

Rocca di Papa, 13th December 2020, 12.00 noon

The Light that lights up the night

1. Opening and greetings

(Music and slides)

CH CONFERENCE CALL, 13 December 2020, 12:00 UTC+1

The Light that lights up the night

ACTIONS OF FRATERNITY

Australia, Brazil, Madagascar, the USA, Pakistan and Philippines.

THE ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO

From Assisi to the world.

GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION

International event.

TV MOVIE ON CHIARA LUBICH

Interview with Cristiana Capotondi.

2020 IN PICTURES

With Maria Voce (Emmaus) and Jesús Morán.

2. The Economy of Francesco

We hear from young people who were part of the event – which is now an international movement - the Economy of Francesco.

3. Actions of fraternity – Part 1

We go to the USA, Pakistan and the Philippines to see and hear about some "small" actions by people who take care of those nearby.

4. Global Compact on Education

On October 15, 2020 Pope Francis drew attention to the alarming and widening global educational gap. Only an alliance between all components of society can generate a change of direction for humanity towards peace and fraternity: this is what gave rise to the GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION.

5. Actions of fraternity – Part 2

We go to Australia, Brazil and Madagascar to see and hear about some "small" actions by people who take care of those nearby.

6. TV Movie on Chiara Lubich: Interview with Cristiana Capotondi

Interview with Cristiana Capotondi, the actress who plays Chiara Lubich in the TV movie about her.

7. 2020 in pictures, with Maria Voce (Emmaus) and Jesús Morán

8. Chiara Lubich on unity

From the CH Conference call “Unity” - Rocca di Papa, 26th September 1996.

9. Upcoming appointments and conclusion.

1. OPENING AND GREETINGS

Annalisa Innocenti: Good afternoon and welcome to the International Centre of the Focolare Movement at Rocca di Papa. Good evening to anyone following us from time zones in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania; and good morning to those who got up at dawn to follow us from the Americas! Welcome to the link up!

I am Annalisa; I work at the Communications Office, here. I'm a journalist. I'm married and I have a 7 year old son.

Today is December 13th, the feast of Saint Lucy, a Christian feast day that is celebrated in many of our countries, it's a day that symbolizes the light that overcomes darkness and it seems like a metaphor for the times we are living in.

In fact it feels like we're going through a dark night: Covid, with the pain and suffering it has brought; with the death of people close to us who perhaps we weren't even able to say goodbye to; with economic difficulties we're experiencing in our families or communities; and with some emergencies that have emerged or have been worsened by, the pandemic.

Light that lights up the night. We'd like to tell you about some of these lights: small experiences from everyday life but also important global events that give us great hope for the future.

We are going to start with one of these, the Economy of Francesco, an event commissioned by Pope Francis.

From the 19th to 21st November, two thousand young entrepreneurs met via streaming together with many experts in the economic, political and social sectors to build inclusive and sustainable models and to make concrete proposals for a better future. Three days live from the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

Now let's hear from Catalina, Jena and Amine who led the live event and were interviewed by Lorenzo Russo.

2. THE ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO

(Music)

Slide: *The Economy of Francesco*

Catalina: My name is Catalina, from Ecuador.

Jena: I'm Jena from the Philippines.

Amine: I am Mohammed Amine, from Algeria.

Catalina (in English): Welcome to Assisi. This is Economy of Francesco.

Lorenzo Russo: What is the Economy of Francesco and when did it start?

Catalina: The Economy of Francesco started when Pope Francis sent a letter to young people, asking that we find a new economic model together, not only one model but several economic alternatives that already exist in the world or that can exist. We young people wanted to respond to his call and decided to get together and start talking about these economic

alternatives, to get away from an economic model that exploits people and does not focus on human beings.

Male voice (in English): We are in the chapel of the Basilica of St Francis of Assisi.

Catalina: We split into what we called villages, in which different groups looked at different subjects.

Jena: The result of the months spent working together in the villages are 12 points that we identified.

Lorenzo: They are very important points: the abolition of tax havens, the stewardship of common goods, the right to decent work for all, quality education and the introduction of an independent ethics committee in every bank.

Jena: In my opinion, these 12 points are clear and say exactly where we want to go.

