

Nairobi, May 19, 1992

Inauguration of the "Mariapolis Piero" in Kenya

Honoured guests, dear members of the Focolare Movement in Africa. You have come here from 24 nations representing the 47 African countries in which our movement is present, including Madagascar. You all know that we are inspired by a very high and marvellous goal: to contribute to fulfilling Jesus' dream, when he asked the Father, "May they all be one."

You know that our movement is like a big ship, a large boat with sails filled by a wind that is blowing over the whole of humanity, despite the disasters, the wars, and tensions of all kinds in our world today. It is the wind of unity, which is a powerful sign of our times. This wind calls the people of our planet to build a more fraternal world, a more harmonious one, a more united world. It is in this perspective that we need to see all the events and activities of our movement and see what is happening here in Nairobi today. It's a seed, a small seed which eventually, over time and hopefully soon, will grow and extend its roots deeply, and rise up to heaven; becoming a small tree and finally be a big tree with leafy branches and beautiful flowers, like the ones here in this wonderful little town.

It is a tree with branches that can shelter many birds, as Jesus said about the Kingdom of God. Many people from different places will come here to learn about unity, how to live unity and how to spread unity. Imagine what the world will be like if the unity Jesus prayed for and which the Holy Spirit wants in our times, is fulfilled.

Today we are laying the foundation stones of the Mariapolis that will develop here. Since the building that we will build must first be a spiritual house and then a real house, we will put a symbol of the spirit that guides us instead of a stone.

Since our Movement is called Work of Mary, we will place a medal with the image of Our Lady in the place prepared for it. In this way, the spiritual importance of the little town is not only assured but also its heavenly protection.

What will be the main meaning of the new Mariapolis, of the new little town? To be the Centre of the whole movement in Africa. Just as the blood flows from the heart throughout the whole body, so too the most powerful influence of our charism will originate from this Centre. In this way, the whole movement in Africa will be deeply united with the Centre of the whole movement in Rome and, through this, with those in other continents.

The specific characteristic of the little town, which is - I would say - the calling of the Movement in Africa, will be its emphasis on our specific duty, namely: evangelization. To achieve this the Centre will specialise in inculturation, which is earnestly wanted by Church authorities and demanded by the different cultures of all those who live on this continent. The doctrine that emerges from our charism, the white light, as we call it, will be the shining star that will guide us in this endeavour.

What will be the name of this Mariapolis, of this little town? It is named after the focolarino who passed away right here in Nairobi: Piero, "Mariapolis Piero". Although he was not African, he loved this country immensely and did so much for it. If we could look into his heart, we would see his great love for Africa. From heaven he will do all he can for this Centre, together with Marilen who was responsible for the Movement in Africa for many years, and with Victoria who gave her life for this moment. They are now smiling on us from heaven.

To conclude, through the help of Mary, our head, our leader, our Queen, let us ask the blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit on Mariapolis Piero, on all who live here, all who are here today, and on all who have contributed and who will continue to contribute to its growth and development.

Chiara Lubich