

fraternity is proposed to all people in its universal human dimension, also outside of any religious affiliation.

Love of All Loves

Politics and Fraternity in the Charismatic Vision of Chiara Lubich

Antonio Maria Baggio
Sophia University Institute

Chiara Lubich gave a fundamental contribution to the rediscovery of fraternity, particularly during the last years of her public engagement. The present article tries to understand the original meaning that Chiara gave to fraternity. Her interpretation is rooted within the Trinitarian reality and, particularly, in Jesus forsaken; fraternity is deeply linked with the mystical experience of '49. There is a "logic" of fraternity, that rises from the Trinitarian "logic." As a matter of fact, on one side we may fully understand her conception of fraternity only in the religious background of the Christian faith. On the other side, Chiara's thought on fraternity grew in the context of the new social Movements she was founding and developing, particularly the Movement for Unity in Politics. Within this Movement's perspective,

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Political reality remains important throughout the reflections of Chiara Lubich. This can be seen in her writings during all periods of her life, both in her private correspondence and in a large number of unpublished notes, up to the great speeches on public occasions given during the last years of her life, especially between 1996 and 2004.

It is a path characterized by various aspects. On the one hand, one cannot speak of her "political thought" in the normal sense of the expression. Chiara does not produce theories or specific political programs. She does not use the technical language of politics. On the other hand, she does address the most important issues of politics and has spoken in such institutions as parliaments and government chambers. Even if her language is full of spirituality and rich with explicit religious references, she is still able to communicate beyond all confessional boundaries. There seems to be originality in the approach which she brings to political reality. It departs, however, from the usual schemes and therefore requires a little effort to grasp its essence.

First, it is important to note the context within which her thought arises, that of the Second World War. War represents the failure of politics and a radical challenge to the cultures and humanism that had preceded it and yet was not able to prevent it. War does not only destroy homes, lives, personal plans, but also collective certainties and great common cultural references. All over the world, but particularly in Europe, the violence of totalitarianism raised questions about the legacy of traditions and about

the meaning of the West. This was a time of very serious challenges to thought; and the years of the war saw the publication of relevant philosophical and political reflections that attempted to lay the foundations for the construction of a new society. Within this general rethinking, a burst of feminine genius stands out across the continent and illuminates humanity, carrying out an intellectual and existential search with a radicality proportionate to the evil that caused it. Among other examples we could list: Edith Stein, who fulfilled her fidelity to the truth with the ultimate sacrifice in Auschwitz on August 9, 1942, and Simone Weil, who died on August 28, 1943 of exhaustion while working for the French Resistance in England. It was also during those years—in September 1946—that a new vocation matured for an Albanian nun named Maria Teresa, making her Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

At the Root of Political Thought:

The Tradition of Relational Definitions and Fraternity

It is in the context of such sufferings and amidst such debris that Chiara's search blossoms, in the awareness of the collapse of the theories and the vanity of tired words. An adventure without expectations begins, relying exclusively on the words of the Gospels. For Chiara these were the only words capable of passing the test of those difficult times. Chiara, speaking about those days during which her city of Trent was being heavily bombed, explains:

We had aimed at the poorest areas of Trent, in the effort to kindle the love the Gospel speaks of there, looking after the needy with the help of those who were better off. By doing so, we hoped to bring about equality in fraternity in the city. This activity won the esteem of the local politicians and aroused their desire to do likewise on a larger scale.

Consequently, instead of a vicious circle, mutual love created a virtuous circle which re-established trust, re-opened hope and recomposed the torn personal and civil bonds. In a context of war-caused lawlessness, we started out again from love—the law of laws, the supreme value, the principle and synthesis of all values. This love, capable of re-building community, brought about unity among citizens which is the essential premise of any communal life.¹

What Chiara describes here is a humanism that reconstructs people and the city, that does not consciously establish political goals for itself, but does fulfill them. Chiara's reflection is not political thought in the ordinary sense, but may be defined as a *charismatic reflection on the city*, on the *polis*. It is drawn from a more profound level than common political thought. It is a "seeing" and a "thinking" that highlights the radical relationship from which *different political thoughts* may be inspired. It is a complete humanism, whose political dimension is only one expression. We note that in the destruction of war, *there was no polis*, in the sense that the specific dimensions of citizenship had degenerated. The humanism triggered by Chiara rebuilds it. It is a combination of constructive thought and the action of the city. Human relationships are rewoven, and this is the premise for the re-establishment of laws and civic virtues; it is the very foundation of citizenship, the unitary condition of any subsequent politics.