Lorenzo: A year ago The Economy of Francesco began its journey with young economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers from all over the world. Thousands of them packed their bags with enthusiasm and commitment. From their first 'yes', they started a process of change towards a just, inclusive and sustainable economy. Before the event in November, over 300 preparatory events took place around the world: in universities, parishes, businesses and even global organisations. Many webinars were held, which they called online seminars, looking towards a world that can think of a different kind of economy as Pope Francis has asked.

(Music and pictures)

Jena: During those days there were almost 200,000 views, which is a lot because we only expected 2,000 people to come for the March event.

Luigino Bruni (in English): We are here and we want to continue with you. We will not leave you alone! With the organizing committee, a first thanks to Pope Francis' who trusted us, who trusted you as young people, for this movement of economists and entrepreneurs. And finally thanks to St. Francis. The economy of Francesco is eight centuries old but it still has a future, because it is the economy of the present, it is the economy of the future and it is the economy of you.

Pope Francis: Each of you, starting from the places in which you work and make decisions, can accomplish much. Do not seek shortcuts, however attractive, that prevent you from getting involved and being a leaven wherever you find yourselves. No shortcuts! Be a leaven! Roll up your sleeves!

Amine: The Pope's message is universal because he's inviting everyone to be part of this initiative, to be committed to solving the world's problems. For me, the message is really strong, even about being "creative". You have to understand yourself first: what you want to do in this world and how to make your own contribution.

Lorenzo: You heard stories from young change-makers from all over the world: which one impressed you the most?

Amine: I was struck by the little girl, who I would say is a "great girl", that we heard in the session called Young Enough to Change the World. Her name is Lilly and she's doing an amazing

job in Thailand. She is 13 years old and is very actively committed to ecology. This story really moved me a lot.

Lilly, Thailand (in English I have done a lot of work in the environmental field over the last 6 years. I have spoken with government representatives in Thailand, with many political decision makers and important brands. I want to raise awareness about the use of plastic, so people can choose more environmentally friendly solutions. Basically what inspired me is hope for the future.

Female voice: There is a rule that can summarize all our commitment. It is the golden rule, present in all great religions, and shared by all people of good will: do to others what you would have them do to you.

(Music)

3. ACTIONS OF FRATERNITY – PART 1

Annalisa: In his message to the young people of Economy of Francis, the Pope said among other things: "Either you are involved or history will pass you by". It is a powerful invitation that the Pope is addressing to each of us, now, in every situation in which we live. The stories we have heard and will soon see show precisely this: that every action, small or large, done out of love can help to change our history, that of those who live next to us and that of entire communities.

Let us watch.

(Music and pictures)

Stephanie Saniga – Ohio (in English): One Saturday just before the election, I was driving to Mass on a Saturday morning and I noticed that a campaign sign had been vandalized in someone's yard. It was a big one that they had hand painted. It was for the other candidate, not the one I support. But nonetheless I felt so sad when I saw what had been done to his sign. I wished I had time to stop and offer to repaint it for him. Instead I thought I could take him a box of donuts. So that's what I did.

I pulled in the driveway and with no little amount of fear; I got out of the car. He was standing there like this surveying the damage, and was really angry.

I told him what I had been thinking and said that I would like to give this to him since I couldn't offer to repair the damage that someone had done to the sign. And he told me all about how he felt about this election and how things were going. And then he asked how I felt. At this point his wife came out and she said: "look what those people are like... and started making some generalizations. And he turned to her and he said: "well you can't say that because she just brought us doughnuts." When we parted ways we both had a lot more respect for each other. And I really feel this is the fruit of trying to live for a United World.

(Music and pictures)

Shalom, Gen4 from Karachi, Pakistan (in Urdu): Hi my name is Shalom, I come from Karachi and I'd like to tell you my experience. Before the lockdown I was thinking of buying a bike and so I had begun saving money. Then the lockdown began and, when I went out with my dad, I was

shocked to see so many poor people. I thought I could give the money I had saved to the poor. When I went out I gave my savings to the people in need. This is my small experience and it made me very happy. Thank you.

(Music and pictures)

Cheska e Pao Pangan – Philippines (in English):

Pao: We were supposed to get married on August 1 2020

Cheska: We planned a fun and eventful wedding in my hometown with all of our friends and family. And then COVID happened and we were locked-down indefinitely.

Pao: At first we thought the quarantine wouldn't last until our wedding day. But it just kept on going and finally we decided to get married despite the restrictions.

Cheska We were willing to give up all of our original plans. Our only hope was to have AT LEAST our parents there.

