



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO MS CHIARA LUBICH
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH
OF THE "WORK OF MARY" (FOCOLARE MOVEMENT)**

Ms. Chiara Lubich

*Foundress of the Focolare Movement*¹. Next 7 December, Vigil of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Focolare Movement will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of its birth. On this occasion I am pleased to extend to you the expression of my heartfelt congratulations and my spiritual closeness to your large spiritual Family, already spread throughout many parts of the world. In particular, I gratefully wish to greet you, the Foundress. Indeed, the "Work of Mary" was born with the special consecration to God that you made in Trento, exactly at the end of 1943; since then, it has continued growing, all directed to the love of God and to the service of unity in the Church and in the world.² In unison with the Magisterium of the Church - I think especially of the Second Vatican Council and the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* of my venerable predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI - the members of the Focolare Movement have become apostles of dialogue, the privileged way to promote unity: dialogue within the Church, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, dialogue with non-believers. How many rapid and disturbing social changes have marked the life of the world in these 60 years? Humanity has become ever more interdependent and, pursuing fleeting pleasures, has at times lost its own ideal values. Now, it risks finding itself almost "without a soul"; that is, without the essential unifying principle of its every project and activity. I think, in particular, of the European Continent, which counts 2,000 years of Christian tradition. At the beginning of a new millennium, the necessity of a renewed effort on the part of believers to respond to the challenge of the new evangelization is urgently required. In this vision an important role is entrusted to Ecclesial Movements; among them, the Focolare Movement holds a prominent position. Faithful to the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit, the new Ecclesial Movements are a precious gift for the Church, who encourages and invites them to carry out their prophetic action under the guidance of the Pastors for the edification of the entire People of God.³ And so, joining in mutual thanksgiving to God for the great things fulfilled by him in these 60 years, I entrust to the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy the members of the "Work of Mary" and their numerous activities. I encourage all to follow Christ faithfully and to embrace the mystery of the Cross with him, cooperating in the salvation of the world with the gift of one's own existence.

With these sentiments, I cordially send to you, to your collaborators and to the entire Focolare Movement my affectionate Blessing. *From the Vatican, 4 December 2003***JOHN PAUL II**
