

ARS AMORIS:¹ THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF CHIARA LUBICH'S INSTRUMENT OF DIALOGUE

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Introduction

A review of UST's 400-year history will readily yield a long list of prominent names and personalities who have become part of the Pontifical and Royal University in one way or another. Certainly, no one can fail to mention Dr. Jose Rizal. Then we have many of our present Catholic hierarchy and political leaders who are UST alumni.

Fourteen years ago, on January 14, 1997, one prominent international personality became part of UST's history: Chiara Lubich.² UST conferred upon her the title of Doctor of Sacred Theology *honoris causa*, making her not only the first lay person, but also the first woman to receive such recognition in the then 386-year history of UST.³

Since this quadricentennial celebration is a toast to UST's history, it is very opportune to speak about Chiara Lubich in this momentous occasion. In addition, since it is in the realm of dialogue where Chiara Lubich is internationally renowned, it is doubly significant to speak about her legacy, noting, that this quadricentennial's theme is **“Thomism and Asian Cultures: Celebrating 400 Years of Dialogue Across Civilizations.”**

This paper, written to bring to light Chiara Lubich's *ars amoris* as an instrument of dialogue, is dedicated firstly as a tribute to her immense contribution to humanity particularly in the advancement of dialogue in the last century, and secondly as a salute to her unique place in the history of UST.

¹ In referring to the Christian duty to love or to the Christian act of loving as an art, Chiara Lubich did not actually use the Latin *ars amoris* in her writings. She simply made use of the Italian *arte di amare*. The use of the Latin *ars amoris* in this paper instead of the original *arte di amare* is grounded on two reasons: first, to emphasize the antiquity of the Christian art of loving; and second, to highlight the novelty of Chiara Lubich's interpretation of this ancient Christian art.

² Chiara Lubich was born in Trent, Italy on January 22, 1920. Along with Pope John Paul II and Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Lubich stands as a leading spiritual figure in the modern times. She founded the Focolare Movement in 1943 and remained its president until her death on March 14, 2008. To read more on her life, see Jim Gallagher, *A Woman's Work: A Biography of the Focolare Movement and its Founder* (London: HarperCollins, 1997). See also Franca Zambonini, *Chiara Lubich: A Life for Unity* (London: New City Press, 1992) and Michel Pochet, *Stars and Tears: A Conversation with Chiara Lubich* (New York: New City Press, 1985). To know more about her teachings, see Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2007).

³ See Piero Coda, *Viaggio in Asia: Con Chiara Lubich in Thailandia e Filippine* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1997), 83, citing the Opening Address of UST Rector Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P. during the conferment of the honorary doctorate in Sacred Theology to Chiara Lubich.

Dialogue, Means to Unity

Chiara Lubich's wide-reaching engagements in dialogue in various religious, political, and social spheres had earned her prestigious international recognitions.⁴ We can ask: what is the impetus behind Lubich's engagements in these various dialogues? In an earlier interview with Franca Zambonini of *Famiglia Cristiana* magazine, Lubich discloses it herself:

The motive from the beginning, has always been, and continues to be, the desire to fulfill Jesus' testament: "Father, may they all be one" (John 17:21). Yes, this is what we live for. Even if it might seem over-ambitious, it's this will, the last will of Jesus that we want to make our own. He was the one who put it in our hearts.⁵

So Lubich's special commitment to dialogue is rooted in this desire to bring fulfillment to Jesus' prayer for unity. But at the outset, Lubich never felt that she was the only one called to realize this particular prayer of Jesus. Rather, together with her, the Focolare Movement⁶ which she founded and represents⁷ also shared this call.⁸ "Unity is our specific vocation. Unity is what characterizes the Focolare,"⁹ she says.

⁴ These prestigious awards include, among several others, the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (1977), the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education (1996), and the Council of Europe's Human Rights Prize (1998).

⁵ Zambonini, *op cit.*, 110.

⁶ The Focolare Movement is an ecclesial movement which Lubich founded in 1943 with members and adherents currently numbering in millions present around the world in more than 180 countries. The name "focolare" which is the Italian word for hearth (a fireplace that gives warmth to a home) was first given to Lubich and her companions by the people who felt and experienced their warmth in the early days of the Movement. The Holy See officially recognizes the Focolare Movement as Opera di Maria (Work of Mary). For more information about the Focolare Movement, visit www.focolare.org/en.

