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teens

WORK IN PROGRESS 4 UNITY



WHO DARES?

Saints Together

The All of My Life

Chiara Lubich
to the young people

Books

1000 Books
in one cover

NEWS

A Hangout
with Pope Francis

Living Witness

After a year of compliance with the canonical norms for the Opening of the Cause, the Bishop of Frascati, Italy, Raffaello Martinelli, designated January 27, 2015, as the date of the Solemn Opening of the “Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich.” In a letter addressed to the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce was delighted to announce the event, inviting everyone who adheres to the spirituality of unity to be a “living witness” of what Chiara lived, proclaimed and shared with so many people, through a common effort to become holy together.”

Does anyone dare to try to do this? In this issue of Teens we will hear about many teens who dare to give it a try! They are

all over the world and they aim high, never settling for little, shallow or temporary things. Instead, as you will read here, they too have discovered why becoming saints mattered so much to Chiara Lubich (1920-2008) and they are committed to achieving that great goal: to be a generation of saints. They are living witness of this kind of sanctity, as they live for God in their youth groups, classrooms, or even cleaning up mud after a natural disaster. As they gather together and encourage one another to get out of their comfort zone to serve those in need, they want to bring many other teens into this amazingly fun divine adventure!!

The best proof that becoming saints matters to teens today is the life of these teens who are doing it!!

the editors

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teens

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the ALL of MY LIFE

Chiara Lubich to the young people on
December 31, 1980

« What I have to tell you is an experience, my own experience (...) from 1943, many, many years ago.(...) It was during the war, so you could die from one moment to the next, and from this came the idea to live the present moment. Having death before us has always been a very important lesson, a very great means that God used to make us (...) understand that the true life is not this one, but the next, that we must put charity first. (...)

Even though I understood that death is a meeting with Jesus, and so something magnificent, I felt anguish at the thought that if I died, I wouldn't make it to become a saint, I wouldn't have time to acquire the virtue needed to become a saint, and I understood that to be a saint means to be a fulfilled Christian. **So yes, I will meet Jesus, but what kind of a meeting will it be if I am not a saint, a meeting which is kind of so-so. But I want a meeting that is really great!** (...)

I was staying in Rome at the time and there was a chapel there in the house. I went in front of Jesus and said, "Maybe you'll give me a few more years, so that I can make it to reach sanctity. But please Jesus, this is my last chance! (...) Give me something to help me - an idea, something!" Then I left Jesus there in the tabernacle and I went about my various jobs. At a certain moment I got an idea: "There is a way for you to become a saint immediately - if you live it! It's Jesus forsaken! It's the charisma I gave you. Remember what you did in the early years of the Ideal, when you saw all this revolution coming about from

nothing, suddenly spreading like fire? What did you have in your heart? Jesus forsaken. You didn't have anything else but Jesus forsaken. If you end your life the way you began it, you will become a saint." And it seemed that He said to me: "But Chiara, if you don't love me, who will love me? It's to you that I revealed myself as forsaken. I gave myself to you as the forsaken one, then you shared this with all the others. (...) So if you Chiara, if all of you don't love me, who will love me?" Faced with such an obvious question I said: "This is it! This is the way!" Within me I felt (...) such a joy - the joy of having found the way - I found it! In fact I said: "I will immediately write on one hand "Jesus forsaken," on the other, "Mary desolate," because Mary lived Jesus forsaken in the moment of her desolation. I wanted to remind myself of this because I had made this great discovery. I had received the answer, this thrust. I already knew Jesus forsaken, (...) but this was really something very strong - above all, the joy I felt.

And so I went to Jesus and said: "OK, let's go along this road! I will always have this one and only idea. It's true that we all become saints by doing God's will, but there is a special will of God for me and for those who are called by this charisma: this will of God is Jesus forsaken!" (...)

What will I leave you, if I don't become a saint? I will leave you nothing. And I want to leave you something. **And this something, my inheritance, what I want to leave you, is my sanctity.** And so I am going to do it! And you do it, too! »

Chiara

(from the Chiara
Lubich Center archives)



Education

from Focolare.org
February 10, 2015

A TREASURE CHEST

Every educator's mission is to help students bring out the treasure they have inside of themselves and share it with others. The "Scholas Occurrentes" convention held in the Vatican, focused on the social-educational responsibility of schools to help form good citizens and a culture of dialogue and acceptance.



