

Chiara Lubich:

POLITICS FOR UNITY

Making a World of Difference

13-14-15/03/2015

event promoted by:



A vast cultural and political transition characterizes our times. Rapid transformations compel us to question: how can positive and irreversible coming closer among peoples coexist with the worsening of hunger, inequalities, widespread wars, terrorism, destruction of the environment, in an atmosphere of increasing uncertainties and concerns? Very often we observe that these situations are in the hands of a weak and sometimes disordered politics.

To contribute to the renewal of politics and the consolidation of its role, the Mppu - Movement of politics and policy for unity is organizing an exceptional event, in collaboration with other social players inspired by the same ideals.. An “intercontinental workshop” will link a series of conferences and seminars in different cities: Rome, Seoul, Manila, Curitiba, Rosario, Strasbourg, Madrid, Budapest, London, Nairobi, New York... only to mention some selected venues in the world.

These meetings, that could provide an appropriate set-up for the different situations, will take place on the dates 13-14-15 March 2015: it happens to be the seventh anniversary of the departure of Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement and of the Mppu itself. This event aims to draw contribution from her rich patrimony of thought and life.

The goal is to provide a forum for many groups of men and women who are passionately interested in establishing the common good. They will be able to investigate, in an open and diverse exchange of views, which political choices could create a fundamental option such as unity in different economic, cultural and institutional contexts.

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CHIARA LUBICH: BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINE

1920 Born in Trent and baptized with the name Silvia. Graduated as a teacher in 1938. She then enrolled at the University of Venice but had to stop her studies because of the world war.

1939 At 19 years old, she understood her vocation: a “fourth way” in the Church, the “Focolare”.

1943 Attracted by the radical choice of Clare of Assisi, she took her name. On December 7, 1943 she consecrated herself to God.

1944 Committed to live with radicalism the Gospel, Chiara and the first group of young people who followed her shared what they had with the poor. A varied community modelled on the community of the first Christians was formed.

1948 In the House of Parliament in Rome, she met Iginio Giordani, deputy, writer, pioneer of ecumenism, and father of 4 children. Giordani, the first married focolarino, would be declared Servant of God in 2004.

1949 Beginning in the summer of 1949, Chiara deepened her understanding of the characteristics of the nascent Focolare Movement and glimpsed the design of a coexistence, the Mariapolis, a city founded on the Gospel, which in turn would animate the rise of many little towns – the Focolare's permanent centers of witness and formation in the culture of unity.

1960 The Movement, which had already started to spread beyond the ocean, began to operate in Eastern Europe.

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1961 In Darmstadt (Germany), she met some Lutheran pastors attracted by her evangelical spirituality. This opened the ecumenical venture that Chiara would go through with passion. In 1966, she was received in London by the Primate of the Church of England Dr. Ramsey and in 1967, she was called to Istanbul by the Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras I.

1977 In London, she received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion which opened interreligious dialogue to the Movement. A period of fruitful relations with the great religions began: in 1981, Chiara was invited to Japan to give her testimony to more than 10,000 members of the Buddhist movement Rissho Kosei-kai. In 1997, she met in Bangkok the Supreme Patriarch of Thai Buddhism; she talked to 3,000 African-American Muslims in the mosque of the Muslim American Society of Harlem (New York); she deepened dialogue with the Jewish world and the followers of other religions. She was among those nominated as Honorary Presidents of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. At the end of the 1970's, openness to people without any religious belief had matured, with the deepening and promotion of common human values.

1991 In Brazil, in response to the huge gap between the rich and the poor, she launched the "Economy of Communion" project that will spread throughout the world affecting entrepreneurs, businesses, and scholars in economics.

1996 - 2007 In Naples, she founded the Movement of Politics and Policy for Unity to contribute to regenerate political action, its foundations, and its objectives. In Paris, she was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education. "At the UN Headquarters, she brought her thoughts on the unity of peoples. She received from the Council of Europe the 1998 Human Rights Award. She developed in the Catholic Church a season of dialogue among charismatic realities; thus "Together for Europe" was born, an initiative among more than 250 movements and communities of various Christian Churches. She received 17 honorary citizenships and 16 honorary doctorates in five continents. The last fruit of her charism: Sophia University Institute located in Loppiano in the province of Florence.

2008 She spent the last months of her life confined at the Policlinico Gemelli in Rome. There she received a personal letter from Pope Benedict XVI and the visit of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I. She died on March 14 at her home in Rocca di Papa (Rome).

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Movement of politics and policy for unity

(Mppu)

Who we are

The Mppu is a global laboratory of dialogue and political action open to citizens, elected officials in the various levels of government, activists in political parties and political movements, civil servants, young people who are interested in the life of their city and world affairs, scholars of politics or other disciplines.

Its action is inspired by the ideals of the Focolare Movement. It is associated with New Humanity, an international non-governmental organization that has consultative status at the General Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is an official partner of UNESCO.

Advocacy

The Mppu wants to contribute to the improvement of politics, the strengthening of its role in front of the crucial choices posed by history and to contribute to the unity of peoples, by respecting their rich variety, reciprocity and inter-independence.

Those who adhere to these, work to bring about a future of unity and peace for the world. For this reason, they intend to make a contribution to thought and action in order to renew culture and political praxis, based on the principle of universal brotherhood.

Numerous positive dissensions indicate that, despite the many divergent forces, the worldwide tension toward the unity of the human family is not a utopia. The idea of universal brotherhood has been used several times in history. What is new, for the Mppu, is its commitment to make it: a political approach; a measure for attaining political, economic, social, environmental, and educational quality; a goal of international politics.