⁷ Chiara Lubich served as the president of the Focolare Movement until her death in 2008. She has been succeeded by Maria Voce, a civil and canon lawyer who served as Lubich's close collaborator in various capacities. Voce is fondly called Emmaus (a name given her by Lubich herself) by the members of the Focolare. She (Voce) came to the Philippines in January 2010, to visit the Focolare Movement in the country.

⁸ Of course, the task to realize Jesus' prayer for unity falls on all Christians. However, Lubich and the entire Focolare Movement with her, can be said to be "called in a special way" to carry out this particular task. As a number of theologians and experts in Catholic spirituality have already affirmed, Lubich is a recipient of a charism, a particular gift from the Holy Spirit given at a particular time in history for a particular purpose. Now Lubich's is the charism of unity. To better appreciate this charism, we have to view its emergence in its proper historic-spiritual context. We can begin with St. Dominic de Guzmán who was given the charism of preaching at a time when the Church was in need of competent preachers to combat several burgeoning heresies. Then came St. Francis of Assisi with the charism of poverty at a time when the Church was dominated by materialistic, wealth-loving clergy and hierarchy. Then there was St. Ignatius of Loyola with the charism of obedience at a time when the Church was abandoned by many (from the laity and clergy to the hierarchy) due to disobedience. Aside from Sts. Dominic, Francis, and Ignatius, there are several others we can mention like St. Vincent de Paul of the Vincentians, St. Hannibal di Francia of the Rogationists, St. John Bosco of the Salesians, and so on. Then in the last century, precisely at a time when there was so much division not only in the Church but also in the world at large (we had the two world wars in the last century), Chiara Lubich came with the charism of unity. These founders, who are the original recipients of a charism, share the very same charism they received with their followers. So we have the Dominicans inheriting St. Dominic's charism of preaching; the Franciscans St. Francis' charism of poverty; and the Jesuits St. Ignatius' charism of obedience. Similarly, the Focolare Movement inherits from Chiara Lubich the charism of unity. For a detailed exposition on the history and development of these various charisms, see Fabio Ciardi, *Koinonia: Spiritual and Theological Growth of the Religious Community* (New York: New City Press, 2001).

⁹ Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 16.

“But how is unity created?”¹⁰ Lubich herself asks. Without hesitation, she responds: “It’s [by means of] dialogue.”¹¹ That is to say, unity comes about through dialogue. Jesus’ prayer for unity can be fulfilled through dialogue. So if it is true that “the deepest aspiration of humanity is [also] the desire for unity, for love,”¹² then dialogue is called for in practically all areas of human affairs. For this reason, Lubich strongly makes this pronouncement:

Yes, dialogue – a word especially suited to our times. Dialogue means that people meet together and even though they have different ideas, they speak with serenity and sincere love towards the other person in an effort to find some kind of agreement that can clarify misunderstandings, calm disputes, resolve conflicts, and even at times eliminate hatred. This dialogue, especially among the faithful of different religions, today is more indispensable than ever if we want to avoid the great evils threatening our societies.¹³

With this recognition of the paramount importance of dialogue in our times, through Lubich’s leadership, the Focolare has been engaged in five different areas of dialogue, namely: 1) within the Roman Catholic Church, or for other Christians within their own Churches; 2) with other Christian Churches and with other ecclesial communities; 3) with those who follow other religions; 4) with those who do not subscribe to any particular religious conviction; and 5) in various areas of culture as a whole.¹⁴

Already in its first years, the Focolare initiated dialogue within the Catholic Church. It might not have been dialogue in the formal sense, but it was still dialogue in every sense of the word. Igino Giordani,¹⁵ who is considered a co-founder of the Focolare, gives the following account of his first encounter with Chiara Lubich:

One day... a group of representatives of the various branches of the Franciscan Order, including a young lady and a young layman, called on me at Montecitorio.¹⁶ The sight of a Conventual Franciscan, a Friar Minor, a Capuchin and a man and a woman of the Third Order of St. Francis all united and in agreement seemed a miracle of unity in itself to me, and I told them so.¹⁷

Apparently, Giordani is saying that in some ways, dialogue was already taking place among the once-divided Franciscans and this, no doubt, thanks to Lubich and the Focolare. But perhaps the

¹⁰ Zambonini, *op cit.*, 111.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 110-111.

