose lives changed, like mine did, when they met the spirituality of unity. There's Father Elkin, a priest who part of a guerrilla group in his youth.

Fr. Elkin Osorio, Parish priest of San Marcos de León (Cali): (...) I came to a parish where there was a lot of social injustice, so little by little, I joined as a collaborator the ELN, the National Liberation Army, which had similar ideals of establishing social justice and helping the farmers acquire social benefits (...) As time passed, my spiritual life diminished and I took advantage of my position as a priest to politicize the farmers (...) Later on, I began to see that the life of this group, of the ELN – included robbery, cheating and prostitution. No, that was not what I was looking for at all.

Adriana: The story of Father Elkin is like that of many priests and religious who believed in an ideal of social justice, but were disappointed and frustrated by the methods used. There were also many priests who gave their lives to denounce the abuses against the farmers, like Jorge Luis Mazo, 33, who was murdered while he was travelling along the Atrato River for his humanitarian mission.

“Life has no truce.” This book tells the stories of guerrillas and paramilitaries who fought at first and then decided to lay down their arms. One of the points in the peace agreement is the participation in political processes by ex-combatants. Orlando, a former guerrilla, now works for the re-integration of former combatants and of the farmers. He witnessed the death and imprisonment of his friends and his brother was killed by paramilitaries. Someone suggested he take revenge, but his decision was different...

Orlando Cardozo Valderrama, Agro-ecological Farmers Association (Villarica – Tolima): I said no, that they should let me put things right in my own way. My way, and my challenge, was all within me; to learn the art of forgiveness that is very, very difficult. Weapons or war are never options to transform life. (...) Truly, I discover that the path to transformation is different; it is being able to touch the human soul of the other person. In order to do that, we do not need the arrogance of power, but rather humility which is the most difficult to build up (...)

Adriana: Travelling down to the south of Colombia, which is mostly rural. Colombian farmers were the victims most affected by the conflict, both due to evictions and exploitation through coca cultivation. Coca has been the cause for bloody wars and for decades has financed both right wing and left wing armed groups. Elsy, who is a lawyer, has worked for years in the redistribution of land by the government, and in the training of farmers and the in conflict resolution.

Elsy Perrucho, Regional Director of Agriculture and Fisheries (Barrancabermeja): Most of them do not know how to read, they meet together to answer some questions. There are others who listen but who do not want to be part of the process perhaps because they belong to the paramilitary groups or guerrilla groups that don't want to stop farming illegally (...) it is very sad to see along the roadsides all the "raspachines"; the people who work in the coca [plantations]; they are very young, some are not even 18 years of age. This is the future if we do not do something (...) We should tell the government that it is not simply about passing laws, but that we are working with people, people who have suffered a lot (...)

Adriana In this conflict, as Pope Francis said during his recent trip to Colombia, all have been victims. Many families have suffered this life of violence. Diana, a friend of mine, lost her two cousins who were murdered for political reasons.

Diana Farfán, General State Prosecutor (Bogotá): In the year 2002, they received some warnings from the paramilitaries telling them that they could not continue in politics and they should abandon their electoral campaign. Then suddenly, we heard that they disappeared, we did not know where they were and we hoped that they would be released in the following days. Surprisingly, after two days, we were told that they found, murdered. It was good that I met the focalare at that time; it helped me to find inner peace. If you start to rationalize, there are many reasons why it is impossible to forgive, but when you do not forgive ... there is no peace (...)

Adriana On March 27th, 1992, there was an attack in front of the headquarters of an international organization in Bogotá. I passed by that place every day on my way home after work and was saved only by a few seconds. I remember the noise, the smoke and the glass falling from nearby buildings. At the time I was working in the Office of the State's Attorney General, a special government body that dealt with the crimes of drug trafficking and terrorism.

I am going to see Miguel, my boss at that time, who is now part of a regional peace commission. A critical point in the signed peace agreements is seeking the truth in order to compensate the victims of this conflict.

Miguel de J. Niño Sandoval – Regional peace and reconciliation commission (Tunja): I really hope that there be honesty, honesty is the principle of truth that opens the way to the solution, (...) It is no longer retributive justice but restorative justice; and how is it restored? Through the truth, in so far as we recognize the truth and this is difficult because there is much fear of the truth, Adriana. There is fear of the truth, we feel it. I prefer to be detained and imprisoned rather than tell the truth, because those who have contributed to this entire problem do not want it and the military even less. Now we are struggling so as to achieve this key, essential and central factor, which is to be reconciled in the truth.

