

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 5 May 1981

The Will of God According to the Spirituality of the Focolare Movement

Chiara Lubich to an Ecumenical Meeting (*Part 1*)

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During our meeting, we are dealing with one theme: the will of God. I will share with you how the will of God is lived in the Focolare Movement. So it is something very simple. ...

The will of God is an aspect of our spirituality, one of the pillars upon which there rests and around which there gravitates the spiritual growth of each member of the Movement.

To introduce us to such an important subject, the Lord, from the beginning of our history, certainly did not spare His light; indeed, He provided particular circumstances and suggested to us simple but effective examples.

To be clear in developing this theme, I think it would be appropriate for me to go back to those early days, recalling the words of Scripture which I think also apply to us: "Remember the earlier days, after you received the light..." (Hebrews 10:32).

As is probably known, amidst the ruins of the war, in the contemplation and realization that everything in the world can crumble, even the most treasured and important, and that everything is vanity of vanities, we, first focolarine, due to a special grace of God, found ourselves making the most demanding choice of our lives: to give ourselves to an Ideal that does not pass, thus to make God the all of our lives.

Therefore, to love Him and to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

But how to love Him, in a way that was not mere sentimentalism?

The sentence of Jesus, "It is not those who say, 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father..." was decisive and perfectly clarifying. We would be able to love God with all our heart... now too... now too, with all our soul, with all our strength... by doing with all our heart... His will. I, by speaking, you, by listening.

(Applause)

We would be able to love God with all our heart by doing His will.

To do the will of God, to do, to do the will of God - was the practical expression of our love for Him.

Thus, from that moment on, we proposed to do not our will but the will of God. We sought immediately to make our will uniform to the will of God. Our only will was God's will.

During this period, we don't remember if it was before or afterwards, an experience I had served to seal our determination. In those early days, in December of 1943 - many years ago - the Lord had called me to consecrate myself to Him in virginity, with a vow of chastity. Shortly afterwards, during the midnight Mass of Christmas Eve, I felt in my heart that Jesus was asking me to give Him everything. By "everything" I could only understand what was usually thought of at that time as being everything: besides the vow of chastity, the gift of my own will through obedience; of all that could be considered mine through poverty; to leave my family and all that is beautiful in the world - by entering a cloister, a convent.

I believed that God was asking all this of me, and I said yes, although in tears and tormented by something - something wasn't right - by something that rebelled within me.

Having confided this circumstance and decision to my confessor, perhaps because he knew what was coming to life around me, he gave a decisive no - this is not God's will for you.

In that moment two ideas which up until that time had coincided, now became distinct: and that is ... what is usually called the state of perfection, that is, the monastic life, etc., and perfection. I understood that, certainly, there were states of life more or less perfect, but that perfection is attained only by doing God's will. I was therefore encouraged by this fact, to pursue perfection with my friends, by doing the will of God.

We had made a discovery, which later on we noticed was also made by many saints. Saint Alphonsus Liguori, a specialist on the will of God, having based all his spirituality on it, says, "All our perfection consists in loving our most lovable God. But then all perfection of love for God consists in uniting our will to God's will."

I remember that before then, I could not find the road for becoming holy. I couldn't find it. I had the impression that a high wall was before me and it impeded my access to holiness. How could I find an opening in it? I thought: if it's a matter of doing a lot of penance - we'll do it! We will wear hair shirts the whole day long, we'll scourge ourselves the whole day long; if it's a matter of praying, we'll pray the whole day long. But what must we do to become saints? I didn't understand. I didn't understand. And it was through the above mentioned circumstance that God enlightened me: to become saints, it is enough to do God's will.

It was truly a very useful and wonderful discovery! Here - I said - is a way to sanctity, good for me, but not only for me. It was a way good for everyone: this is the great discovery! A way good for everyone: for men and women, for the gifted and ungifted, for intellectuals and labourers, for mothers - for mothers - for religious, for lay people and priests, for bishops, for the elderly and for the youth, for the Pope, for government officials and citizens... a way for everyone!

(Applause)

I felt-I truly felt that I had in my hands the ticket to perfection not only for an elite of persons, like those who become priests or go to a monastery, but for the crowds! For the crowds! This is the great discovery!

I saw before my own life and the lives of everyone else, a fork in the road: in our lives we could do our own poor will, or we could do God's will. Following our own will, our destiny would be much like that of almost everyone else in the world. Every day very many people die and it causes much suffering: there are tears and flowers. But then, after the second generation has passed, who remembers them?

Instead, if we walked along the way of God's will, He would guide us along paths prepared moment after moment by his love, invented by his imagination, proposed by his providence, which cares for each individual and for the collectivity. He would have led us on a marvellous, divine adventure, unknown to us.

And how would our life end? Not in silence, but it would remain to give light to many, like the lives of the saints.

And we were so convinced of the goodness, of the value, of the usefulness, of the beauty of this choice - the will of God - that we judged as being strange that attitude that many Christians adopt when they say that they are resigned to the will of God. We used to say: What? resign ourselves? - only resign ourselves? - Rather, we should have to resign ourselves to doing our own dull wills, so unprofitable and inconclusive. We should - instead of resigning ourselves only - in certain circumstances - also - when there are great sufferings, but generally, we should want to do God's will, because it is the greatest thing we could desire. It is not the case to say, "I must do the will of God, "but "I can do the will of God!"

With these convictions, all our projects gave way and we abandoned ourselves completely to God.

When we chose Him in the midst of the terrors of the war, He manifested Himself to us as Love. Therefore, we believed in His love and we abandoned ourselves to Him completely. And this abandoning ourselves was not quietism or indifference, because having grasped God's will, we made it our own, and

we carried it out with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, endeavouring to be as coherent with it as possible, even though it changed often, because it does change - something comes up unexpectedly.

When we didn't know what God wanted, we did what we thought best, asking God to put us back on the right track if we had made the wrong choice. And quite soon we acquired a good deal of elasticity in understanding it.

We felt that with our lives we were weaving a divine design, about which we knew nothing, as I said before, except that it was proposed to us by a Father, and that all the circumstances were expressions of His love for us; He would have willed or permitted everything for our good.

Living like this, many words of Jesus or about Jesus came to light from Scripture; words that we already knew, but that came to light, for example, Jesus says: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me. (John 4: 34) or else, "I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me." (John 6:38). "Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine." (Luke 22:42). "I always do what pleases him." (John 8:29). "God ...I am coming to obey your will." (Heb 10: 7).

VIDEO end of Part 1