Chiara's brief description regarding the action of the first *foelarine* in the city of Trent comes from a talk she gave on June 9, 2000, on the occasion of the first congress of the Movement for

1. Chiara Lubich, "Towards a Politics of Communion," *address to the Italian Parliament at Palazzo San Macuto*, Rome, December 15, 2000. (Our translation.)

Unity in Politics. In explaining this action, Chiara brings together some basic elements: (1) the free decision of the *focolarine* to love; (2) favoring the least who were helped with the goods of the more well-to-do, thus creating bonds of fraternity between the two groups; (3) and thus achieving equality through fraternity. For Chiara, from the very beginning in 1943, these three elements—liberty, equality, fraternity—create the conditions of political life.

In this inaugural talk, Chiara rereads the history of the Focolare Movement and its relationship with politics from the perspective of fraternity, which is proposed as the specific characteristic of the new political Movement for Unity in Politics. So she says:

What is the specific characteristic of the Movement for Unity in Politics? We know that the redemption brought about by Jesus on the cross transforms from within all human bonds, imbuing them with divine love and making us all brothers and sisters. This has profound meaning for our Movement. If we consider that the great political plan of modernity is summarized in the motto of the French Revolution: “liberty, equality, fraternity.” While the first two principles have been partially achieved in recent centuries, despite numerous formal declarations, fraternity has been all but forgotten in the political arena. Instead, it is precisely *fraternity* that can be considered as *what is most specific in our Movement*. What is more, by living out fraternity, freedom and equality acquire new meaning and find greater fulfillment.²

2. Chiara Lubich, “The Movement for Unity and a Politics of Communion,” *address to the International Conference of the Movement of Unity in Politics*, Castelgandolfo, June 9, 2000. See Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2007), 244.

In fact, at that time, to speak of fraternity in the political world, whether at the level of action or in academic reflection, was to risk being misunderstood or mocked. This was and remains a sign of the deep crisis that theoretical and practical politics is going through. We see it when politicians limit their action to the pursuit of the inclinations of the electorate rather than proposing serious and far-reaching programs. We see it when political problems are transformed into issues of law enforcement and public order. We see it when reliance on weapons is preferred over dealing with the real causes of domestic and international injustice. We see it when politics becomes the passive executor of great economic interests and things get out of hand. In each of these cases, politics betrays itself and is reduced to something else, because it no longer knows what it is.

Chiara’s approach to politics gives an original contribution within the great tradition of relational definitions of politics, based on the interpretation of the nature of the bond of citizenship starting from the very foundations of political discourse. Aristotle gave rise to this rich and complex tradition, defining the relationship between citizens as friendship based on “utility,” where utility is understood as the common good.³ Aristotle’s notion of the common good does not consist only of the availability of material goods, infrastructure, and institutions. It is characterized by a common desire to create the conditions for a happy life, based on the pursuit of what is rational and good. Political friendship is therefore a relationship that requires civic virtues and the ability of each person to set aside his or her private interests in order to attain a good that can be achieved only when pursued together with

3. Aristotele, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 6, 1167a.

the others. He also provides other definitions of politics,⁴ but the relational type definitions to which he gave rise are genetic and descriptive, showing on what anthropological bases the political society is formed.

This tradition has provided essential interpretative tools that have served throughout the history of political thought. The relational dimension is decisive, for example, in the political philosophy of Augustine. As is well known, he describes the life of two cities where the relationship among the citizens of one city is very different from the relationship among the citizens of the other. There are two radically different forms of citizenship: the citizenship of the city of God, where citizens are united by social and agapic-love, by the will to do good for each other; and the citizens of the earthly city, characterized by a private and self-love.⁵ Throughout history, the two cities are mixed together and it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. In the same parliament we can meet both types of citizens: those who have this social and agapic-love and therefore contribute to the common good, and those who have private and self-love, and whose political activity is really carried out for their own benefit.⁶ But according to Augustine, only social love is able to establish true citizenship. The relationship based on private interests is not political; and without social-love there is no real city, there is no *polis*, there is no politics.

