Chiara Lubich: Female Genius Transforming Political, Economic and Development Structures through Love

For months, Chiara Lubich listened as bombs destroyed her friends' and relatives' homes during the Second World War in Trent, a small city in the North of Italy. She was experiencing the cruelty and the ruthlessness of the war when, in a cellar sheltered from the bombings, the Gospel became her compass. Guided by Jesus' message, "Let all be one," she inspired a worldwide movement that today encompasses more than two million people in 182 countries, committed to over a thousand international development projects.

Chiara is universally known as the founder of the Focolare Movement, however she always repeated that it was not her goal to be known: she played on the ground the music written in Heaven. For Chiara, each person, within and beyond her own Catholic tradition, and those not belonging to a religious or spiritual practice, was an instrument to strengthen the bonds of fraternity and peace, to start social and civic projects among diverse peoples, between communities, and even between enemies. For Chiara, loving God meant loving every human being.

Her genius allowed her to see crises and obstacles as opportunities for unity through the art of loving—her method of love welcomes others without discrimination, offers concrete support, shares willingly, forgives enemies, and values each human being. This open spirit of communion has made Chiara welcomed in mosques, synagogues, Christian churches, Buddhist temples and monasteries, and also inside universities and parliaments. Her commitment to unity was awarded by the UN and UNESCO with the Prize for Peace Education.

Chiara also provoked politicians by encouraging them to love the homelands of others, in addition to loving their own country and by urging them to hold the common good of humanity in higher regard than political factions. Today, the Political Movement for Unity, inspired by these values, has representatives in Europe, South America and Asia.

In 1991, she was struck by that contrast between the favelas and skyscrapers that she saw when visiting Sao Paolo, Brazil. Instead of launching a social project, she addressed local entrepreneurs and proposed the sharing of their profits with the poor, making their factories a model of the culture of sharing. Currently, more than 900 businesses across the globe belong to the Economy of Communion's project, which “unites those in material and spiritual need with entrepreneurs... in a global effort to create material and spiritual abundance and to freely share that abundance in ways that make us all better off.”

Chiara Lubich was appointed as Honorary President of Religions for Peace in 1982. She passed away on 14 March 2008.