The idea behind the project called **Scholas Occurrentes** (meaning schools that respond to the needs of the population) is that education of youth should involve families, civil authorities and cultural institutions. The project was created in Argentina and launched in Buenos Aires by the then-Archbishop J.M. Bergoglio (now Pope Francis). Recently it was presented on an international level. The aim of this project is to integrate, in some way, the educational efforts of all, and to establish a contract among all those in charge of educating young people and children so that the educational system can bring about a change in society. At

the end of the 4th World Congress held in the Vatican in February, **Pope Francis** underlined this by saying, "Scholas seeks to integrate education with culture, sports and science; **it tries to build bridges, to move out of the local scene and consider the needs of the whole world.** Today this sharing of knowledge, this cultural interaction, is being played out in every continent in the world."

More than 250 people participated, including well-known experts in the field of education and social responsibility, members of various religions and cultures, delegates from sports organizations, as well as representatives of the world of art, show business, culture and technology - all of whom can help "create a classroom where all are welcome," as José María del Corral, Scholas Director stated.

The goal, as outlined by the Pope in his speech, is to rediscover sport as part of the educational process, to lead children to appreciate art, and to harmonize the "language of the brain" and the "language of the heart." Those who attended presented their experiences, projects and research which served to fire up everyone. It also made them look for ways to include students with particular educational needs or addictions, and consider topics like extreme poverty or the crisis of the environment. Some projects sponsored by the Focolare Movement were presented, such as the **Udisha project in India**, mobilizing cities to react against the culture of gambling, as with the **Slot Mob project in Italy**, and also the effort to build bridges among religions in the **Living Peace project in Egypt.**



Two morning sessions were dedicated to deepening the educational theory of “learning accompanied by service in solidarity with others” was developed in the United States in the 60s and promoted over the last twenty years by **Maria Nieves Tapia** of the Focolare together with many other organizations. Working with the Latin American Center for Learning and Solidary Service, they try to combine their efforts according to the research on how to promote social integration and the culture of encounter.

“The youth are the ones who will benefit,” **concluded Pope Francis**, underlining the importance of this work which builds bridges between the youth of all nations and creeds, educating them towards peace and fraternity. He then affirmed: “We will not change the



world if we don't change education.” This is a real “rescue plan” put into action, as he had said on other occasions, to stem the “throw-away” culture which leaves no room in society for a whole generation of children and adolescents, and to continue believing that “life is a great treasure, but which is meaningful only if shared with others.” »

To participate in the project: www.scholassoccurrentes.org

Tech-savvy Pope shares laughter, advice with special needs kids

Pope Francis virtually joined seven young people with disabilities and special needs in his second Google Hangout as pontiff, sharing jokes, advice and encouragement. “Each one of us has a treasure inside,” the Pope told the young people during his Feb. 5 Google Hangout. “We share our own treasure with others, it multiplies along with the treasures that come from the others we meet. What I want to say is don't hide the treasure that each one of you has. Sometimes we find it right away. Sometimes you have to do a little game of treasure hunt. But once you find it, share it, because when you share it you receive from others and it multiplies...and helps all of us to understand that life is a beautiful treasure, but it only makes sense if we give it.”

The seven young people who participated in the hangout with Pope Francis hailed from all corners of the world, including Spain, India, Brazil and the United States.

Among the participants were Isabel, 13, who is blind; Bautista, 12, who has autism; 17-year-olds Alicia and Elvira, who both have Down syndrome; 13-year-old Manosh from India, who is deaf;

Pedro from Brazil, who has a congenital malformation; and Isaiah from the United States, who has a type of growth disorder which affects his motor skills.

Each participant had the opportunity to speak spontaneously to the Pope, telling him about themselves and how they use technology to help them with their disabilities.

Isaiah, who joined in from Nebraska, asked the Pope what he does when he faces something difficult. The Pope responded by saying, “First of all, I try not to get angry. (I try) to be calm. Afterward I try to look for a way to overcome it. And if I can't overcome it, I endure it until I see a way of overcoming it.” He then said, “We must never be afraid. We are all capable of overcoming (difficult situations). We only need time to understand, intelligence to look for the way, and courage to go forward. But never be afraid.”



edited by the staff



Getting out of our comfort zone to bring a special Unity to Our Towns

The Global Person Project 2014 was an event that changed us in many ways and that will stay forever in our hearts. Many people described it as "the best two weeks of their life." Coming back home we want to bring the same unity back to our towns and continue to live like we did in Argentina or Mexico. In addition, Pope Francis continues to invite us to go out to people on the peripheries, those who are rejected or left out, and with this fire of love and unity in our hearts, we want to share it with our friends when we see them sad, suffering or struggling, or bring it to places in our neighborhood or city that need love. It's not an easy task, that's for sure! So we've asked for some advice from two Teens4Unity "old timers"- Luke Johnstone from Indianapolis and Anne Masters from Chicago.