¹³ Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 340.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 395.

¹⁵ Igino Giordani (1894-1980) was a member of the Italian Parliament. Married and with four children, Giordani was also a noted writer and journalist. After meeting Lubich in 1948, he became her follower and paved the way for the inclusion of married people in the Focolare. He was actively involved in the Focolare’s ecumenical activities and, after the death of his wife in 1974, spent the rest of his life in a Focolare community. The process for Giordani’s beatification is now already well under way.

¹⁶ Montecitorio refers to the Bernini-designed Palazzo di Montecitorio in the city of Rome where Italy’s Chamber of Deputies sits. Giordani, then a member of the Italian Parliament, held office there.

¹⁷ Igino Giordani, *Memorie di un Cristiano Ingenuo* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1984), 149; quoted in Zambonini, *op cit.*, 56. The said meeting happened on September 13, 1948, the first between Giordani and Lubich. The Focolare then was barely five years old. The woman of the Third Order of St. Francis was Lubich. Silvia was actually Lubich’s baptismal name which she later changed to Chiara after St. Clare of Assisi (Chiara di Assisi in Italian) when she joined the Third Order of St. Francis in her youth.

culmination of Lubich's and the Focolare's engagement in dialogue within the Catholic Church took place in 1998 when, together with some other 300 ecclesial movements, they gathered before Pope John Paul II as one, united, family.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Lubich's involvement in ecumenism began as early as the 1960's when the Focolare came into contact with a number of Evangelicals, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Christians who belong to the Eastern Catholic Churches. At present, there are close to 50,000 Christians from about 350 different Churches who participate in varying degrees in the life and activities of the Focolare.¹⁹

But more impressive, perhaps, is the Focolare's success in interreligious dialogue. Lubich became the first Christian and woman to address a large assembly of Buddhists in Tokyo, Japan in 1981. Then, in 1997, she also became the first Christian and woman to address an assembly of about 3,000 African-American Muslims in a mosque in New York.²⁰

Ars Amoris, Instrument of Dialogue

The Focolare's approach has always been simple: To engage in genuine dialogue. "Naturally dialogue is true if it is animated by love," Lubich confirms. On the contrary, "a dialogue built without love... would not be a dialogue but something else: proselytism, for example," she warns.²¹

Hence in Lubich's view, "dialogue means loving, giving what is in us out of love for the other, and also receiving and being enriched."²² In other words, she speaks of dialogue as "a mutual enrichment, a love for one another, a feeling that we are already brothers and sisters, the creation of universal brotherhood here on earth."²³

Furthermore, Lubich claims that in the Focolare, "dialogue has developed so rapidly and fruitfully because the decisive and characteristic element has been the art of loving."²⁴

But what is this art of loving? What does it consist of? How does it contribute to the Focolare's success in its engagements in various dialogues?

The art of loving first of all pertains to the "knowing how to love" which St. Augustine speaks about.²⁵ It is everything, the Saint says; hence, for those who are especially engaged in

¹⁸ See Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 390. A similar meeting with Pope Benedict XVI also took place in 2006.

¹⁹ See Zambonini, *op cit.*, 111-121; cf. Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 396.

²⁰ See *Ibid.*, 387, 389. The Focolare's engagement in interreligious dialogue also extends to the Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, and several others. People who profess no religious conviction have also been embraced by the Focolare. Then in the last decades, the Focolare has engaged in dialogue with various areas of culture. In the field of economics, Lubich has given impetus to the birth of the Economy of Communion wherein business enterprises are encouraged to split their profit into three so that a third goes to the poor, another third goes for the formation of people in the culture of giving, while the remaining third goes back to the company for the growth and improvement of the business. Currently there are about 800 big and small business enterprises worldwide committed to the objectives of the Economy of Communion. In the field of politics, Lubich has also inspired the birth of the Movement for Unity in Politics wherein politicians collaborate together for the common good of the people without regard to which political parties they are affiliated to. Other movements which have come to life from the Focolare include: New Families Movement, New Humanity Movement, etc.

