

QUEST



Chiara Luce: a Streak of Light



On September 25th, the Church declared that Chiara Luce Badano is now “Blessed” Chiara Luce and from now on, her feast day will be October 29th –

which is her birthday! We can take her as a model and tell many other young people about her, because now she is a model for all the young people of the world! We have already published different things about her life in the past Gen 3 magazines of this year. In this issue, we have some other stories. We will start with Chiara’s words about being saints, and she said that the Gen 3 will be the “generation of saints!”

CHIARA LUCE, A GEN 3, IS BEATIFIED BY THE CHURCH!!

LEAVE BEHIND A STREAK OF LIGHT!

I saw that **two roads lie before us in life**, and that my friends and I, like everyone else, would have to choose between them: **we could spend this life either following our own will, or following God’s will.**

If we followed our own will, our destiny would be like that of almost everyone else in the world. Each day many people die, and the tears and flowers show that their death causes much suffering. But then, after another generation has passed, most of them have been forgotten.

If, instead, we walk **the way of God’s will**, he will guide us moment by moment along paths conceived by his love, invented by his imagination, and suggested by his providence, which reaches and cares for each one of us as individuals and the community as a whole.



He will lead us on a marvelous, divine adventure, as yet unknown to us.

Our lives will not end in silence, but will remain **to give light to many, like the lives of the saints.** (...)

THE GEN ARE AIMING AT HOLINESS!

“What is the **characteristic of the Gen 3**, the third generation? They have one main characteristic: **they aim high, very high.** They want to accomplish an extraordinary task, starting with their own generation. They know they are aiming at something immense and so it requires a big commitment. They don't count only on their own strength but first of all, or course, on the strength that comes from heaven, from God. However, they also want to do all their part and they realize that throughout history those who really made a profound impact on others were the saints. **The saints drew crowds to follow them, they brought many people to God, they changed the world in all the places were they lived.** And so what have the Gen 3 decided to do? They want to be (don't be surprised!) they want to be **a generation of saints!**

Chisara

“YOUNG PEOPLE, DON'T BE AFRAID TO BECOME SAINTS!”

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Pope Benedict XVI to the students of all the Catholic Schools in England

There is something I very much want to say to you. **I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the 21st century.** What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. **He loves you much more than you could even begin to imagine,** and he wants the very best for you.

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And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness. Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of **people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like.** It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves?

What kind of person would you really like to be?

When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am not asking you to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, **it is not enough to make us happy.** Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. **Happiness is something we all want,** but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. **We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone,** not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. **Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.**



At home with Chiara Luce

Some of the Gen 3 interviewed Chiara Luce's parents, asking them what it was like to be with her.



Chiara Luce's mom, Maria Teresa:

Chiara didn't talk a lot, but when she did, she spoke words filled with wisdom. And being near her, you couldn't be down. **You had to be very "up,"** which meant you had to be happy!

Towards the end, when we knew she was dying, I would sit near the end of her bed and hold her legs. She had an oxygen mask on and often dozed off. But within me, I felt an extraordinary peace. I realized Chiara would be leaving us soon, but I felt such joy. A

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song filled my heart as I looked at Chiara with her eyes closed. I asked myself, **"I wonder what Chiara is doing right now?" But I didn't say it out loud.** The unity between us was so strong, that there was no need to speak, because we seemed to be

on the same wavelength. Then all of a sudden, Chiara opened her eyes and said to me, **"Mom, do you know what I'm doing?" "No," I told her. "I was singing."** "Really? What were you singing?"



"I was singing, 'Here I am, Jesus, today too before you, totally renewed just like you want me to be.' And you, Mom, what were you doing?" **"I was singing, too!"** "And what were you singing?" "The song, 'I need to find you in my heart.'" She never told us when she was in pain - she was always peaceful. I noticed that every once in a while she would turn and look at **the picture of Jesus Forsaken.** One, two, three, even four times. Once I asked, "Chiara, are you in a lot of pain?" She shrugged her shoulders, and I knew she didn't want to say. That's when she told me, **"You know, Mom, Jesus is cleaning me with bleach,** and bleach burns, but it removes all the dark spots, so when I leave for heaven, I will be as white as snow. By the way, could you please put the picture of Jesus Forsaken where I can see it better?" And I noticed that when Chiara looked for the picture of Jesus Forsaken, it was because she was suffering a lot and asking him for help. That image gave her the strength to overcome the suffering with joy. On another occasion, after her dad had spent the night by her bedside, I came to her in the morning and she told, "You know, Mom, **I saw a little star in the sky last night.** It was more beautiful than I had ever seen it before. It was so special, so luminous, that I tried to watch it from the window, but it was too bright. I couldn't keep looking at it." I told her, "That little star was you!" But she just shrugged her shoulders, as if to say "To be a star, you have to be *really...*" Then the next morning, I asked her, "So, did you see the little star again?" She was a little sad and said, "No, it wasn't there."