Pao: But with my dad in the states and Cheska's parents a 2-hour flight away, even THAT seemed impossible to achieve. So we decided to let go of everything and created a plan where it would be just us, a priest, and 2 witnesses -- the bare minimum.

Cheska: This made us appreciate the true essence of marriage - a holy union between the two of us and God.

(Music and pictures)

Cheska: If there's one thing our relationship has taught me, it's that when we let go and entrust everything to God, we gain much more than what we asked for...

(Music and pictures)

4. GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION

Annalisa: Like Pao and Cheska we know that many other young people have made the choice to get married in these complex times. Our best wishes to them!

In the stories we also heard Shalom, and like him, many of us during the pandemic felt we had to review our lifestyle and intensify our witness of fraternity. An extraordinary communion of goods was launched in the Movement. And with what has arrived we have already managed to cover half of the requests for help and priority has been given to the needs of the people and communities most affected by the pandemic.

Thank you very much to everyone. If anyone still wants to contribute or to invite someone to contribute, you can see on www.focolare.org all the information to do so and also some news about how this action is being carried out.

Last October 15th, in the Great Hall of the Lateran University, Pope Francis, together with other political, religious and educational leaders, launched the GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION, a worldwide educational pact to enable children and young people to build a world in peace and fraternity. The Focolare Movement also participated in the preparation of the pact and embraced it with all the richness and newness of Chiara's educational vision.

(Music)

Pope Francis (Video-message to the Global Compact on Education): *“There is talk of an “educational catastrophe”, inasmuch as some ten million children might have been forced to leave school as a result of the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus.”*

Speaker: On the 15th October, 2020 Pope Francis drew attention to the alarming increase in the educational gap across the world.

This is how the GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION began, a global, intercultural and interreligious educational pact to build a civilization of harmony and unity. The Pope put forward a global plan in seven points: bringing the person back to the centre, listening to the voices of children and enabling their access to education, education on acceptance; economy and politics as a service, safeguarding our common home.

Mons. Vincenzo Zani, Secretary to the Congregation for Catholic Education: At least three important steps should be promoted: - putting at the centre the person, who has the right to be educated and to be accompanied to maturity through many stages of life; - confidently planning medium and long term initiatives, by listening to the questions of both young and mature people; - dialogue between cultures and religions and enabling relationship, to build a new humanism, having an inclusive vision. And, in particular, we need to have the courage to form people who are willing to put themselves at the service of the common good and therefore are able to build a new humanity.

(Music and pictures)

Speaker: Nieves Tapia is the founder and director of the Latin American Centre for Learning Solidarity Service, a worldwide educational network with hundreds of schools and millions of schoolchildren. Through the “learning-service approach” the child or young person learns by putting him or herself at the service of others and the community:

Nieves Tapia, Director of the Latin America Centre for Solidarity Learning Service (in Spanish): It means that pre-school children can learn the natural sciences by planting trees to help reforest the National Park; it means that the educational track our school children follow promotes the rights of the local population; and that students at a technical school can design wind turbines to provide sustainable energy to the rural populations of their community.

Speaker: In Hungary, Silvia Berényi has been participating for two years, with another one hundred Focolare people, in a course called “Dialogue among consciences”:

Silvia Berényi, IT consultant (in Hungarian): In the run-up to the parliamentary elections in Hungary in 2018, we realised how difficult it was to talk about political issues within the Movement, or that people preferred not talking about it so as to avoid clashes. We wanted to grow in our capacity for dialogue so we created a new forum for dialogue. The aim wasn’t suddenly to achieve a unified view of problematic issues, but to understand each other's motivations and intentions.

I found that I was able to understand better my colleagues at work, my family and the people around me.

Then a year ago we launched another project in collaboration with the Sophia University Institute. We've called it the Sophia Network for Eastern Europe.

Our members come from 10 countries between Russia and Slovenia, and the aim is to develop a capacity for relational thinking and foster a culture of dialogue in all fields.

(Music)

Speaker: The idea of a global educational pact was born from the dialogue between people with different histories, cultures and religions, as we hear from José Levy, a Jew, one of the initiators who brought this proposal to the Pope:

José Levy, CNN international correspondent (in Spanish): This interreligious educational pact was born after almost seven years of contacts between José María del Corral and Enrique Palmeyro, the well-known journalist Henrique Cymerman, and myself. We see on the one hand the overriding need to put an end to this phenomenon whereby millions of children around the world simply do not have educational facilities and become easy prey for extremists. (...) and on the other hand we have none other than Pope Francis who can really be the fundamental unifying element of this great project.