Papa Francisco, Villavicencio, September 8th, 2017: Truth is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. Indeed, truth should not lead to revenge, but rather to reconciliation and

forgiveness. Dear people of Colombia: do not be afraid to ask for forgiveness and offer it. Do not resist reconciliation.

Adriana *Do not resist reconciliation. A phrase full of meaning also for me and my family. Together, we decided this time to return to Colombia, to celebrate my father's birthday, with whom there was not an easy relationship. It grew worse after we were separated. It is time to heal wounds and overcome resentment. Reconciliation also happens through each one of us.*
(Song and applause)

Antonella: Reconciliation, involves each of us. ...

We think we have Leidy from Medellin, in Colombia, on the phone. Are you there Leidy?

Leidy: Hello, I'm here.

Antonella: We can see you. Ciao! Listen, Leidy, how are you experiencing this process of reconciliation?

Leidy Vargas: Some very important steps have been taken in the country, like the 80% reduction in murders connected with the conflict over the last 6 years. But there are still many problems related above all to drug trafficking, to violence against leaders in society and corruption. ... Our commitment is on different levels. Certainly, there is a new willingness to forgive. Some people are involved in compensation for victims; others are working in the field of education to contribute to the courses being given in all the schools. There remains the biggest challenge of all which is to build up and spread an inclusive political culture, to rebuild the social fabric.

Antonella: Thank you Leidy, we wish you well for this work and know that we are with you. Ciao!

Leidy: Thanks. We count on you. Ciao! (Applause)

6. Brazil: Pintor's story, "Melancholy merriment"

Francesco: Sometimes situations can suddenly change our life. And yet, focusing to look at suffering and facing it, we can transform our life into a work of art, as what happened to Pintor. Pintor, a professional actor, of San Paolo in Brazil.

José Pinto: *I am a geographer by profession. I have worked as geography teacher almost all my life. When I was young, maybe 8 or 9 years old, my family took me to Alto do Moura, a village known for fine arts, artwork with clay and terracotta. When we arrived in the place, I saw a sculptor. He was seated behind a door, making the head of a doll. That doll seemed so beautiful to me. He was working with his hands and with a small piece of wood he was putting the finishing touches to his work. At a certain point, when the sculpture seemed to be perfectly done, after examining it, he threw it onto the wall, and it broke. Then he started working again with the clay - which had become more malleable - to do the work again.*

For me art has always been an opportunity to express myself. At a certain point, I felt the need to dedicate myself more to art and so I left geography completely. When I was at the height of my art, with shows, travels, and projects, I became seriously ill. One day I woke up

and it was difficult to move my hands and feet, and they felt very itchy. I was taken to hospital and I was diagnosed to have Guillain Barré Syndrome. This illness paralyzes the whole body, and you are no longer able to move even a finger, you cannot even move the eyes.

I imagined that I would have to completely abandon the theatre. I became desperate, thinking that the only thing I could do was being taken away from me. I asked: "Eternal Father, God, what do you want from me?" After waking up that morning I had never lost consciousness, except for a few moments. But I could not show that I was conscious. If I could have screamed, I would have shouted: "I'm alive, I exist!" Then a doctor asked me a question. She said, "Are you conscious? Do you know who I am? If you are conscious, then close your eyes". Since that was the only movement I could do. I managed to close my eyes. And she was glad saying, "So you are conscious!" From that moment on, I began to communicate. Only towards the end of my stay in the Intensive Care Unit was I able to make the first movements. They put before me the letters of the alphabet and the words: Yes and No. The first word I wrote was mosquito, because there were mosquitoes in the ICU that stung me, in my eyes. When I wrote that word, the doctor asked: "mosquitoes here in the ICU?" I could move a little, so I showed the word "yes". He asked me again: "in here?" And I: "Yes."

I learned many things while I was in the ICU: life is composed of relationships. It is like a fabric, a network, where sometimes you are underneath and sometimes you are above, but where everyone has a role. If I were to die now, what would remain? I believe that the experience in the intensive care unit was like that story I told about the clay doll: I think God threw me, made me more malleable; he deformed me, in order to rebuild me.

Francesco: Thank you Pintor for the courage you have shown. Thanks also to *Breaking Rays*, a project involving young film-makers from different parts of the world, enabling them to contribute to the Conference Call through their reports and their stories. Thanks!

7. Gis Calliari: her priority

Antonella: On January 20th, at the age of 97, one of Chiara Lubich's first companions passed away, Gisella Calliari, better known as "Gis". Like Chiara, Gis was born in Trent, in northern Italy. Thinking of her, the adjectives that immediately came to mind to describe her are: determined, radical, courageous. She directly experienced the Second World War.