“Oh well,” I said, “perhaps there was a cloud or the moon that covered it up and it couldn’t be seen.” As I said, she said very few words, but when she did, she immediately set you straight. “No,” she said, “**perhaps I haven’t lived 100% today** and that’s why the little star didn’t show itself.” When she answered you like this, you couldn’t add anything, because she always put you back in the truth. Once I told her, “In a month, a week, whenever you pass, when Jesus will come to take you, tell us what we should do, because your father and I will be lost.” In her great simplicity, she looked at me and said, “Mom, **just follow God** and you will have done everything! Do all those small things, Mom. **Don’t worry about the big things, because Jesus does those.** Just do those small things every day.”

Chiara Luce’s dad, Ruggero: It’s hard to put into words the moments we lived together because it was so amazing. Sometimes I would think, “This is impossible!” After she died we never even cried for her. Sure, we had some tears, but we never cried desperately. **I felt Jesus always holding me by the hand,** like someone always helping me, always. It was a grace, and perhaps it was something that Chiara Luce obtained for us, because I don’t think I would have been capable of anything like this.

Sometimes I would see the difficulties or get upset over something quite small. So I would ask Chiara, “Tell me! How do you make it to live like this?” **“You have to live the present moment,** Dad! You’ve heard that so many times.” And I would answer her, “Yes, you’re right. I’ll try, but...” “Here’s what you do: take a minute and divide it in four, and you offer what you have – a suffering, whatever it is.” “Okay, I can try to do that.” “But if you say, ‘I have a toothache, so I offer it to you,’ you have to do it with all your heart, not just waiting for it to go away – that’s not worth anything. **You have to give everything to Jesus with your heart.**” I’d try, and sometimes I’d make it. Sometimes I wouldn’t. She instead got it right on. I think living the present moment was her strength.

At times, I think of Chiara, and I think of her with Jesus. I believe she followed his way, and it’s almost impossible to think she made it to go to the end, but she did it with Jesus, and with Jesus everything is possible!

Maria Teresa: On Valentine’s Day, Chiara Luce told me, “Mom, make reservations for you and Dad to **go out to dinner.**” I told her that it would be impossible to get reservations at this point and that I wouldn’t want to leave her. She was very strong-willed, so she said, “Mom, give me the phone book.” And **she called all the restaurants** until she found a place for us to have dinner. Then she told us, “Don’t come back till midnight! Look at each other in the eyes and tell each other, ‘I love you.’ **Because before I came along, there were the two of you!**”



A DREAM COME TRUE!

Projects dedicated to Chiara Luce in Benin

As we know, Chiara Luce really loved the children of Africa and would have liked to go there and work when she grew up. She sent all her money to a missionary working in Benin and now **two projects there have been named after her!**

One is a **health clinic** that seemed impossible to build because of the lack of water. Then after digging nearly 100 feet, they hit water and were able to build a well! It was a real miracle! Now the clinic serves all the local people who would not have any medical help without it.

The other project is the "Chiara Luce Badano Center," an **orphanage** for about 20 children who have nowhere else to live. With the Sisters and some lay workers, they form a beautiful family and now they have even been able to build a school and a church – the very first church to be dedicated to the Blessed Chiara Luce!

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An Agnostic asks Chiara Luce for Help

Franz, the older brother of Chiara Luce's best friend, Chicca, is a nonbeliever. He is not sure if God exists or not, which means he is an "agnostic." He wrote a book about Chiara Luce called, "From the Rooftop Down." Here is one of his experiences:

I was driving on the expressway to Rome and a huge thunderstorm seemed to be following me. The road wound through the mountains and it was dangerous, especially when the big trucks would pass me at high speed and spray water all over my windshield and at times make the car slide on the road. **I was scared** and with a little irony in my voice, I said, **"OK, my friend, let's see what you can do!** I need to get home safely..." And then an amazing thing happened!