(Music and pictures)

Speaker: How can we implement this educational alliance today? José María del Corral, director of Scholas Occurrentes, one of the promoters of the Global Compact on Education, sees its intercultural, interreligious and intergenerational aspects as one of its greatest strengths:

José María Del Corral, Director of Scholas Occurrentes (in Spanish): I believe that this educational pact launched by the Congregation for Catholic Education right in the midst of the pandemic is a huge opportunity for us: on the one hand, by using new technologies and bringing together young people who are inside and outside the educational system; on the other, by giving intercultural and inter-religious lessons and courses and, as the Pope also asked, by bringing together adults, older people and young people.

(Music and pictures)

5. ACTIONS OF FRATERNITY – PART 2

Annalisa: One thing we have learned in these months of pandemic is that life - though with many more difficulties - cannot stop, neither ours nor that of the communities in which we live. It is all about "how" we do things and "how" we deal with situations...

(Music and pictures)

Jolly Tayaban – Australia (in English): I am a registered nurse, working in a respiratory ward in a hospital in Melbourne, Australia.

When I found out I had tested positive for Covid-19, I was in complete shock and denial. I had always thought that the transmissibility of the virus within the ward was slim to none, because we depended heavily on meticulous use of personal protective equipment.

During my first week in isolation, I was restless. Then I began asking God why he had allowed this to happen to me.

I remembered many past experiences at work, which brought me peace. Once, while doing post-mortem care, I was told to complete it quickly to minimize contamination. I thought to

myself: but this patient is somebody's mother, or sister, or wife. Regardless of the Covid status, this deceased patient needed to be thoroughly cleansed and properly wrapped with care. At the end of my shift that night, I felt I had done the right thing and was able to sleep peacefully.

Sometimes, I overstayed inside a Covid patient's room for chitchat knowing the depression that many Covid patients experience, at some stage, because of prolonged isolation.

I remembered feeling exhausted when my shifts ended, as well as the leg cramps and skin tears I had on my face and behind my ears from the masks I wore for the whole eight-hour shifts. But I saw my tiredness as something to offer to God for the patients who suffered most.

But then again the thought, amidst all this effort to love: why had I been rewarded with this deadly virus? I began to realize some things. God is love and full of mercy and thinking of Jesus on the cross, there came an answer to this question with no answer.

God has a greater plan for us. I may not see clearly his plan, and maybe in the future he will give me other trials; but never without the grace to handle it. I have found a new peace.

(Music and pictures)

Stephany – Fortaleza, Brazil (in Portuguese): I'm going to tell you a small experience I had when I was still a Gen3, about DARE TO CARE. At the beginning of the quarantine, I really wanted to help people but I had neither resources nor money. I have always wanted to donate blood. So I thought: I'm going to donate blood. So I rang the number. From the time I made the call right up to giving blood, I was very happy. I couldn't explain this happiness because it came from within. So I went to give blood. I arrived there really happy. I found out that with one bag with a few millilitres of blood I could help up to four people. Wow! Something so small can become so big, right? That was my experience.

(Music and pictures)

Rondro – Madagascar (in Malagasy): When I heard that I had coronavirus, my whole world fell apart. By the time I got home my children had already prepared the room for my isolation. I felt such a doubt, and anxiety and sadness and fear for my family. A few days later my children and my husband were tested positive. It was so difficult for us. There was so much medicine we had to take. It came to my mind the words of St. Paul who says "he who has faith in God will win". So we also put this into the hands of God. In our area we couldn't find the medicine that we had to take and for us anyway it was too expensive to buy. So we asked a relation who lives in the capital and he managed to get the medicine to us. To our great surprise, when we opened the box, there were also all the medicines we couldn't have been able to buy. We experienced that when we have faith in God we see His wonders.

(Music and pictures)

6. TV MOVIE ABOUT CHIARA LUBICH: INTERVIEW WITH CRISTIANA CAPOTONDI

Annalisa: And now a surprise: we have been given the chance to broadcast an exclusive preview from the TV movie dedicated to Chiara Lubich which will be aired on Raiuno, the Italian television network, at the beginning of January.