Anne: When I was a Teen4Unity, I also had an experience of wanting to shout the Ideal of unity from the rooftops, especially after I attended the World Youth Day and Genfest in Rome in the summer of 2000. That was my first experience with the Focolare where my family wasn't with me and I felt very confirmed that I too wanted to live the spirituality of the movement, not just because that was what my family was doing. But honestly, when I got home from Rome, it was a lot harder than I expected.

Luke: First things first, in order to share this lifestyle with our friends, we must strive to live out the art of loving/the Golden Rule in our daily life and let God speak through us! Like St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." Next, it is very helpful to share this lifestyle with a close friend. Then the next step is to start brainstorming with that friend on how you can both spread the art of loving or the Golden Rule. By planning with your friend, it allows you to have Jesus in the midst from the beginning of planning. With the presence of Jesus, you can work with your friend to think about the best method to "connect" with your other friends. Maybe you often meet with your friends for a game of basketball; why not plan a pickup game and read the monthly Teens4Unity Word of Life together before the game? Remember, the program doesn't have to be too intense from the start, but our love does!

Anne: In college, I was able to “tell” a lot of people about the Focolare Movement, but I felt that few were able to actually experience what it’s like. I was disappointed, but eventually I realized that in that moment maybe I was just supposed to form friendships with others and immerse myself in the university. So I kind of let go of directly trying to evangelize others and simply tried to be present where I was.

One year we were going to take a group of students up to Chicago for the Prayer for Christian Unity, but the weather was really bad so we didn’t go. Instead we decided to have our own Prayer for Christian Unity on campus. It was a small gathering, but we sang the same songs, did the same readings, and prayed the same prayers as those at the Chicago prayer service. That was the first time I really felt I was able to share the Focolare spirituality with others, and people seemed really happy!

One of my roommates at the time was actually the one who suggested doing the Prayer for Christian Unity on campus :-). She later became a Youth4United World.

Luke: One last word of advice from my experience: **don’t get discouraged!** I remember many times that my friend, who is also a Teen4Unity, and I would be the only two who showed up at a meeting. Those meetings were very discouraging. But we have to *wipe any hard feelings aside*, restart often, and keep trying! Because *no matter how small the gathering*, our efforts to do God’s will is all God needs to spread unity around us!

“When two or more people are gathered in my name, I am with them” (Matthew 18:20) by Bobby Montelongo

I joined the Teens4Unity at my parish in Chicago late in December 2013. My first meeting with the group was at their Christmas party, go figure! I knew a few people in the group already, two or three were alumni of my grammar school, and one was an altar server from my church I had met once before. The others were people I had never met. I remember thinking, “Don’t mess this up for yourself.”

In my grammar school, I had a good circle of friends who I stay in contact with to this day, but I always love to meet new people and have new friends, it’s just a part of who I am. This group was older than me (for the most part), and they had all known each other for at least a year. I expected that it would take time for them to warm up to me. I am so happy I was wrong!

The Teens4Unity that I had met were all extremely open and friendly. Whether they were third year in high school or just starting junior high, I was instantly a part of their group. The warmth and love that could only come from Jesus was really there, I felt it more than I ever did at school, or any groups I’ve been to, even ones that were focused on things I love to do (writing and video games). It was there in that little room, every other Thursday, that it felt the most like a family. Like a family we have our disagreements mostly on which high school is better or trivial things like that and we have our “in” jokes (ask anyone from our group about “Dixie Highway” and watch them either light up or roll their eyes). Most important though, like a family we worry about each other,

continued on the next page...



"When two or more are gathered" continued....

we try to help each other out with anything from homework, to real problems in families or anything, and being a part of that is a spectacular feeling. *I thought it would be cool if every teen in the whole world had that same experience!*

Now I want to jump forward to right before school let out for 2014. The annual "Let's Color Our City Service Week" was coming up and I had the stressful task of trying to get everyone in the 6th, 7th and 8th grade of my school to consider going. One of our leaders was adamant that I could do it, and so I went ahead and told the whole junior high exactly what I wrote above, about my experience with the Teens4Unity, and how I could never meet any better people. Then that summer rolled around and only two other kids showed up. I didn't know how to feel, grateful that two people decided to see what our group was about or defeated in that the whole rest of the Junior High thought I was insane.