It was like a dream because the trucks started passing me *only* when we were in the tunnels, so I didn't get sprayed and the road was dry. First I thought to myself, **"It's**



just a coincidence!" But then it kept happening over and over, for many miles. Then, since I am so skeptical (as all agnostics are!), I told her, "Well, while you are at it, can't you just stop the rain?" But instead the rain was still heavy all the way to Rome. I had a lot of things to deliver for my job, as well as the precious papers of her beatification, which my sister had told me to be very careful with. So, like a joke, I told Chiara Luce, "See what you can do, because it would be great if these papers don't get soaked!" **Just as I pulled into the parking place to deliver her papers, the rain stopped completely!** But when I came out it started pouring again and by the time I did all my other deliveries, I was soaking wet! It made me think of an old saying, **"Don't joke with the saints!"** That's certainly true!

(Taken from his book, entitled "Dai Tetti in Giu", pp. 120-121.



The increasing means of communication continuously report the very painful and serious situations in the Church today. In an interview with Fr. Tonino and Fr. Wolfgang at the Focolare's International Priests' Center in Rome, we discussed how the abuse scandal counteracts the message of the Church and taints its image, and how we as gen can foster forgiveness and justice.

The Church Today

In light of the Ideal of unity, what should we think about the painful situation that the Church is living now?

We are called to be a “presence” of Mary in today’s society. After Jesus died and the apostles felt that deep loss, Mary helped them recognize the signs of the Risen Christ even in the midst of all that confusion and disappointment. At the foot of the cross, she had shared the cry of Jesus, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” In that cry Jesus took on all the anguish of humanity. As with every suffering, we need to embrace what is happening in the Church now as our own suffering, because we *are* the Church. We can’t look at it from the outside and judge it!

So much has been reported on the news. What exactly is happening?

First of all, there are persons in the Church who have committed intolerable sins. And these actions of a few now threaten the credibility of the whole Church. Jesus was very strict with those who commit scandalous sins. He says, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe (in me) to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea” (Mk 9:42).

At the same time, there is the media that is often “driven” by people who have an agenda perhaps to harm the church for economic or political reasons. For example, a well-known German scientist who is not a believer agrees that the Pope is being particularly targeted. (...)

The media often twists the facts about this situation. Cases from years ago are reported as “breaking news,” giving the impression that they just happened now. Or sometimes cases from another part of the world are reported as if they happened locally. As a result, readers and viewers lose perspective on time and space, and a situation that may in fact be diminishing appears to be increasing.



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Certainly, even a small number of abuse cases would already be too much, but the proportion is very limited considering the 400,000 priests throughout the world – and that’s without counting all those priests who have died, giving their lives to work in difficult or dangerous places.

How should we respond to friends who are really troubled by these accusations and who stand firm in their position against the Church?

Our typical style is that of loving, just as Jesus Forsaken and Mary loved.

We don’t have the answers, so we shouldn’t worry about defending the Church. Rather, we should listen. If they want us to say something, we should give our opinion and also speak about the life and work of so many Christians and priests who live the Gospel. In other words, it can be an important moment to be protagonists, even in a small way, in the history of humankind and the Church.

In an interview with a journalist on his flight to Portugal, Pope Benedict stated his joy in going to pray at a place where the Virgin Mary appeared to three children.

In fact, at Fatima, one can see that “precisely from the young comes a new strength in faith that is not limited to the young but rather has a message for the entire world throughout all of history.” To the three young shepherds of Fatima, the Virgin Mary had entrusted the prophecy that the Church would suffer through the Pope’s own suffering. In addition to the assassination attempts against Pope John Paul II foreseen in the message at Fatima, the Pope explained that there were truths revealed about the sufferings that the Church would undergo in the future. “What we can deduce from that message today,” the Pope said, “is that the attacks against the Pope and the Church are not only external, but the sufferings of the Church come from within it, from the sins that exist within the Church. It had been said that this would happen, but today, we see it in a frightening way... The Church therefore has a profound need to re-learn penance, to accept purification. On one hand, the Church needs to learn forgiveness, but also the need for justice. Forgiveness does not substitute justice.”

“But the Lord is stronger than evil,” the Pope concluded, “and the Virgin Mary is for us the visible guarantee. God’s goodness is always history’s last word.”



