

(Transcription)

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Interview with Chiara Lubich on Holy Week with ZENIT

Chiara Lubich: we answer to terrorism with the discovery of Jesus, perennial Easter

Terrorism brings people to live as if it were always Good Friday, the day of the passion, while the discovery of Jesus leads to perennial Easter.

This is what Chiara Lubich, foundress and president of the Focolare Movement, said in an interview on Holy Week with ZENIT:

We are nearing Easter. While the world is breathing an atmosphere of fear because of the threat of terrorism, what answer may come from the mystery of Good Friday and the Easter Resurrection?

Chiara Lubich: Every day is Good Friday. Looking at the news, in front of the killings and assassination attempts, one after the other, in those pictures of inhuman violence, in the cry of those sufferings, resounds the cry of abandonment which Jesus cried out to the Father on the cross: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?, his greatest trial and the darkest shadow. But it's a cry which didn't remain without an answer.

Jesus did not remain in the abyss of that infinite pain, but, with a huge and unimaginable effort he re-abandoned himself to the Father, overcoming that immense suffering and in this way he brought people back in the bosom of the Father and in the reciprocal embrace.

We know the deepest causes of terrorism: resentment, suppressed hatred, the desire of revenge smouldered for years by oppressed peoples because goods are not shared equally and rights are not recognized.

What is lacking is communion, sharing and solidarity. But we know that goods don't move if hearts are not moved. Therefore, what we need to create everywhere in the world are spaces of brotherhood, that brotherhood which was won back on the cross.

From that cross Jesus gives us the highest, divine and heroic lesson on what Love is: a love which makes no distinctions, but loves everyone; which doesn't expect return, but always takes the initiative; that knows how to make itself one with the other, knows how to live the other; that has a measure that is infinite: it knows how to give its life.

This love has a divine strength, it can produce the most powerful Christian revolution which must invade not only the spiritual realm, but also the human one, renewing every expression of it: culture, politics, economy, science and communication.

This will be the most radical struggle against terrorism: we'll show the power of the resurrection that won over hatred and death, the true face of Christianity, a very different face of that of the Western world.

One of your charisms is the ecumenical and interreligious dialogues. Today they are more than ever needed in front of the risk of a culture clash. For decades the search for dialogue with other faiths sometimes put aside the proclamation of Christ, while Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in the book "Faith, Truth and Tolerance," sustains that no dialogue can generate fruits if it's not based on the search of truth and that Catholics cannot renounce to the proclamation of the truth. What is your position in regards to this?

Chiara Lubich: We certainly agree on this position. A conviction, that has been reinforced in these decades of dialogue and is expected from us Christians by people of other faiths, is especially a concrete witness of the love drawn from the Gospel, that everyone desires and welcomes, nearly being the answer to the natural vocation to love of every human being. It's no coincidence that every religion had in common the golden rule: "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you." In the atmosphere of reciprocal love that living out the 'golden rule' creates, we can in fact establish dialogue with our own partners, dialogue in which we try to "be nothing," "make ourselves one" with the other, in order to "enter" into them in a certain way. This is the secret of that dialogue that can generate brotherhood.

It's a sometimes difficult art, but always vital and fecund. It has a double effect: it helps us to enculturate ourselves, in this way coming to know the religion and the other's language and thus prepare others to listen to us.

In fact, we have noticed that the one talking is touched and asks for explanations. In this way we can pass on to the "respectful announcement" where, being loyal to God, to ourselves and also out of sincerity to our neighbour, we say how our faith affirms the topic we are speaking about, without imposing anything on the other person, without a shadow of proselytism, but out of love. This is the moment in which, for us Christians, dialogue leads to the announcement of the Gospel.

Mary is at the centre of your spirituality and activity. Could you tell us in which way Our Lady can favour ecumenical and interreligious dialogue?

Chiara Lubich: Mary is the teacher of dialogue. Even though she was the super chosen one, she knew how to be a nothingness of love, in the total and unconditional welcoming of God's plans. It's this welcoming, this emptiness of love that our brothers and sisters of other faiths must find in us Christians to discover God's Love that through us loves them immensely.

Then they become a living experience, in the dialogue with Jews and Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, those words pronounced by the Pope at Madras, in India: "Through dialogue we make God be present in our midst, because while we open ourselves to one another in dialogue, we also open up to God. The fruit of this is union among people and union of people with God."

In this way, we can work together so that religious pluralism won't be the source of divisions and conflicts, but contributes to recomposing the human family in brotherhood.

Where does the Focolare Movement get its strength from? Where does this ardent love come from?

Chiara Lubich: From a great discovery which is at the heart of the charism of unity: that commandment that Jesus defines as new and his: "love one another as I have loved you," when it is lived-out with radicality, it generates unity and brings about an extraordinary consequence: Jesus himself, the Risen One, is present in our midst, as he promised "where two or three are gathered together in my name," that is, in his love, as the Fathers of the Church say.

A page at the beginning of the Movement, tells us the surprise for the first discoveries: "Unity! We feel it, we see it, we enjoy it, but it's ineffable! Everyone enjoys his presence, everyone suffers with his absence. It's peace, joy, love, ardour, atmosphere of heroism and utmost generosity. It's Jesus among us!"

And with Him, it's perennial Easter.