²¹ Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 356.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 355-356.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 346.

dialogue, “it is necessary to know this art.”²⁶ The noted psychologist Erich Fromm (1900-1980) had even underscored the importance of knowing this particular art. In a book whose title is exactly the same as Fromm’s, Lubich quotes him at length:

Our society rarely makes an effort to learn the art of loving and, notwithstanding the desperate search for love, the following are [still] considered more important: success, prestige, money, power. Almost all our energies are expended to attain these goals and almost nothing is done in order to know the *art of loving*.²⁷

Without a doubt, only those who know the art of loving can put it into practice. But even for those who already know it, practicing this art is never easy to begin with. Lubich calls it “*arte impegnativa, con forti esigenze*,”²⁸ that is, a taxing art with serious demands.

Be that as it may, Lubich shares that the first technique to learn in the art of loving is the ability to “*love everyone*.”²⁹ Certainly, true love makes no limits; hence, if we speak of loving, it is an art that primarily requires one “to go beyond the narrow confines of purely natural love which is often directed almost exclusively to family and friends.”³⁰ Moreover, Lubich explains that

This art of loving means that we love, like God does, everyone, without distinction. We don’t choose between likeable or unlikeable, old or young, compatriot or foreigner, white or black or yellow, European or American, African or Asian, Christian or Jew, Muslim or Hindu.³¹

Likewise, enemies are also to be loved,³² since the art of loving demands that everyone be loved.³³ But this entails that we have to put a stop to all our preconceived judgments of others in order to ascertain that our love includes everyone, setting aside no one.³⁴ This, of course, is only the first step.

²⁵ “*Amare è bene; saper amare è tutto*” (Loving is good; knowing how to love is everything). Sant’Agostino, *Commento alla Prima Epistola di San Giovanni*, 5.7; quoted in Chiara Lubich, *L’arte di Amare* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2005), 23. The translation of the quotation into English from Italian is by this paper’s author.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “*La nostra civiltà molto raramente cerca d’imparare l’arte di amare e, nonostante la disperata ricerca di amore, tutto il resto è considerato più importante: successo, prestigio, denaro, potere. Quasi ogni nostra energia è usata per raggiungere questi scopi e quasi nessuna per conoscere l’arte di amare.*” Erich Fromm, *L’arte di Amare* (Milan: 1971), 18; quoted in *ibid.* Translation by this author.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ “*È un’arte che vuole si superi il ristretto orizzonte dell’amore semplicemente naturale diretto spesso quasi unicamente alla famiglia, agli amici.*” *Ibid.*, 24. Translation by this author.

³¹ “*Quest’arte di amare vuole che amiamo, come fa Dio, tutti, senza distinzione. Non c’è da scegliere fra simpatico o antipatico, vecchio o giovane, connazionale o straniero, bianco o nero o giallo, europeo o americano, africano o asiatico, cristiano o ebreo, musulmano o induista.*” *Ibid.*, 27. Translation by this author.

³² Cf. Matthew 5:44. Lubich adds that for Christians, it is very helpful to master the art of seeing, or better, loving Jesus in others. She stresses that the Biblical passage (Matthew 25:40) in which Jesus announced that “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” only confirms that we need to constantly love as if it is Jesus Himself who we love in our brothers (*L’arte di Amare*, 93-100). Non-Christians, of course, cannot apply this art of loving. Even then, the great religions also teach that there is the presence of the divine in all creation. So if non-Christians see the divine in each person, it is like seeing Jesus in each person.

³³ Lubich, *L’arte di Amare*, 39-40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

The second technique in the art of loving is the ability to “*be the first to love*.”³⁵ This is now a more concrete art of loving and, according to Lubich, “perhaps the most demanding of all because it tests the authenticity and purity of our love, asking us to *be the first to love*, to always take the initiative without waiting for the other to make the first move.”³⁶

Lubich recounts an experience in the early life of the Focolare when they put into practice this art of being the first to love. Young as they were then, it was difficult to live a radical life of love. To resolve this, they agreed to make what they called “the pact of mercy.” Simply, it meant that each morning, as soon as they woke up, they had to see everyone – in the Focolare, at school, at work – with “new eyes” forgetting, in effect, the ill feelings of the previous day, the negative judgments, and all those unpleasant things that did not contribute in any way to the life of unity and love. Consequently, with those “new eyes” with which to see and welcome the other, they found a way to be the first to love. They even agreed to begin each day with the resolution to be the first to love everyone they would encounter during the day – yes, always the first.³⁷

The question, undoubtedly, is this: How are we to love?