Everything is possible! *If God is with us, one city is too little. We want to aim at the united world, at universal brotherhood. We need you too! Your contribution is important to help us reach our goal. Let's give everything, all day long, so we won't have to be sorry for having loved too little.*

Everything is possible. If we believe that God loves us, every impossibility becomes possible, even the fact that one day our planet can live in peace. Yes, everything is possible. If we believe and hope and ask with all our heart, the world will move towards unity – unity among generations, unity among social classes, unity among races and countries, and unity among Christians who have been divided for centuries.

Chiara

JUNIOR MAYOR

When I heard about the elections of a junior mayor in my city, I decided to run as a candidate. I was enthusiastic

about the idea of doing something that could bear witness to the ideal of a united world.

Right away, a group of friends and I came together and formed the "Together for the Future" political party. We created a program, a logo, and off we went to start our campaign. There were nine of us candidates but I wasn't afraid, because my sole objective wasn't that of winning, but of giving my contribution on behalf of my school. I was sure that in the end, more than winning the election, I would learn a lot about the world of politics, through my desire to see Jesus in everyone, including my opponents. Above all, I wanted to build unity with my friends, some of whom are non-believers.

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Finally, Election Day came, but my thoughts were not on the votes I would get, because I was so happy to see all the candidates having a great time. There was an atmosphere so different from what we usually see!

Two of us obtained the majority of the votes, and I even got five votes more than the other candidate. I was happy, because I had moved to this city only a year ago! Since the difference was so small, we had a second election, which my opponent won. Even though it may sound strange, I was happy for him. The competition had been friendly, without putting anyone down, and we had helped one another throughout the campaign and exchanged helpful ideas during the meetings. In the end, I was elected the president of the junior council.

Now both parties are collaborating with each other and no one points out the differences between us. Rather we work together to bring about important changes for our school. And after having met with the real mayor, we saw how our ideas could help improve the city! In fact, our suggestion for a recycling project was taken into consideration by the city council and has now been enacted. I realize every day that by living the Ideal we can bring God and his Love to many people, including those who don't know him yet. It's always possible to live for unity, even with those who think differently from me! **Simona from Italy**

Sports Weekend scores a win in Ohio!

"I wish it was every day. I would come!" wrote 11-year-old August after participating in the 13th annual Sports Weekend on September 25 in Delaware, Ohio.

Organized by the Midwest Young for Unity (YFU), the Sports Weekend brought together more than 80 participants from across Ohio and from as far away as Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. Live music filled St. Mary's hall as participants registered and picked up a colored bandana with the event's logo. A short presentation on the YFU opened the morning, followed by the experiences of youth on building peace at school and with friends.

Lunchtime gave the newly formed teams a chance for members to get to know one another better and build team unity. Then, it was time for sports! While playing basketball, soccer, pipeline, obstacle course and human bridge, kids were challenged to live the 6 rules of the Sports4Peace program:

Play hard. Do your best!
Play fair! Hang in there!
Take care of yourself and others!
Celebrate! Make a difference!

In 2004 alone, more than 20,000 kids in Austria participated in the Sports4Peace program, developed by the local Focolare community to promote the Golden Rule. Sports4Peace has since become a model for similar initiatives in Argentina and different European countries to underline the fact that sports can be an instrument to build peace instead of just competing. A parishioner at St. Mary's, 12-year-old Alex, said he liked the "hang in there" point. "It helps me learn never to quit on anything," he said.

The afternoon continued with a video presentation on Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, the 18-year-old Italian youth of the Focolare, whose process for beatification occurred the very same day in Rome, Italy. Named by Pope Benedict as a model of sanctity for youth today, Chiara Luce, an athlete herself, is hailed for her heroic measure of love for God and neighbor throughout her battle with bone cancer. After having been asked if she learned anything new today, 14-year-old Melanie from St. Mary's answered, "Yes. To help others and be supportive and see Jesus in everyone."

Lauryn said she "learned to work as a team," while Jarryn, 9, from Michigan stated that he learned "that working together and honesty in sports or activities are important."

The excitement to meet again for future Young for Unity events was felt among all. When asked whether she'd like to be invited to the next YFU event, 9-year-old Rachel wrote, "Definitely, positively, yes!" And she wasn't alone. "When is the next one?!" was heard as parents took their children home.

13-year-old Chicagoan, Daniel concluded, "I liked the point 'Do your best' because we should do our best not only in sports but in everything we do. Of course, it was also a great way to have fun, meet new people and build unity."