This is a clip that we can watch courtesy of Casanova Multimedia, which made the film for TV, and it is for the exclusive use of the Conference Call, so we ask you not to broadcast it through other channels.

This is followed by an interview by Stefania Tanesini with the star in the role of Chiara Lubich, Cristiana Capotondi.

(Music)

Slide:

Working trailer by courtesy of Casanova Multimedia. For the exclusive use of the CH Conference Call. Please do not distribute.

- ~ It all began in Trent, during the war.
- ~ Run!
- ~ Miss Chiara, why are they bombing us?
- ~ The street is full of the dead and wounded. It's a disaster.
- ~ We must get ready. This is only the beginning.
- ~ And Gino?
- ~ Dr Lubich, right?
- ~ Have we met?
- ~ I'm afraid I won't see you again.
- ~ I'll be a careful partisan, promise. Concentrate on getting your philosophy degree.
- ~ The Nazis are occupying the city; do you want to join them?
- ~ They're our allies and we are betraying them.
- ~ Look! Who is bombing us? The Anglo-Americans and not the Germans.
- ~ That damn siren's got something good about it.
- ~ At least, when it sounds, I know you'll all be here.
- ~ This girl is a bit unusual. She's just come up from the south.
- ~ But where do you get all this joy from?
- ~ From the flask! It looks like water but it's grappa!
- ~ Your companion told me what you're doing for the poor.
- ~ Those who can must give to those who need it most. That's how we grow stronger.
- ~ Yes, because people are only fully happy when they turn on the true engine of their lives: love.
- ~ Whatever happens we will always be united.
- ~ She is a woman, the daughter of a socialist. The sister of a doctor who is a communist, a partisan and a wanted man.
- ~ You fight with your men in the mountains and I'll fight with my women in the city.
- ~ There are so many people suffering and we have only tried to love them.

~ What if the Church tells you that you have started a heresy?

Stefania Tanesini: With us today is Cristiana Capotondi who plays the part of Chiara in the TV movie “Chiara Lubich: love conquers all”. Ciao Cristiana, welcome!

Cristiana Capotondi: Good evening. Good evening Stefania!

Stefania: Cristiana is one of the most successful actresses in Italian cinema and television. She is much loved by her audience and is a very versatile actress having played a variety of roles on burning issues such as the mafia, disability, violence against women and now Chiara Lubich. Cristiana, how did you prepare to play this part?

Cristiana: Well first of all I read a lot, a great deal about Chiara Lubich and I read many things she wrote. I discovered someone who was restless, restless in a positive sense. Someone who could not accept the idea of a city, a country and a world that was suffering. And in her small way, starting off with a group of friends in an Italian province, she tried to respond to suffering with love. Then I tried to put myself in the shoes of this woman, this very young woman, and I looked for the spiritual aspect within Chiara, beyond a religious aspect that could be a limitation in some places, for those who are not Catholics. Instead Chiara with her ecumenism has always embraced everyone. And I looked for her there, where we are all understood.

Stefania: Which Chiara did you choose to tell the story of, you and the director Giacomo Campiotti?

Cristiana: Giacomo wanted to focus on the nature of the starting point of this Movement which is still so alive and vibrant today. So it’s about telling the story of the simplicity of a girl who, with her sweetness, her strength and determination, manages to involve a whole town, a whole city, then the entire nation and then the whole world into her vision of universal fraternity. Chiara is not only a woman who expressed important values, but she’s a woman who fought to make her dream come true. And this, in my opinion, is a very first message that can really trigger a sense of identification in the audience.

Stefania: What has stayed with you about Chiara? Who is Chiara for you, having played this part?

Cristiana: I’ve taken Chiara's principle that the other person is me. I mean the actual idea of the relationship with the outside world as if the outside world were inside me.

Stefania: Thank you Cristiana. We are grateful and will look forward to seeing you on the 3rd of January on Rai Uno, in “Chiara Lubich: love conquers all”.

Cristiana: Thank you. Thanks Stefania. Bye everyone.

7. 2020 IN PICTURES WITH MARIA VOCE (EMMAUS) AND JESÚS MORÁN

Annalisa: And now we are here together with Emmaus, Maria Voce, Jesús Morán, President and Co-President of the Focolare Movement.

Thank you for being here, welcome. With them we would like to look back on this year 2020, a very unique year in our history. The prestigious TIME magazine called it the worst year

ever. It seems to us that alongside the pain, the great deal of suffering that we have seen this year, there has been something else.