Passing on to the modern age, according to Thomas Hobbes the political society is built through a contract in which each person gives up all his or her rights in order to give life to a political institution wherein power is absolute—the Leviathan—precisely to protect each person from the aggressiveness of others. For

Hobbes, the essence of human relationality is expressed in aggressiveness, whether this is caused by desire for profit, by the pursuit of personal safety or of glory. In any case, the outcome is destructive and generates a permanent insecurity and fear among citizens for their own lives. The institutions born from such a vision reflect it: humans are subjects rather than citizens.⁷

John Locke adopted a different anthropological vision on the basis of a contract giving rise to political society. Certainly, for Locke there are also other reasons that require the setting up of a political society, especially the element of the defense of property. But even before coming together politically, human beings are linked in society and acknowledge an obligation of mutual love.⁸ Locke grasps this social vision of human nature from the Bible, of which he was a passionate reader, and from the reflections of the great Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, who considered mutual love not only as a commandment of the gospel, but as a duty that human beings can understand based on natural intelligence.⁹ For this reason, according to Locke, human beings already live socially before establishing the political contract. The government that emerges from such an anthropological setting must be based on laws and consensus. In fact, it is the precursor of the modern state of law.¹⁰

We see then that focusing on the anthropological and relational dimension of citizenship, and using the vocabulary of sociality and love, or their opposites, is not at all improper, but is part

4. *Ibid.*, 1, 1094 a–b.

5. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV, 7, 2.

6. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 11, 16, 20.

7. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I, XIII.

8. John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government*, II, 5.

9. Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book One*, ed., A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 80.

10. Locke, II, 5.

of a significant tradition in the history of political thought. Losing it, giving up this kind of language, would mean losing some essential contents of human history. For her part, Chiara recovers this tradition, bringing to light a historical path on which to set one's own thoughts, reinterpreting tradition in order to continue building it.

The Love of All Loves

The relationship of love, the ways to build it and the difficulties it encounters, has great significance in Chiara's reflection on politics. It makes sense that she should try to communicate this fundamental "resource" to those who engage in politics so as to lead them to the source of love itself. For Chiara, this source is God; it is in Christ that it is fully revealed to human beings. Chiara explains: "Jesus is *the Man*, the perfect Man who sums up in his person all men and women and every truth and drive that they may feel, in order to be raised to their rightful place."¹¹ But it is not the omnipotent Jesus the miracle worker, or the Jesus who attracts and feeds the crowd, that she feels is closest to the tasks of politicians. For Chiara the greatest love is manifested in Jesus in his abandonment.

In her address at the first congress of the Movement for Unity in Politics,¹² she proposes Jesus forsaken as the model of a politician because he is the one who embraces all divisions, defeats, and separations present in humanity; and he brings them all back to unity with God. Chiara explains that the cry of Jesus forsaken "is the most beautiful Song, because the Love that he gives us is God: his suffering is divine and therefore God is his Love."¹³ Politics

11. Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 240.

12. *Ibid.*, 242.

13. Chiara Lubich, *Unpublished Writings*, July, 24, 1949.

is also suffering that is transformed into love. It is the choice to devote ourselves to meet the needs of others, to fulfill the rights of human beings. If it were just suffering, it would only turn into resignation or hatred, which are two forms of war: against ourselves or against others. But if suffering is transformed into love, politics takes the place of war, and the united city arises: "Jesus forsaken is the greatest Love, the Love of all loves . . . because he is Unity."¹⁴

Speaking to a few hundred mayors and administrators of European cities gathered in Innsbruck in 2000, Chiara goes more into this important message. Chiara is realistic in her assessment of the difficulties, conflicts, and tragedies that politics must face and overcome. Therefore, on the one hand, she proposes Jesus forsaken as a model who was able to go beyond conflict, remaining faithful to his duty up to the ultimate sacrifice entrusting himself to the Father. On the other hand, and precisely for this reason, she sees political love not as a sentiment, or a generic love that diverts attention from cruel life, and not even as an ethical reminder that judges the good and evil without considering effective action. Rather it is the specific way in which politics addresses and solves the problems of society. We can understand this better if we follow Chiara along two important pathways.

The first concerns the role of Mary. If Jesus is the model of the politician, for Chiara, Mary is the one who must lead the political movement. She writes:

It is Mary who sings: "The Mighty One has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49). In her God has deposited his plan for humanity. In her he reveals his mercy for humankind, destroys the false projects of the proud, casts down the

14. *Ibid.*

powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly, reestablishes justice and redistributes riches. Who, then, is more a politician than Mary? The task of the Movement for Unity in Politics is to contribute toward fulfilling in human history what Mary announces as already accomplished in herself.¹⁵

For Chiara, Mary's Magnificat is the summary of the program of the Movement; every word of Mary corresponds to a violated right and a concrete political action to be taken. But Chiara, emphasizing what has "already" been accomplished in Mary, indicates a precise methodology to the Movement: before carrying out something outside, we must have already achieved among us what we want to build for everyone. Mary is the antidote to all ideology.