This brings us to the third technique in the art of loving, and that is, the ability to “*love others as we love ourselves*.”³⁸ Lubich notes that this way of loving is recommended not only in the Gospel,³⁹ but also in the Holy Books of other religions. In Hinduism, for example, there is this passage from the *Mahabharata* which Lubich cites: “Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done unto you.”⁴⁰ So to speak, this art of “loving others as we love ourselves” pertains to what most people know as the Golden Rule. It is an elementary moral precept, but one which, many times, people simply take for granted and disregard.

Now the practice of loving others as we love ourselves is effectively facilitated by another technique in the art of loving: the ability to “*make ourselves one*” with others in order to love them in the truest sense.⁴¹ According to Lubich, this art of loving demands “emptying ourselves of all our worries and thoughts”⁴² so that we can fully enter into another’s shoes. This means leaving behind all apprehensions, judgments, thoughts or any other thing.⁴³ So if somebody is suffering, for example, we empty ourselves of our joy and other feelings to fully unite ourselves with his suffering; if somebody is joyful, we put aside our suffering in order to share in his joy.⁴⁴

To make ourselves one with others, then, we have to die to our egos,⁴⁵ precisely, in order to “live the other” and “participate totally in the other.”⁴⁶ This is not sentimentalism, Lubich clarifies, but concrete action, that is, love at work.⁴⁷ That is why she emphasizes that the art of making

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁶ “*Un altro passo dell’arte di amare, forse il più impegnativo di tutti, che mette alla prova la sua autenticità e la sua purezza, domanda di amare per primi, prendendo sempre l’iniziativa, senza aspettare che l’altro faccia il primo passo.*” *Ibid.* Translation by this author.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 55-56.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59; cf. Matthew 19:19.

³⁹ “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31); quoted in Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 368.

⁴⁰ *Mahabharata* 5:1517; quoted in *ibid.*

⁴¹ Lubich, *L’arte di Amare*, 69. .

⁴² Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 237.

⁴³ Lubich, *L’arte di Amare*, 71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

ourselves one with others “is not [simply] a tactic or an external way of behaving. It is not just an attitude of goodwill, openness and respect, or an absence of prejudice. It is all that, but it is something more.”⁴⁸ Lubich claims that in this art of loving “lies the secret of a dialogue that can build unity.”⁴⁹

The Focolare in the Philippines

The Focolare has been in the Philippines for about 45 years, arriving on our shores sometime early in 1966.⁵⁰ Since then it has spread to many parts of the country. There are Focolare Centers in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

To spearhead initiatives for dialogue, in 1982 Chiara Lubich inaugurated Mariapolis Peace⁵¹ in Tagaytay. It is the place where dialogue is put into action through the art of loving as lived by its inhabitants. *New City Magazine* reports:

Already early on, the Focolare vocation to build unity with all was evident: after the Rector of Union Theological Seminary (UTS) and three professors

⁴⁸ Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 347.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 346. Lubich further contends that the art of making ourselves one with others naturally results into reciprocal love which, for her, is not only a “gem, [a] precious pearl” but also “the perfection of love” itself (*L’arte di Amare*, 104, 114). Moreover, reciprocal love is made a commandment by Jesus Himself, the only commandment which He called “new” and “my” (cf. John 13:34-35, 15:12). For this reason, it is imperative for all Christians to engage in this way of loving. Accordingly, reciprocal love is a very concrete witness of the Christian faith. Tertullian testifies that during the first centuries of Christianity the pagans could only look in amazement at how the early Christians loved one another to the point of even being ready to die for one another. As a result, it did not take long for many to be converted to Christianity (*L’arte di Amare*, 104, 107). Similarly, in the early days of the Focolare, from a group of about 20 girls, Lubich relates that “after a few months about 500 people of all ages, men and women, from all social strata” became part of the Movement (*Essential Writings*, 7).

⁵⁰ See “40th Anniversary of the Focolare in the Philippines: Chiara’s Visits,” *New City Magazine* (February 2006), <<http://www.newcityph.com/archive/0602/chiara1.htm>>, 07 January 2011.