And we would like to look at this year a little like leafing through a photo album, seeing some pictures that are meaningful for our life and for the life of the Focolare.

And let's start with this one. Actually, this was not yet 2020, it was the 2nd of September 2019. But we believe the importance of the private audience you had with Pope Francis gave the social calendar of the Focolare Movement, which begins in September, an extraordinary start.

Jesús, on that occasion the Pope invited us to continue carrying forward Chiara's prophecies. What does it mean to do that at this moment in history?

Jesús: As the Pope said in Loppiano, I think that many of Chiara's prophecies are still at the very beginning. But in some ways, if we think things through, I believe that these times are more suited to fulfilling some of these prophecies in the ecclesial and civil spheres, because, as we can all see, a deeper sense of humanity is emerging, as well as an understanding of what the Church really is.

I am also convinced that in order to fulfil these prophecies we will have to establish partnerships with other ecclesial and civil entities.

Annalisa: Let's move on to another event of historic significance. Actually, we're jumping ahead a year because it's October 2020 and it's the visit of His Holiness Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, to the International Centre of the Focolare Movement to pray at Chiara's tomb.

Emmaus, looking at this photo you can sense a deep friendship between you and the Patriarch. That day he called you: 'Dearest sister'.

What did this visit mean to you?

Emmaus: Well, first of all, it was extraordinary, because you only have to look at the photos to realize what an occasion it was; and also feeling truly loved as a sister by him, this personal and very privileged relationship.

However, I believe it was much more than that, because it wasn't a visit to me, it was a visit from the head of a Church, a Church from apostolic times - what a Church! - to the Focolare Movement, to Chiara's work; a visit to Chiara during her centenary year. He said he was coming to pay homage to her and he expressed his hope that we would be worthy of bringing Chiara's charism to the world, bearing witness everywhere and to everyone, to the love that can save the world today.

Annalisa: 2020 is also the centennial of Chiara Lubich's birth. We were in Trent for the inauguration of the exhibition 'Chiara Lubich World City'.

Since the opening of this exhibition, exhibitions have multiplied around the world in various cities. Here is a photo that from the architecture already shows that we are in Nairobi in Kenya; and here is the ribbon cutting at the expo in Jerusalem: in this exhibit a part was dedicated to the relationship between Chiara Lubich and the Holy City.

At the end of January, on 25 January, the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, travelled to Trent. In his speech he remembered Chiara in a simple but also very profound way. He also added some personal memories. We thus discovered that he had known Iginio Giordani personally.

And then the pandemic arrived, the scenario changed, our lives changed. Here are some symbolic photos that remind us, and make us think about those days, posted on social networks by doctors, nurses, the sick, the many who did not make it.

Obviously, in this situation, the centenary has also been transformed. The exhibit in Trent, for example, was enhanced by a virtual tour, and the one in Brazil took a different format because it went online on social networks.

Now, Emmaus, looking at this centennial in the pandemic, which we are still living through, what meaning does this centenary have?

Emmaus I believe the pandemic has taught us many things, and among these it has reminded us of something that we'd almost unconsciously put as the title of Chiara's centenary, because we gave the title "Celebrate to meet". Now the meeting, the living meeting with Chiara, cannot be limited even to a hundred years, not even to a centenary year. It is not over and it will continue as long as there is someone from Chiara's family on earth who will continue to hold meetings to witness that Chiara is alive, that Chiara's charism still has something to say to the world.

Annalisa: Many other events of the Focolare Movement have also gone online, the United World Week, for example, which our young people organise in the first week of May. This year there were also 400 micro and macro events in 65 countries, all via web.

And then the Mariapolises, the annual appointments of the Focolare, were also reinvented to be held on-line.

And we keep on leafing through the album. Let's fly over to the Philippines. This flower trying to emerge from the ash, was taken in the little town of Tagaytay, where the eruption of the Tall volcano buried a vast area in ash, including the Focolare little town, causing serious damage for miles around. And then there's another photo we've chosen, I think you'll recognise this one: it's the city of Beirut, it's unforgettable, the port area after the explosion on the 4th of August that caused over 100 deaths, thousands of injuries and massive destruction in a country that was already experiencing a complex economic and social situation, made worse by the pandemic.

Annalisa: Jesús, we have talked about emergencies, and among the very painful emergencies that we have had to face this year in the Movement, there is a particularly serious one. There have been some cases of child abuse caused by people in the Movement. In some cases these are things that happened a long time ago, in other cases more recent events, and consecrated persons are also involved.