The second way of understanding the specificity of the political action proposed by Chiara is to carefully examine the words: "Love of all loves." This phrase is often repeated, but not always understood. It is the expression that tradition attributes to Bernard of Clairvaux, to designate the Eucharist,¹⁶ understood as the

15. Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 244.

16. The expression "amor amorum" referring to the Eucharist can be found in two texts. Regarding the inauthenticity of the first text, whose author is called Ps. Bernardus, *Sermo de excellentia SS. Sacramenti et dignitate sacerdotum*, n. 10: PL 184, col. 987, we were advised by the editor: "Non est S. Bernardi, sed cuiusdam non sacerdotis, ut ex num. 3, 5 et 16 colligitur," ivi, col. 981. The second text, *De coena Domini alius sermo: Opera S. Bernardi*, Basileae 1552, col. 188, does not even exist in the Patrology of Migne. The erroneous attribution can be explained by the existence of a genuine sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux, entitled *In Coena Domini Sermo de baptismo, sacramento altaris, et ablutione pedum* (PL 183), with which the other two texts, of "unknown author," are commonly confused. The phrase "love of loves" in reference to the Eucharist is attributed to Bernard by many eminent authors such as Francis de Sales (cf. Letter to Chantal cited by P. G. Galizia, *La vita di S. Francesco de Sales: Vesovo e principe di Genova, Fondatore dell'ordine della Visitazione*, Venezia, 1762, 367) and Alfonso Maria de Liguori, *La vera sposa di Gesù Cristo* (1760–1761), XVIII, 235, in *Opere ascetiche*, Voll.

sacrament which expresses Christ's sacrifice and thus the apex of his love. The phrase enters the tradition of ecclesial thought and perception and remains there up until today.¹⁷ For Chiara, the Love of all loves becomes the Love that embraces suffering and disunity, overcoming them. It therefore retains its Eucharistic meaning and effectiveness; but inasmuch as it is political love, it actively penetrates history laicly exercising what is typical of Eucharistic love. Chiara explains:

In fact, politics seen as love creates and preserves those conditions that allow all other types of love to flourish: the love of young people who want to get married and who need a house and employment; the love of those who want to study and who need schools and books; the love of those who run their own business and who need roads and railways, clear and reliable laws. . . . Thus, politics is the love of all loves, gathering the resources of people and groups into the unity of a common design so as to provide the means for each one to fulfill in complete freedom his or her specific vocation.

But it also encourages people to co-operate, bringing together needs and resources, questions and answers, instilling

XIV–XV. Rome: CSSR, 1935; available in I Edizione IntraText CT, Copyright Eulogios 2007, www.intratext.com; *Practica di amor Gesù Cristo* (1768), in *Opere ascetiche*, Vol. I, 1–243, CSSR, Roma 1933, available in I Edizione IntraText CT, Copyright Eulogios 2007, www.intratext.com; up to the one closest to us by Annibale Maria di Francia, *A Gesù diletto dei cuor* (1899); in *Dattiloscritti*, vol. 54, 27; on the official website www.difranca.net. Such authoritative precedents were taught in many homilies, especially on Holy Thursday where reference to Bernard is usual.

17. It is enough to cite the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission*, Rome, February 22, 2007, where the Eucharist is defined as the "sacrament of love."

mutual trust among all. Politics can be compared to the stem of a flower, which supports and nourishes the fresh unfolding of the petals of the community.¹⁸

Here we encounter one of the innovative aspects of the charisma of unity: Chiara shares what Bernard said of the Eucharist, but she says the same for politics. For her, politics understood as action and thought of authentic love has similar value to the Eucharist. It is the exercise of the total and splendid priesthood of humanity that loves, of the politician who, in the daily practice of his political profession, offers himself as a sacrifice.¹⁹ On several occasions, in fact, Chiara recalled some examples of politicians who became saints not “in spite of” politics, but through it, among whom there are Robert Schuman, Iginio Giordani, and Alcide De Gasperi.