⁵¹ Mariapolis literally means “City of Mary” (Maria and *polis* combined). It originally pertained to the annual summer gatherings of the Focolare in the 1950’s which still continue today in many parts of the world. These gatherings would normally last three to five days. During these days, all who participate put into concrete and actual practice the art of loving. The result is a very beautiful atmosphere, which some call “supernatural.” Everyone makes a contest in being the first to love. But since these gatherings lasted only for a few days, people went back to their homes with the nostalgia of their beautiful experience of loving and being loved in return during the Mariapolis. And so one by one people started to ask Lubich to hold more frequent similar gatherings. In response to this clamor, in 1964, Lubich finally inaugurated the first permanent Mariapolis of Loppiano in Incisa Valdarno near Florence, Italy. This Mariapolis no longer dissipates on the third, fourth, or fifth day but remains all year round. In time, other permanent Mariapolises were also established in the different parts of the world. To date, there are more than 30 such little towns. The structure of each Mariapolis is like any ordinary town: there are homes, schools, business centers, churches, and even cemeteries. The only distinguishing mark of the Mariapolis, the one that makes it different from ordinary secular towns, is the law of love, the practice of reciprocal love, which all its inhabitants commit to live twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. From the start, Lubich has christened each of these Mariapolises. She called the one in Tagaytay Mariapolis Peace. For years until recently (Thailand now has also one), Mariapolis Peace has stood as the only permanent Mariapolis in the whole of Asia. As such, it has served as a reference point for the Focolare’s major activities, particularly in hosting important dialogues in various spheres. For more information and updates on the Focolare’s activities in the Philippines, visit www.newcityph.com or www.focolare.org.ph.

spent some time in the Mariapolis in Tagaytay, one of them invited a priest to speak about the Focolare to a group of about 40 Protestant leaders.⁵²

The said priest, of course, could have only come from the Priests' School for Asia, one of the very first structures to be constructed in Mariapolis Peace. The construction of the school came about upon the request of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to Lubich.⁵³ The school's objective has always been that of training Filipino and neighboring Asian priests to learn and live the spirituality of unity of the Focolare. Corollary to this, the school has also served as a training ground for priests, including seminarians, to become men of dialogue and apostles of unity in their respective dioceses.⁵⁴

Another of the first structures to be constructed in Mariapolis Peace was the School for Oriental Religions. Lubich affirms that

[this school] was established in order [for us] to become better acquainted with the other world religions and to discover the seeds of the Word contained in the religious traditions of the East, and so focus together on what we have in common.⁵⁵

Hence the unique character of Mariapolis Peace, through the School of Oriental Religions, is its being a special venue for interreligious dialogue. Referring to Mariapolis Peace, one Muslim friend of the Focolare remarked: "I like coming here because as Muslims we find true unity and reciprocal love. Here we experience the peace and serenity badly needed in our country, and especially in Mindanao."⁵⁶

"At the same time," Lubich adds, "we are involved with our Buddhist friends at a social level in projects to help the poor around the outskirts of Manila."⁵⁷ This and several other initiatives have characterized the Focolare's presence in the country for more than forty years.

Conclusion

Certainly, much more can still be said about Chiara Lubich or the Focolare Movement. But for us who have learnt from their story, theirs is not only an invitation for thoughtful reflection, but also a call for concrete action.

To conclude this paper, here are words from Chiara Lubich herself which could further inspire us to work for a better, united humanity:

A love capable of becoming dialogue... is a love that, far from closing itself off arrogantly in its own concerns, knows [how] to open up to others and work with all persons of goodwill in building together peace and unity in the world. Therefore let us try to open our eyes to the neighbors we meet, to appreciate the

⁵² "40th Anniversary of the Focolare in the Philippines: The Family Grows," *New City Magazine* (February 2006), <<http://www.newcityph.com/archive/0602/begin.htm>>, 07 January 2011.

⁵³ See Coda, *op cit.*, 70-72.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁵ Zambonini, *op cit.*, 83.

⁵⁶ "40th Anniversary of the Focolare in the Philippines: A Little City," *New City Magazine* (February 2006), <<http://www.newcityph.com/archive/0602/city.htm>>, 07 January 2011.

⁵⁷ Zambonini, *op cit.*, 83.

good they do, whatever their convictions may be, to feel solidarity with them and encourage one another in the way of justice and love.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 356.