

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 23 January 1981

## **Interview with Chiara Lubich on Iginio Giordani**

*By Jean-Claude Darrigaud*

### **Can you tell us something about your encounter with Iginio Giordani?**

**Chiara:** Giordani was waiting his whole life for a road to open up to fulfil that desire that burned in his soul of total consecration to God notwithstanding his state in life as a married person.

He had searched a lot, but he certainly did not imagine that the encounter with a Movement just born in Italy, after the war, would mean something for him. In fact, he was quite stand-offish towards persons who in that period seemed to possess some ready-made solution for the rebirth of Rome and he had waited two years before accepting to meet me.

In 1948, since the Movement had spread beyond the region of Trent all the way to Rome, we were looking for a house and someone had recommended that we ask Giordani, then deputy in parliament. I went with a small group of people who belonged to various branches of the Franciscan Order. After a rather long wait, Giordani welcomed us, but, as I mentioned, more for the fact that he saw possible voters in the new guests, than for any other reason. However, as soon as we entered, he was struck by the group itself that united persons from the Franciscan family so often separated between them, at times even – so history tells – hostile towards each other.

I don't recall what he told me as soon as he saw us. Completely forgetting the original scope of our visit, I found myself briefly telling him the humble story of our Movement, which had a great impact on him, as he himself later narrated in his autobiography. He accompanied us as we were leaving, and at a certain point he drew close to me and asked if I could write what I had shared. It was a way for him to keep in touch.

Later on, I realized who I had met with. He wrote to me: "Thoughts like yours, so rich with doctrine, wisdom and fire, I did not believe could exist on earth." God had prepared him his whole life to meet the charism of unity. What then took place were personal encounters, or with groups, which brought about an unimaginable maturation of the Movement.

### **Giordani was the first married focolarino. How was this idea born, so original in the history of the Church?**

**Chiara:** In a very simple manner. I have to first say that this vocation blossomed as the accomplishment of what seems to us a design of God on the Movement.

Already in 1939, four years before the birth of the Movement, we had an intuition: A *fourth way* would come to life along which young people would be able to journey: not simply matrimony, not a consecration to God in the convent, not a personal consecration to God remaining in one's own home, but a new reality, a life in common made of virgins and married people, on the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. This new reality blossomed only through the vocation of Giordani, who brought with him in focolare numerous married people who were attracted by it.

We are now in 1954. That year about sixty young men and women had asked and obtained permission from the Assistant of the Movement to consecrate their lives to God in virginity. Giordani, who was

present in the women's focolare, praised with great humility the state of virginity which he saw as unattainable.

He was told that in front of God what counted was love and that no one could prevent him, even though married, to love as much and in the same way as those who were consecrating themselves to God in those very days. Even though his state in life was different from those young people, he could nonetheless do everything out of love and thus be pure, obedient and poor.

**When Igino Giordani died, a news reporter called him "cofounder of the Focolare Movement." Are you in agreement with this definition?**

**Chiara:** I think we can say that Giordani was really a cofounder of the Focolare Movement. We know that a cofounder is a rather special Christian in the Church. He is like the seed of one of its new plants, of a new Work. And just as God the Creator places the DNA in the seed of plants, that is, the project, the law of their development, so in the soul of a founder God places the program for the Work that has to come to life through him/her. Now what is said of a founder holds true, in an analogous way and with due proportions, for a cofounder for that part, or that aspect, of the Work that God deposited in him like a seed.

When we met Giordani in 1948, our Movement, which presented itself as "a renewed Christian community," had witnessed a special vocation emerge from its heart: that of the focolarini, with men's and women's focolares that constituted the core, the soul of the community.

The encounter with Giordani matured a new composition in the Movement: the focolarine formed the women's branch; the focolarini that of the men's and the people who benefited from the new spirit of the Focolare took on the form of a Movement: that is, a portion of humanity, of every gender, vocation, age, called by God to compose the Movement together with the focolarini. Giordani was the figure, besides the cause, of this new aspect.

Later it was because of Giordani that the Focolare Movement felt the special call or vocation to work to bring Christ to the world, that is, to permeate the different realities of this earth with the spirit of God.

**What is the mission of Igino Giordani?**

If Giordani is a cofounder of the Movement, possessing for this task a special charism, he must then be present in all the Movement for as long as it exists. Above all, it would be impossible for the married focolarini and the lay movement to be detached from him, as too all those who will work more directly for the specific goal of unity among Churches.

But, aside from all of this, in all the focolares and in the entire Movement worldwide, Giordani is very present among all those who have gotten to know him. It seems that the best of him has remained: that ardent charity towards all that distinguished him, that appeal that came forth from his being to always keep mutual love alive among all. He is always alive with his unique personality, with his holiness.