But at that time, together with her sister Ginetta, she met Chiara and the first group of girls who had made God the ideal of their life. She and Ginetta wanted to join them as they had gone to live together in a small apartment in Piazza Cappuccini in Trent. But her mother was totally against it and adamant. Let's hear what Gis told us.

Gis: *"Of course, there was Ginetta, and there was Gis, who both wanted to leave the family, of course, it goes without saying. So much so that we went to bed at night, and when our mother went to sleep, and all the sisters were asleep, we were in bed and as soon as they slept we would get up, get dressed and go! We went to Piazza Cappuccini, and then early in*

the morning we went home, acted as though we were in bed and then ... just to tell you our adventures"⁴

Antonella: Gis spent almost sixty years with Chiara, sharing the various phases of the new Movement with her, its development and growth; its trials, uncertainties, and times of great darkness ... but the very joyful times too ... Two of Jesus sayings accompanied her life in a special way: "Love one another as I have loved you." and "Where two or more are united in my name there am I in their midst."

Now let's watch a video recorded on a cell phone, at home, during her last days ... in which she confided what was most important to her.

Gis: *Mutual love. That is what matters ... then everything else follows. To love always, continuously, without resting, without ... without anything. He will help us (...) the words "where two or more are united in my name ..." is enough. He is in our midst. You and you, I and you ... we find that we are very united. Do you understand?!*

Antonella: Thank you, Gis!... I think I can speak on everyone's behalf saying we will take your words as our commitment too.

8. Italia: Dino Impagliazzo - RomaAmor

Francesco: Has it ever happened to you to go down the same road so often, to go to the same places, to be with the same people? And then suddenly, one day, you realize you are seeing people you did not see before, "invisible" people, marginalised, people you had never noticed before? There are many experiences of those who have opened their eyes and hearts towards these marginalised people. Today we will tell you one, right here nearby, in Rome.

Music and effects

Giampiero: *My name's Giampiero. How did I get to know the RomAmor association? It was a difficult time for me, and I met them in the squares where they were giving this service. Then you understand that in some way that what you have received is something that you can give back in other ways.*

Sara: *I am one of the millions of ordinary people who live in Rome, who go into the subway every day, or the train station. Looking around, I realized that some people are left out and marginalized. These people sleep in the stations. Yet we often pretend they don't exist. Five years ago something clicked inside me and I felt the need to change, to change something in this society. But I did not know how to do it, how to make a change. So I started surfing the internet, looking for volunteer associations. That's how I found Dino, Dino and his RomAmor association. This station seems normal, it's a normal station. But in the evening, it is filled with people who come here to look for a bit of comfort, a hot meal, someone who takes notice of them, someone who would talk to them, or listen to their stories, someone to whom they can*

⁴ From a talk given at Castel Gandolfo to the focolarine, 7th December 1993.

vent their feelings. These people come, migrants from various countries, but also many Italians, often elderly women who may not have enough money to live on each month, who do not have a good enough pension. It is a very varied and mixed reality. I also started to offer some services that the association did not do before, like distributing clothes, which meant I got to know people in a different way because it meant a more personal relationship. One day while I was distributing clothes, a boy came up and looked at me and said: "You look at us in a different way." And I asked him: "What do you mean?" "You see us."

Gianpiero *He is our friend, a hairdresser. These people need to look okay don't they? They are out and about all day long and they need to be pampered, sorted. So our friend gives his time to pamper them a bit, as he is doing now.*

Dino *The heart of it all is universal brotherhood; the heart is the Gospel where Jesus says, "Whatever you did to the least, you did it to me." At the end, Jesus's prayer was, "Love one another as I have loved you." And from the start of our activity, we said to each other that we did not have to do things on our own.*

Edoardo *Here there are people of various backgrounds, some are believers, there are the Catholics, some Orthodox, and some Muslims, and there are people who do not have religious faith. But the most important thing, which is the basis of everything, is the fact of being ready to welcome those we meet. This is the foundation we have in common. Accepting and welcoming each other. And we bring this reality even into the squares.*

Condé (in French)

My name is Condé Adbakar, I'm from Guinea. I came to Italy crossing the desert and the Mediterranean Sea: the story of this journey is very long and difficult to explain.

We are here at Tuscolana with the RomAmor association, which we have agreed to join in order to help others.

