

Bratislava, 10th May 2001

To recognise one another as brothers and sisters to bring about real change in the world*(Answer of Chiara Lubich to a Member of the Slovak Parliament in Bratislava):*

Honorable Malíková is a Member of the Parliament, representing the Slovak National Party. Please come to the microphone. Thank you.

Honorable Malíková: Thank you. I am very struck by Ms. Lubich's words concerning love and universal brother and sisterhood, and how much these are needed in Europe:

"What do you think about the bombing in former Yugoslavia and the contribution, in this case, of Western European countries?"

There is talk of building new bridges; but in this case a good number of bridges have been destroyed, both real and symbolic ones between peoples and among Christians; many Christian Churches have been ruined. Thank you."

Chiara: This is my impression, that in Yugoslavia and in other places, in today's world of course, what happens is unfortunately what has always happened in history and even in the modern age when people do not see each other as brothers and sisters. They don't see further than the color of their skin, their language or nationality, their sexual orientation or anything else. That's what happens, truly. So I really think that the very simple solution of fraternity, to know that we are brothers and sisters, is a solution ... a helpful and very useful solution. I'd say it is necessary in order to bring about real change in our world.

We are also there in Yugoslavia. Recently, I was very close to where they fought, because I went to Slovenia, Croatia, and other places. The Movement is there too. The focolarini live there and they have lived heroic times, right there, in the midst of all that and the bombings. We try to establish bonds among individual people, as far as possible in the circumstances of the war; we belong to all those nationalities. But there is no distinction among us. It happens truly in our Movement, thanks be to God, because it is his work. As a consequence, it's normal to love the other person's country as our own. If you ask me: "Chiara, do you love Slovakia more than Italy?" Honestly, I love both equally, in the same way as I love America, Brazil and the Philippines... It's enough to act according to this brother and sisterhood, to feel that we are all children of one Father. Then all the world's problems will be solved. I think all of them.

The important thing is that we start, personally; let's commit ourselves to it; let's begin.

We often speak of an art, and we call it "the art of loving". We learned it from the Gospel over many years of Gospel life. It has some special requirements. It is not like any other kind of love, the one we know in the world. Its first requirement is that this love loves everyone; hence when we love we don't see people as nice or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, Slovak or Italian or French. These differences do not exist. In this art of loving that comes from the Gospel, we must love everyone. Why? Because the Gospel tells us that the Eternal Father sends the sun and rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Let's try it; all of you ladies and gentlemen, could start trying to love truly throughout the whole day and you will see how it will slowly trigger a Christian revolution around you. People will be touched, and sooner or later they will also respond to this love, which creates bonds. We go beyond the love that is limited to one's own family, children, husband or wife, friends or colleagues. We go beyond. We love everyone, everyone: from the greengrocer to the doorman, from the Member of Parliament who works with you perhaps to the President, everyone. This is the first requirement of this art of loving. This is the art that brings the fact of being brothers and sisters ahead.

The second requirement is to be the first to love, to be the first. Love usually expects love, expects to be loved. But when the Eternal Father sent Christ on earth, he did not expect us to love him back. We were sinners, so we were not loving. Jesus came down on earth, and how did he love? He loved us first. This is not easy. Let's try, let's try more than once, wherever we go. Let's see another Christ in all the people we meet. He wants to be loved everywhere, and let us be the first to love. This is the second requirement of this art of loving.

This Christian love does not consist of words, words, words or feelings. It is a practical love that makes itself one with the person we are loving, listening to them. We make their worries and sorrows our own, even their joys. Love shares everything and is practical, helping out or giving bread, love is concrete. Christian love is real. There are many declarations of love in the world, but often they are empty.

And yet, the true love that helps us to love concretely is to see things as they really are. One day we will be judged and we already know how we will be judged – that's our good fortune. We already know how - it will be like this: Christ will say to us: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was naked and you clothed me" And so on. Then we will say: "But when Lord, when did we do this to you?" And he will answer, "Every time you gave food to one of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me, you did it to me."

So from now on, we should prepare for this exam that we will have. We are fortunate to know what we will be asked. So let's start right now to see Christ in everyone. This helps us, because it's hard to love a nasty person, but knowing that Christ is in them, we can love them! We should be the first to love them, and love everyone and be the first to love: let us love Christ.

Then love can be truly triumphant when love becomes mutual, reciprocal, when we love one other. This love bear witness: "From this they will know - it was said - that you are my disciples, if you love one another..." And it was with this love, with love for everyone and by mutual love that Christianity spread. As Tertullian said: we were born yesterday and we are already all over the world. We were born yesterday ... And we too, in our small way, we in our Movement can say: we were born yesterday, a yesterday that might be half a century ago, but we are already all over the world. It is love that paves the way; it is love that moves forward, it is love that goes ahead. If we can manage to bring a little of that love everywhere, we will see that these conflicts will subside and gradually there will be portions of humanity that live in peace.

This is the answer.