The Movement for Unity in Politics

These particular characteristics of the charisma of unity have fascinated politicians from the very beginning. It shows Christian life in its fullness, in all of its aspects, a Christian life which does not just descend from the exercise of spiritual life, when one walks out of the focolare or a church to enter the public squares or parliament. From the beginning of the Movement, there have been

politicians who experienced, in a small measure through their contact with the Movement, the society they would have wanted to build through their public action. The first among these was Iginio Giordani, who Chiara considered as a co-founder of the

Movement. Giordani’s importance extends beyond the political dimension alone and, together with Pasquale Foresi, takes in all the aspects of the Focolare Movement’s social, cultural, and historical commitments. But since he had a significant political experience, starting from the *Italian’s People’s Party (Partito Popolare Italiano)* suppressed by Fascism, and later with the *Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana)* after the Second World War, Giordani helped to nourish Chiara’s interest in this aspect and drew various politicians into the Movement. Over the course of decades, they found various positions within the Focolare Movement or they collaborated with it,²⁰ up until the decisive moment when on March 2, 1996 in Naples, Chiara founded the Movement for Unity in Politics.²¹ There she said that she understood this movement as the result of a long journey: “We always gave special attention to the political world because it offered us the possibility to love our neighbor with much greater charity: from interpersonal love to a greater love towards the *polis*. Many of our people have been involved in this, and often in positions of responsibility.”²²

18. Chiara Lubich, “A United Europe for a United World,” address to *One Thousand Cities for Europe*, a conference for European mayors, Innsbruck, Austria, November, 9, 2001: *Essential Writings*, 254–255.

19. A few years after this talk of Chiara Lubich, Benedict XVI, in the above cited *Post-Synodal Exhortation*, would define the “worship pleasing to God” as “Eucharistic consistency”—which is not to be understood only as a private worship—offered by the commitment of politicians in bearing witness to essential human values such political action as specified in the *Exhortation*: “there is an objective connection here with the Eucharist,” no. 83.

20. For further information on the development of this story, in addition to where Chiara Lubich mentions it in “The Movement for Unity in Politics,” please refer to the study by Tommaso Sorigi, “La città dell’uomo: L’agire e pensare politico in Chiara Lubich,” *Nuova Umànità* XXII (2000): 551–601.

21. In the beginning it was called “Movement for Unity.” Later the name was corrected by Chiara herself, explaining that it was a “political” movement, whereas the original name seemed more appropriate for the entire Focolare Movement.

22. Lubich, “The Movement for Unity in Politics,” 262.

The membership of the Movement for Unity in Politics includes parliamentarians, mayors, administrators, diplomats, employees, active citizens, in brief, people committed in many different positions and aspects of political life. Chiara explains “Through their profession and social commitments, members of the Focolare Movement are present in political life, together with many others who know the Ideal of unity and live it, without necessarily belonging to the Focolare.”²³ This Movement, therefore, is not a component within the Focolare Movement, but it is a result of the overflowing of the charisma of unity outside the structures of the Movement. It is, to use one of Chiara’s expressions, an “inundation” which is not left to itself, but assumes the form of a true and proper new Movement endowed with its own structure and culture. Chiara affirms:

The Movement for Unity in Politics brings with it a new political culture. But its vision of politics does not give rise to a new party. Instead, *it changes the method of political activity*. While remaining faithful to one’s own genuine ideals, the politician of unity loves everyone, as we said, and therefore in every circumstance searches for what unites.

Today we would like to present a vision of politics perhaps as it has never before been conceived. We would like to give life—forgive my boldness—to a *politics of Jesus*, as he considers it and where he acts through each of us, wherever we are: in national and regional governments, in town councils, in political parties, in various civic and political groups, in government coalitions and in opposition. This unity lived

among us, then, must be brought into our political parties, among the parties, into the various political institutions and into every sphere of public life as well as into the relationships among nations. Then people of all nations will be able to rise above their borders and look beyond, loving the others’ country as their own. The presence of Jesus will become a reality also among peoples and states, making humanity one universal family.²⁴