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Method

Our first choice is to give room for dialogue between different positions and realities which are often divergent, in order to develop a "politics of communion." It asks, first of all, for mutual listening and respect, competent and constructive debate, so as to develop a new creativity and intelligence in relationships and produce thought and common actions, in the spheres of political decisions as in the processes of implementation and valuation.

The Mppu operates as a network: its nodes are the different local and national centers and an international coordination center. An essential component of its method is to seek collaboration with other associations, organizations, and institutions that work for the same goals.

With the youth

The youth are entrusted with a specific responsibility on account of their capacity for innovation and experimentation that is typically theirs.

They are the protagonists in all the activities of the Mppu and to them is dedicated an international network of schools of social and political participation and formation, aimed at both those who are already committed members and those young people in disadvantaged areas with low education, so that they may become subjects of the development of their city and their country.

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THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

(SOME INFORMATION)

The Focolare Movement was born and developed on the basis of an ideal: unity. Unity among persons of different language, ethnicity, religion, culture, age, social or political position. Unity among groups, associations, cities and peoples in the richness of mutual relations. Its specific purpose is to help realize the prayer of Jesus to the Father: "That all may be one" (Jn 17:21); to realize universal brotherhood.

Commitment

The Focolare Movement is committed to working towards an ever greater unity within the Catholic Church; to establish relationships of fraternal communion and common witness with Christians of other Churches; to seek dialogue with people of other religions and deepest possible union in God; to work with people without religious convictions and in various areas of society and culture.

Origin

Trent, 1943. Faced with the destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that only God, who is Love, gives meaning to human existence. She shared this discovery and others followed her; a community was formed which in a few years extended to people of any age, condition, and belief in the five continents.

Diffusion

today the Focolare Movement is present in 194 countries throughout the world, with permanent centers in 80 countries. There are 120,000 members and about a million and a half adherents and sympathizers. In addition, through various initiatives, it is estimated that about a million people are reached regularly. In addition to Catholic Christians, about 25,000 Christians belonging to 350 Churches and ecclesial communities are part of the Focolare Movement. More than 7,000 followers of the great religions and 10,000 people with no religious convictions or cultures share in various ways the spirituality and goals of the Movement.

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Government

at the head of the Movement there is the President (a woman by statute), assisted by the Co-President and the General Council, with a six-year term that can be renewed only once. The current president is Maria Voce and the co-president is Jesus Moran. The General Statutes are approved by the Catholic Church.

Some structures for formation, witness and research

- 24 “little towns” around the world, with homes, schools, work activities, and places of prayer.
- Schools of formation for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and social issues.
- Abbà School, is a research center composed of professors and experts in various disciplines, to explore and elaborate the doctrinal implications of the charism of unity.
- Sophia University Institute, is an education center for academic, interdisciplinary, and intercultural research located at the international “little town” of Loppiano (Incisa Valdarno-Florence) (www.iu-sophia.org).
- Economy of Communion, inspires the current economic management of more than 860 businesses and promotes an economic culture geared towards communion and fraternity. To date, such economic model has been studied in more than 300 theses and doctoral dissertations in 28 countries (www.edc-online.org).
- Movement of Politics and Policy for Unity, is a laboratory of reflection and political praxis among politicians of different parties, diplomats, public servants, scholars, and active citizens. Its projects include the schools of participation and active citizenship for young people (www.mppu.org).
- International networks of scholars, professionals, students and practitioners of architecture, art, communications, law, ecology, medicine, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, sport.

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- New Humanity, 1st level non-governmental organization recognized by ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the UN), UNESCO's partner for peace education (www.new-humanity.org).

Initiatives to promote international solidarity

- More than 1,000 social projects and activities in various countries of the world. Approximately 60 projects to support international cooperation and development promoted by "Action for a United World" (AMU, www.amu-it.eu) and other non-governmental organizations in 45 countries.
- 99 projects in 49 countries and approximately 15,000 supportive initiatives of "Distance Support" promoted by "AFN onlus" (www.famiglienuove.org).

Some publishing activities

- "New City": 25 publishing houses in the world and the Opinion Magazine with 37 editions in 23 languages.
- "New Humanity", a bimonthly magazine on culture, in Italian and English. "Gen's" and "Unity and Charisms", bimonthly magazines on ecclesial life, with 15 editions in 8 languages.
- Official international website (www.focolare.org), in 7 languages, with 27 channels in social networks.

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NEW HUMANITY

(for a united world)

New Humanity is an international NGO active in over 100 countries worldwide. It aims to contribute to the creation of unity in the human family, fully respecting the individual identities of all of its members.

For this reason it spreads the idea of a united world and promotes, in all spheres of society and at all levels, universal fraternity as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a dynamic factor in social cohesion.

To this end it carries out, through a strong volunteer base and active youth involvement, cultural activities, social and educational projects, economic initiatives, combining a local dimension with an international one.

As such, it is open to the contributions of all and collaborates with individuals, institutions, representatives of the religions and diverse cultures of the world towards common goals.

Its principles and initiatives draw on the values of the Focolare Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich, Unesco Prizewinner in 1996 for peace education and Council of Europe Prizewinner in 1998 for human rights.

Since 1987 it has granted the ECOSOC/UN Special Consultative Status, and since 2005 the General Consultative Status. Since 2008 it is recognised as official partner of UNESCO.

In collaboration with other associated NGOs and with experts in cultural and social matters, New Humanity takes part in specific activities of ECOSOC, Human Rights Council, and UNESCO, through the presentation of documents, experiences and projects in the field.

It participates in European Commission programmes, particularly in the youth area.