

## SPIRITUALITY OF UNITY

# Dialogue with Chiara Lubich

Over the many years of dialogue between Chiara and members of the Movement, one theme kept re-occurring: the search for a greater union with God, for a deeper interior life. And this was often linked with a desire for a greater unity with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

*Only of Mary, is it said that she is the mother of Christ. Is it possible, by living the Word of Life, to become like her?*

It is possible, but in a different way. More precisely, it is so through our participation in Mary's life. Every time we let a Word of God enter into our heart, it isn't like other words that are carried away by the wind and are lost. It is a presence of Christ; it is a seed of Christ that enters into us. And by constantly living his word, he grows in us; he grows, and gradually takes the place of our whole self. He 'Christifies' us; he makes us into another Christ.

In this way, we are mothers of Christ within us... I remember having read that the greatest grace God can give someone is spiritual motherhood.

From answers to young people of the Movement  
(Rocca di Papa, Italy, December 31, 1974)

*It seems easier for me to find unity with Jesus than with Mary. What can I do, or better? What have you done to have unity with Mary?*

Our way is this: first we find God, then we find unity with Jesus, and then, later on, much later on, we find unity with Mary. It's something that has to mature in us; we can't do it just by deciding at a certain moment that we want to have unity with Mary. Certainly, it is one of the most beautiful things that exists on this earth. I believe that one of the greatest gifts we can receive is to have Mary as our mother and to feel it's true. It is to have union with Mary, as well as with God and with Jesus.

You can't explain it – it's something really 'impenetrable', with various dimensions – it's hard to explain.

But you can't reach it immediately. So you have to keep going ahead. Union with Jesus is the right way to go and then God will help you reach union with Mary, too, but it will be later.

From answers to the men and women living in Focolare (Grottaferrata, Italy, January 2, 1960)

*Very often we realize that our relationship with Mary is not as it should be. What should we do to allow her to lead us to Jesus?*

I have often said that, for us, it seems that it's not in the first few years in the life of the Ideal that we feel union with Mary and, therefore, a relationship with her.

I think it is Mary herself who does her part to be sure that, first of all, we have love for Jesus and then for the Father planted firmly in our hearts.

For me, love for her blossomed in my heart at almost the same time as love for the Holy Spirit.

But if you go ahead following the way of this spirituality, at a certain moment you will become aware that a relationship with Mary is emerging and then becomes, I would say, predominant.

I think it's a question of continuing along our way. However, even if you don't yet feel in your soul what you should feel [for Mary], it would be good (and necessary for us who belong to the Work of Mary<sup>1</sup>) to maintain a conversation with her, entrusting ourselves to her care.

I think we should give her not only our daily efforts to become saints, or the stage of sanctity we may have reached so far, but we should give her our whole life.

From notes prepared by Chiara to answer questions from the citizens of Loppiano (May 1986)

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*Every day I am more and more convinced that the way to go to God is through our neighbour. How can we reconcile this going together on the way to holiness with a growing desire to imitate Mary in her solitude with God?*

In what you say I find a misunderstanding of Mary. Mary, as she is presented in the Gospel, is not in solitude with God. She is in God, which is different.

Immediately after the annunciation, she goes to visit Elizabeth, so she was not alone with God. At the wedding feast at Cana, Mary is attending a wedding. She is there when Jesus starts his public life and she follows him, so she is in the midst of the people. Later, when she is left alone by Jesus, she can be found in the Upper Room surrounded by the apostles. She was not in solitude with God.

Also as a little girl and as a young woman, she was with her family. One cannot live solitude with God in a family. [Later she was in the family with] Jesus and also Joseph. She mingled with the women of her time, went to the market, shopped for food and did all sorts of things; she also went to the temple. So let's be careful about how we define her. We should rather say that Mary was always in God. This is our aim.

From answers to the men and women living in Focolare (Rocca di Papa, Italy, March 25, 1989)

*Could you point out the steps that we can take to be another Mary?*

It is by loving Jesus forsaken that we become similar to Mary and therefore, more 'one' with her. Why is this true? It's true because the encounter with Jesus forsaken fills our soul with virtue. I'll give you an example. I might be a little impatient. I embrace Jesus forsaken and in this embracing Jesus forsaken, I become patient. Or another example, perhaps I am a little exasperated, almost desperate. I embrace Jesus forsaken and hope returns, the virtue of hope. Or perhaps I am tempted. And so the virtue of purity comes to me.

Whoever is full of all these virtues is another Mary because she is really the fullness of all virtues, especially the virtues that are not charity itself, but the fruit of charity, which is the mother of all virtues.

From answers to the citizens of Loppiano (May 12, 1987)

<sup>1</sup> Work of Mary: the official name given to the Focolare Movement by the Roman Catholic Church.

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