In March 2019, you and Emmaus wrote a letter to all the people in the Movement precisely to inform them that this scourge had also affected us.

Jesús: Yes, unfortunately - as you rightly say - we have to admit that this scourge of abuse, not only child abuse but also abuse of authority, and other kinds of abuse, has also occurred among us. In this sense, we would like to take this opportunity of a worldwide link to ask for

forgiveness wholeheartedly, sincerely, of all the people who have been victims of any form of abuse. This is the first thing we would like to say one year after that letter.

Then, as we know that this is never enough, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to the work we are doing, and that we want to improve more and more, in terms of prevention and training, so that these things don't happen anymore, because they are so contradictory to what Chiara gave us, that they really shouldn't happen anymore.

And then we reiterate the accompaniment of the victims, which is the most important thing and we hope to be able to do it even better, even more effectively.

Emmaus: Certainly, of course. It is a suffering that we live together, that we take on together, all together, and only together can we overcome it, because it is a great suffering for everyone.

I remember we wrote in that letter that every single case for us means a profound purification of the Movement, and we consider it as such. We accept it – and we said so - with humility and deep compassion for those who have suffered indescribable traumas perhaps because of our lack of attention, and we commit ourselves to directing or refocusing our conduct as individuals and as a Movement towards an ever more conscious and mature commitment to the safeguarding and well-being of minors in particular.

But we added at the time - we stressed this in that letter - that we must also be careful to look beyond our Movement, because of course we want to contribute to the fraternity of all, and therefore we must take on board the cry of pain of all those who suffer abuse, especially children but not only, children and young people of the world. And this attention must lead us to see all these people as the Spouse we have chosen, as Jesus forsaken. So we should feel drawn to go and console this pain and to do everything possible to ensure that traumas of this kind do not happen again in future.

This applies to the abuse of children and minors, as well as to all the other types of abuse, even of older people, disabled, of those who suffer abuse of any kind, of their rights, their personhood, and their dignity. We should feel drawn to go and love and relieve these wounds, to respond as far as possible with our attention and love for the victims, for all those who suffer, and to ensure that these traumas never happen again.

Annalisa: While you were speaking, I was reminded of the commitment we have made this very year to "care", which is the Pathway, this path towards fraternity designed by young people, but to which we are committed with the whole Focolare Movement and beyond, the Dare to Care. Among the examples of Dare to Care, of taking care, of reaching out to the extreme consequences of love, of hearing the cry of even those most suffering peoples, I think we all remember Miriam Lefebvre, who was a young person from the Focolare Movement, aged 26, from France, who lost her life in an attack in Niger where she, who had studied conflict resolution, had gone on a humanitarian mission.

Emmaus: This is what our Gen urge us to do. But our Gen are really spearheading what the whole Movement feels. We cannot choose to love Jesus forsaken without looking for those who seem the least, the humblest, the most abandoned people on earth.

Jesús: It's a key word for these times: taking care.

Annalisa: And we have concluded this overview of 2020. But let's take a look at 2021, because at the beginning of the year there will be the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement, and your presidency will come to an end. If you had to summarise these 12 years as president in a few photos, which would you choose?

Emmaus: I would choose three.

The first was in March 2008, the image of Chiara's funeral, the funeral at which the Church bore witness to the greatness of the charism, and not only the Church but Churches, as well as believers of various backgrounds, cultures, religions, who bore witness to the greatness and the influence of the charism on them. So that's the first thing. And that funeral in my opinion showed. Well, I heard an experience yesterday of a young man who had arrived there almost by chance and who encountered Chiara at that moment, when she was dead, but evidently when she was very much alive because at that moment it was as though Chiara spoke to him and called him to follow her. So Chiara living at that moment.

Then the images of all these 12 years that made me see Chiara living in her Work, in her charism that was spreading in the world, in many, many actions of love, of solidarity that Chiara's family showed to all the people they met in the world, and the witness of this love, of this charism of Chiara. So also those last ones that we saw during the Link-up.

And then the last one, that of Pope Francis signing the Encyclical on fraternity, because it seems to me that this is exactly the culmination of what Chiara would have wished for: that a Pope would promulgate to the whole world her dream, Chiara's dream which is Jesus' dream: "That all may be one".