The feeling of defeat died rather fast. During the Service Week I got to know great new friends from all around Chicago, Michigan and

Ohio. The list is long, but just to name a few I met that week: Hazel, Robyn, Joey, Alyssa, Michael, Kyle, Gemma, Piper... They are all amazing people and if they are reading this I want them to know that I am very thankful for what they have done for me and that I will always try and be there for them, like they were for me.

It's amazing looking back on how clearly I can remember so much of these amazing experiences, on how they have stuck with me and helped mold me into who I am today. I am forever thankful for the Teens4Unity, for my incredible friends, and for the leaders who make our time much better. Most importantly, though, to *God* be the glory for what has happened to me through the Teens4Unity. I know his plan was for me to meet these people and to experience all that the Teens4Unity had to offer. I can't wait for this summer when I get to spend another week with my Teens4Unity friends in beautiful Tennessee. *And you bet that I'll be again inviting other teens that I know to have this same experience of unity!*

IN A NUTSHELL

- Live the Golden Rule and be present to your friends & classmates
- Always extend an invitation to Teens4Unity events but leave them free
- Get together with a friend/sibling who lives out the Golden Rule and plan things in unity with Jesus in the midst
- Be courageous! You can be the one to start up something :)
- Size of the group is not important
- Connect young people to other young people and later to the larger "family" of people who live the same values
- Persevere, endure, get rid of hard feelings
- Don't get discouraged! Restart often!

Many people are looking forward to finding something great, and we have it! Let's share it!





IN PARAGUAY THERE ARE TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES: SPANISH, SPOKEN BY 75% OF THE POPULATION, AND GUARANI, THE LANGUAGE OF THE NATIVE PARAGUAYANS, SPOKEN BY 95% OF THE PEOPLE.

3 More points

FROM PARAGUAY A WITNESS
AGAINST **DISHONESTY**
AMONG THE SCHOOL DESKS



At my school the academic year was drawing to a close, and all the teachers were giving us the results of the tests.

One teacher, aware that some of my classmates did not pass the test in his course, decided to add three points to their test scores in a way that would favor their promotion. Aware of his intention, I asked to speak, and then I said that this didn't seem honest to me. Why not give everyone three more points?

My classmates who did not pass the test reacted badly and began to insult me, because my idea jeopardized their getting promoted. So I told the teacher I was convinced that if we acted dishonestly in our school, our country would never stop being corrupt and dishonest. Then with tears in his eyes, he told me: "I never thought a girl your age could teach me something so important - that we should be

honest! I'd like you to tell your parents that I congratulate them for the way they raised their daughter. And don't be afraid. You can be sure that what you've done will turn out okay." Then he continued with the lesson. At the end of the hour he said to me: "I wish I had a thousand students like you!" A lot of my classmates heard about what had happened and were upset with me, saying it was my fault if some would not pass. They insisted that it was not a matter of justice, that what mattered was being promoted to the next year. I listened to them, and then realizing that they really felt offended, I decided to speak to each one personally to assure them that it was not my intention to hurt them. Most of them understood, but some continued to think that I am a bad person. So I resolved to give more attention to making it clear that I really had their best interests at heart. For example, I helped them in their assignments. Today I continue to build a deep relationship with each one. I am certain that with small acts every day, we can make a change in our society.

SCHOOLS IN PARAGUAY

Classes are held from Monday to Friday, mornings and afternoons, and in some schools even in the evening. When school began this year, in mid-February, it was in the middle of summer here. The school year finishes at the end of November, with two weeks of winter vacation in July.

nowteens

TOWARD A WORLD UNITED THROUGH
WORDS AND IMAGES, EVENTS AND
EXPERIENCES

PARMA: ANGELS OF MUD

OCTOBER 13, IN PARMA, ITALY (WHERE PARMESAN CHEESE COMES FROM), FOLLOWING A HUGE RAINSTORM, THE **BAGANZA** RIVER OVERFLOWED AND FLOODED THE ENTIRE REGION, DESTROYING BRIDGES AND ROADS AND CAUSING MORE THAN \$4 MILLION WORTH OF DAMAGE. MANY PEOPLE PITCHED IN TO HELP WITH MANY ACTS OF SOLIDARITY. A 10-YEAR-OLD WROTE TO US:

