

SPIRITUALITY OF UNITY

The God of today

We continue with this year's theme on Jesus Forsaken, who Chiara Lubich describes as 'the God of our times, the God of today'.

This is our Ideal: Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, in us and outside of us, in the whole world that is waiting to be consoled and comforted,' wrote Chiara in the 60's. With the compass of life aimed at him, an endless horizon opened wide in front of her. Just as the poor were in the foreground from the beginning, at the time of discoveries and developments, so they were always central, with all those in need. However, very soon other scenarios emerged, such as moral evil in its various facets; people with no religious faith; the Church reduced to silence and persecuted in Eastern Europe; the divisions within Christianity. With prophetic clarity and realism, Chiara faced up to the postmodern, pluralistic, multicultural and multifaith world, torn apart by the proliferation of numerous conflicts. In all these situations, the love for Jesus Forsaken ensures that one does not flee but rather addresses every challenge, with concrete attention to individual persons, and with actions, projects, social movements and initiatives for dialogue. Whoever has discovered Jesus Forsaken and sees his countenance in every pain and disunity, in every misfortune and division, cannot withdraw into a life of devotional piety or even comfortable intimacy, but rather will always be – with him – at the forefront, in the fracture, in contact with the 'wounds', in order to find a solution. It is in this sense that Chiara saw Jesus Forsaken as 'the God of our times', 'the God of today'.

Sharing, conversion, unity

'Because of our love for Jesus Forsaken, light and peace shone out, not only in our souls, but in all those who were alone, disorientated, orphans, disheartened, failures, humiliated, without support in absurd situations – once they recognized him

under those aspects. We chose him together. These people were the favourites among the members of the movement and we tried to share all the pain of their hearts. Then at the opportune moment, we would talk to them about Jesus, about his infinite love, especially for those who are mentioned in the beatitudes, and about the privilege they had to be able to share the cross with him, for their own good and the good of humanity.

We also explained to them the need to offer him our personal sufferings, in which we see nothing other than his face...

Jesus came down on earth, becoming a human being, but on the cross, he annihilated himself, and in the abandonment, he seemed to be totally obliterated.

As a divine inclined plane, he has given each and every person on earth a chance to reach the Divine Majesty, in whatever moral or spiritual condition they find themselves, as long as they turn to him, transforming all the sufferings that oppress them into a coin of love as they follow him.

In this way, many people, little by little, also through our movement, have understood or experienced the words of Jesus, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." (Mt. 9: 12) ...

Then there were the sinners and those far from the Church... and yet they are all members of the Mystical Body, or at least directed towards it.

In these brothers and sisters, too, we saw his face.

It was this love for Jesus Forsaken in them, besides the witness of the unity among us that brought about, with the grace of God, the most varied conversions.'