8. CHIARA LUBICH ON UNITY

Emmaus: After all, this is also the reason why I chose to introduce Chiara's reflection right now, which is entitled, "Unity", precisely because Chiara presents unity to us in this way, that is, being close to everyone. "Why? Because God sent Chiara's charism on earth; this is the word he wanted to say to the world, the word "unity".

Unity is a grace that comes from God. But God has been so good as to tell us what conditions he requires of us people so that he can provide this grace, and the conditions are mutual love, love one another as he has loved us, not just any kind of loving, but loving one another with the measure of Jesus forsaken, who showed us that he was ready out of love to give everything for us, everything for the love of humanity.

So Chiara urges us to have this kind of love among us precisely so that this love we can then give to the world, our word, which is the word "unity", which is what the world is asking to hear today and which it cannot hear if we do not put this mutual love into action among us which attracts this grace. This is Chiara's thought that we will hear now together.

Chiara Lubich:¹ [...] Unity. But what is unity? Can we achieve unity?

Unity is what God wants from us.

¹ From the link up of 26th September 1996 - Unity

Unity means fulfilling Jesus' prayer: "Father that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be completely one". (Jn 17:22-23) But unity cannot be achieved through our own efforts. It can be accomplished only through a special grace which the Father gives if He finds us prepared, by living a precise and necessary requirement.

We must live out Jesus' commandment to love one another, loving one another as He wants, which is not - as we know - simply a spiritual friendship, or agreement or understanding. It means loving one another as He loved us, that is, to the point of being forsaken: to the point of complete material and spiritual detachment from things and from people, so that we can make ourselves one mutually and perfectly.

By doing so, we will have done our part and fulfilled the condition for receiving the grace of unity, which will not be lacking, which must not be lacking.

How grateful we should be at the thought of being called to this; how encouraged we are to do all we can to obtain this gift which cannot be found where this is not lived.

We must remember that there is an added grace in our communitarian spirituality, that heaven can open up for us in every moment; and if we do what heaven asks of us, being filled by this grace, we can do much, very much for the kingdom of God. ...

Conscious of this extraordinary privilege, this is why, in the early days, we expressed ourselves in this way:

"Fix just one idea in your mind. It was always just one idea that made great saints. And our idea is this: unity".

"Let everything crumble. But unity never! (...) Always bring this blazing fire among you. And don't be afraid to die. You have already experienced that unity requires the death of everyone in order to give life to the One! (...)

Do this as a most sacred duty, even if it will bring you immense joy!

Jesus promised the fullness of joy to whoever lives in Unity! (...)" ...

Let's get to work. This is what the Lord wants from us. He wants it through our charism which has been inscribed in our statutes: unity is the premise that comes before every other will of God.

Then we can also speak in order to spread the Gospel. But afterwards.

9. UPCOMING APPOINTMENTS AND CONCLUSION

Annalisa: And we are coming to the conclusion of this Link-up. In a few days it will be Christmas.

Emmaus: Happy Christmas, Happy Christmas to you all.

For sure this Christmas, in a pandemic year! Christmas in the midst of a pandemic. We see terrible things, poverty to the point of starvation and increasing hunger in many places; we see wars that are partly hidden, partly ongoing; we see climate disasters, changes that are putting our common home at risk.

And so all this makes us say: Jesus came into this world; Jesus came; he became man and took charge of this world, and he came through love to show us his love. And so, on the one

hand it makes us feel humble before the greatness of this love, and grateful to him who has shown us this love. And on the other hand, it urges us to do something like him, it urges us to look around, to reach out to everyone, starting with the most marginalised, the poorest, humblest, most abandoned, migrants, those who are alone, the sick, children, all those in need. And he also urges us to love them with all that we can: by sharing our affection, our thoughts, our communion of goods and even taking risks at times, risking our lives as he did,

And so this will truly be a Happy Christmas, that is, a good Christmas, a Christmas of goodness, a Christmas that because it's goodness also becomes a Christmas of peace, hope and joy.

Annalisa: Thank you for this wonderful Christmas greeting. We are at the end of this Link-up. The next Link-up will be on Sunday the 7th of February 2021 and it will be a special Link-up because it will be entirely dedicated to the General Assembly of the Focolare which will end on that very day.

Thank you for following this Link-up and on my part too: Merry Christmas!

Emmaus: Happy Christmas everyone!

Jesús: Happy Christmas!

(Music and pictures)