The streets were flooded and some families lost everything. It was a desperate situation in some areas of our city! I live in Noceto, 6 miles away from there, but hearing the news and seeing the pictures of what was happening, some friends and I went and asked what we could do. We decided to join a lot of other volunteers who were clearing the mud from the streets and the houses. We were given boots, shovels, brooms and buckets and were assigned to one part of the city. We told the residents we were there to help. It was very hard work to move out the mud, which is so heavy. In the midst of the tragedy we saw many gestures of solidarity among people who hadn't even known one another before. There were a lot of other kids who joined us instead of spending Saturday afternoon bumming around with their friends. We all worked together to shovel the mud away from the streets, and everyone did it with a smile! We got to know some of the residents who stopped to talk to us. They asked who we were and they were amazed that we would come even from other cities nearby like Modena, Reggio and Piacenza. At the end of the day, we arrived home very tired and dirty, but happy we had done something for others.

Matilde Daini - Noceto (Parma)



1000 books

in one
COVER



by Chiara Baldas,
Elena Magliozzi,
Marta Vettoretti

Have you heard of the He-book? It is a new kind of digital book that is becoming more and more popular. But what will become of our dear old books?

It is now possible to read anything on your smart phone, tablet or other apparatus designed precisely for this purpose. They are not illuminated like computers, and so they are easier on the eyes. The market for the e-book continues to grow and the most famous brands are: Kindle by Amazon (with various models like the *Paperwhite* or *Fire*), and *Kobo*. E-books (or electronic books) are very convenient. They are less expensive (the classics are often free), their batteries stay charged for a long time, even for days, and the

latest models incorporate a light so they can be read anywhere, even in the dark. There are now not just novels. Even school textbooks are available in digital form. You can work exercises, underline or make notes, and they are so light that the weight of your backpack is greatly reduced. This is very useful when you have to carry a lot, although, according to the experts, students study better with printed books. Consequently many students acquire both versions: at school they use the digital ones and at home they study with the traditional printed books. Electronic books will certainly be very useful in the society of the future, but for now they can't match the "smell of paper." In fact, many people still prefer printed books. The



pleasure of flipping through the pages, the smell of the paper, whether new or old, enjoying every inked impression, tracing the shape of the characters in relief on the book jacket: none of this can be replaced by the e-book which, however convenient, remains a cold metal instrument which can never give you the satisfaction of "reading a book." ■

THE TEENS FOR UNITY PRESENT:



RUN4UNITY 2015
RUN
لنكتشف الأخوة
WE LINK: DISCOVERING FRATERNITY



Sunday, May 3, 2015

From 11:00am to 12:00pm in every time zone of the world, we'll run in the 4th edition of our worldwide relay to show our commitment to building peace and unity among peoples.

Sunday, May 3, 2015

(a minute of silence or prayer for Peace)

Contact your local focolare center for more information about this event. Run together for unity!

Run4unity – Its goal has always been to show our world-wide commitment to bringing unity to the entire human family.

This year there is so much suffering in so many countries that it makes our goal seem very far away. After the attacks in Paris, the massacres in Nigeria, Pakistan and Iraq, causing so many people to flee for their lives, we might think there's nothing we can do to stop this wave of violence unleashed in the world. But that's not true! The ideal of unity, which we all want to bear witness to, was born during a war - the Second World War! And it spread all over the world, because those who lived this Ideal loved others one by one, seeing all people as candidates for unity. Through Chiara we've discovered that a small act of love can stop a bomb in the hands of a terrorist.

Teens Magazine of the Focolare Movement

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The motto we chose is 'WeLink' (we build bonds of unity: discovering that we are all brothers and sisters), to remind us that together we can form a network capable of lifting up the world by building links all around us, wherever we are: in the family, at school, doing sports, with friends.

How many WeLinks?

Let's promote small or big changes! To do so, we need the courage to take the initiative. Let's have a "competition" that can keep us going, by asking ourselves every day: How many "WeLinks" did I build today? **How many concrete actions have I done by living the Golden Rule and building relationships of peace and fraternity?** Some will be big challenges, others small, depending on what it was that separated us from others, like indifference, social divisions, different ideologies, or even terrorist attacks, or wars. We can start now by communicating the steps we've made at: **#run4unity**.

During Run4Unity and the United World Week, we can tally up all the "Links" we will have created together all over the world.