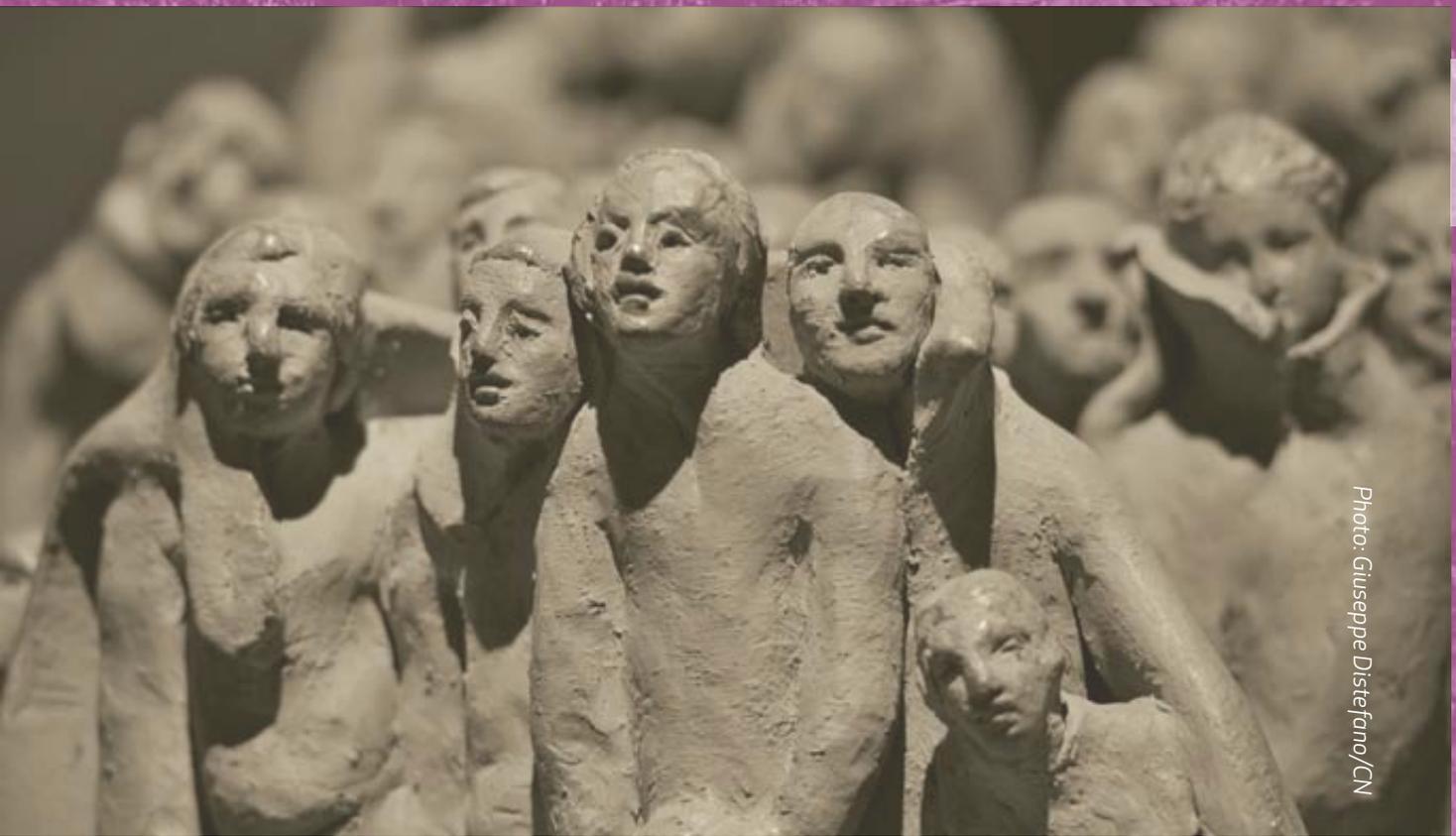


Photo: Giuseppe Disteferno/CN

Social works and projects

From a talk entitled, 'Men and women religious and the challenges of society' (Castel Gandolfo, Italy, April 19, 1995)

Jesus Crucified and Forsaken: the key to unity, but also the mirror reflecting all the suffering in the world... Could there be anyone, no matter what his or her spiritual or physical pain, unable to identify with him? That infinite torment became for us the panorama of every suffering in the world. This is the way we have always thought and always tried to act accordingly...

When the movement begins with the poor, with the needy, then we know that its life is starting in its own characteristic setting, and this promises development, fruits and vocations...

Over the years, the great tree of the movement, whose nature is love, supernatural love, has grown and blossomed into many branches all over the world, with an abundance of flowers and fruits. These fruits include a variety of short-term or on-going social or charitable projects... They are

initiatives of different scope and size, but they all pulsate with life, because those who work in them have at heart Jesus Crucified and Forsaken who repeats to them: 'You did it to me' (Mt. 25: 40).

Our activities, and particularly those of the youth, are not limited to these. Every day they initiate activities for the benefit of those they call 'the Jesus Forsaken of the moment'. They help many people who are suffering due to natural disasters like earthquakes, fires, floods... or those tragedies provoked by people, like war. These young people have no peace until they give their own personal contribution, until they can hasten to those areas where death and suffering are commonplace. They invent all kinds of projects, according to the needs they see around them, collecting money, goods and even truckloads of useful things to be distributed. Why do they do this? Because of what Jesus said: 'You did it to me.'

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