Julian *I am a computer technician from Altruistic Rome, the umbrella body for many volunteer activities, where many volunteers sign up to find the different projects. After six years working from home as an IT expert, I thought, why not do a real concrete activity?*

Irene *Almost four years ago, at a certain point I stopped and said, but what am I doing? I'm wasting time for nothing. Why not use my free time and energy for really useful things, for something serious? That's why I'm here!*

Voices: *all brothers and sisters, volunteers...*

Dino Impagliazzo *For me they are all brothers and sisters, like you are a brother, and her and her. The poor people on the streets are our brothers and sisters too, without any discrimination.*

(Applause)

Francesco: Thanks to all those involved in the RomaAmor Association and thanks to Dino Impagliazzo who is with us here this evening.

Antonella: You are great Dino! (Applause)

Francesco: Thanks Dino also for the determination you have shown in continuing with this service, despite the difficulties you encounter every day. Thank you!

9. Chiara Lubich: Champions of unity

Francesco: Tomorrow the Winter Olympics will conclude in South Korea, with champions from all over the world. It's a nice coincidence thinking of what we are about to hear. Chiara Lubich is inviting us to become world champions, but in a sport that's a bit special ... which is love for all people.

Chiara Lubich: Recently, I don't know where it was because I don't keep up with these things, there was some kind of Olympics or competition, with athletes who came mostly from Eastern Europe, but also from China and America.

I saw them on television one evening. Eli called me: "Look, Chiara, what perfection!" There were these young girls, like our Gen 3, jumping high in the air, doing artistic gymnastics, wonderful, twisting in the air and coming down again, somersaults, jumping up again like a ball. It seemed effortless – there was such perfection and harmony, and of course, they were the world champions.

As I watched them, it was as if someone said, perhaps the Holy Spirit said, "Why don't you become a world champion? In what? "In loving God: champions, coming first, winning gold, but not on earth, in heaven."

I said to Eli, as we watched, what effort it takes, training for hours and hours. They don't eat ice-cream; they keep in shape; training for hours and going on.

And within me: "You can too, in the present moment. You have the present moment in which to train yourself in loving God and your neighbour. Loving God means doing His will, completely; loving your neighbour means making yourself one, and always ahead."

Now we're living the new Word of Life, where Mary says, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.' "And the Word I gave to the Movement is unity, being one. Live unity, train yourself moment by moment, train yourself. I want you to be a world champion." And so I am passing this on to you. (Applause)

We can become champions now and if someone objects saying "But you know, I have such a difficult temperament." I read that St. Francis De Sales said: "There is no good temperament that through repeated bad actions does not become bad." And, I say: "There is no bad temperament that through repeated good actions doesn't become virtuous."

Now, if we want to become champions, we must do actions, actions, one after the other. Then I've seen we make mistakes, but don't bother about them. It's okay, I'm starting again. Always saying, "I'm starting again".

"Oh no, I've lost union with God." "Oh no, I was attached to eating or to something else! Don't say oh no! Say I'll start again, and again, otherwise this moment has passed, this one is passing, I've got less time to train. So that's it: world champions! (Applause)"⁵

10. Greeting from Emmaus and conclusion

Emmaus: That is quite a challenge Chiara has given us! World champions in unity, my goodness! If we were able to show and have a Movement that is all together, all united, a champion of unity in the world, don't you think it would be the best present we could give Chiara on her tenth anniversary in Heaven?

So perhaps we should really commit to this. Now, the month of March will be filled with events, Masses, celebrations to remember Chiara's arrival in Heaven, already 10 years ago. We don't want anyone to miss these events. Here too at the Centre of the Movement⁶ on the 3rd March we will have a festive afternoon, a celebration recalling this special anniversary. But there will be many events all over the world. Everywhere there will be Masses, events, conferences, celebrations of all kinds. So, in all these events we have the chance to contribute in some way, or at least to attend them.

We would like it to be an opportunity to bear witness to the world that after ten years Chiara is still alive and present in her Work and that her charism is still able to transform people and situations, generating fruits in unity, generating new life everywhere.

I feel I truly want to challenge you with this commitment. We should take on the commitment to give this witness to the world, to give Chiara a present and, with her, give a gift to the world.

Do you agree? (Applause)

Antonella: Yes, Emmaus, of course!

We have just heard this news which is something good to end with. We know that today the United Nations Security Council was meeting to discuss Syria. They unanimously approved the resolution on a ceasefire, and have asked for a truce for at least 30 days to enable humanitarian aid to go in. This seems a sign of hope and we are truly grateful for it. (Applause)

Francesco: So thanks to all of you who followed this in different parts of the world. Thanks to all those who helped with the link up, the translators did a great job.

Our next appointment is on 28th April, at 10 a.m. Central European Time.

Antonella: Thanks to you all. Bye! (Applause)

⁵ From a talk to some priests, Rocca di Papa, 1st December 1981

⁶ At the Mariapolis Centre at Castelgandolfo