It would be worth looking further into these words of Chiara. First of all, faced with the many aspects of crisis in politics, the Movement for Unity in Politics acts, with regard to individual politicians who make it up, in a way similar to how the first focolarine acted in bombed-out Trent. On the one hand, the Movement rebuilds the conditions that facilitate dialogue, trust, mutual recognition, and respect for the diversity among those involved in politics. It draws politicians beyond their institutional buildings and parties, and offers them a free space in which to cultivate relationships of fraternity, through which each person can rediscover his or her own original political vocation and the best reasons for their own commitment. In this way politicians recover the ability to speak to one another of their differences, without covering up disagreements and possible conflicts, but explaining and clarifying what is positive and constructive in their thought. On the other hand, as Chiara explains, politicians can bring what they have experienced within the Movement for Unity in Politics back into their institutions and parties, into their activities. In this way the Movement can inspire new projects carried out by its members,

23. Ibid., 243.

24. Ibid.

and sometimes can become the direct promoter of political initiatives of civil, cultural, formative value devoted to the common good. The Movement for Unity in Politics is therefore not an ecclesial nor institutional subject. It is not a party. Its members however operate and enter into each of these areas. But the Movement as such is a political entity that lives in society, that develops the political dimension of society, which aims at the growth of fraternity understood as the foundation of the bond of citizenship, and at developing all that political theory and practice entail.

Secondly, how are we to understand Chiara's affirmation that the Movement for Unity in Politics wishes to help bring to life "a politics of Jesus," while at the same time remaining a lay reality, open to persons of varying religions and convictions? We can understand Chiara's idea by observing that in her thought there is a constant connection—based on Jesus forsaken—between heaven and earth. In an unpublished note of 1949, Chiara writes: "In fact, whoever lives Jesus Forsaken lives the gospel and has the hundredfold which is the earthly Paradise down here and eternal life which is the heavenly Paradise up there."²⁵ Commenting on this thought during a session of the Abba School several years ago, Chiara explained:

I think that, if everyone lived the gospel, the "earthly paradise" would be a reality: the question of the poor would be solved, in the whole world. We should keep this in mind and try to apply this, for example, in politics. But we need to put the gospel as its basis, like the basis of all the other sciences.²⁶

25. Chiara Lubich, Unpublished Writings, July 24, 1949.

26. Chiara Lubich, Note to the Writing of July 24, 1949.

With this, Chiara by no means was thinking of a direct application of religious language or ideas to political realities: there are no fundamentalist leanings in her thought. She continued:

It's in fact true that the solution to every problem is found in the gospel. But it's also true that, once the solution is understood in the light of the gospel, the sciences are the ones that must translate it into adequate knowledge and norms of life for the various eras and cultures.²⁷

Inasmuch as the Movement for Unity in Politics is a lay movement expressing itself with the languages of the sciences and of human experience and acting in the social and public arena, it carries out, according to Chiara, precisely that mediation through which the gospel lives in society and in politics, without implying a confessional bond. The root that nourishes this vision for Chiara is very deep:

At times there is a tendency to think that the Gospel cannot solve every human problem but is intended to bring about the Kingdom of God understood only in a religious sense. But it is not so. It is certainly not the historical Jesus or Christ as the Head of the Mystical Body who resolves problems. Instead, it is Jesus-us, Jesus-me, Jesus-you, etc. It is Jesus in the person, in that given person—when his grace lives in that person—who builds a bridge, who opens a way, etc. Jesus is the true, most profound personality of every person. Every human being, every Christian, is, in fact, more a child of God (= another Jesus) than a child of his

27. *Ibid.*

own father. Therefore Jesus in each person has the maximum impact in all he does. Every person gives his or her particular contribution in all fields as another Christ, as a member of his Mystical Body, whether it be in science, art, politics, etc. With this the human being is a co-creator and co-redeemer of Christ. This is the continuation of the incarnation, complete incarnation which concerns every Jesus of the Mystical Body of Christ.²⁸

Therefore, all human beings are part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Every human being is capable of bringing his or her own contribution of love, even those who do not know Jesus Christ. This is why Chiara, in all of her discourses in the context of the Movement for Unity in Politics (1996–2004), never proposed that the politicians she was addressing should *belong* to one or another confession. Rather, what she proposed was a way of being human beings and, as a consequence, of living politics.

Fraternity and Politics

We have heard how in the first of her talks to the Movement for Unity in Politics, Chiara affirmed that fraternity is the characteristic of the theory and practice of the Movement itself, and she announced this as something new. While that may be true in terms of her views of politics, as we have seen it is something that was there at the very beginning of the Focolare Movement. Chiara develops the category of fraternity in her political thought. To understand her view, one must look both at the root in the spirituality and at its development in the Movement of Unity in Politics.

28. Ibid.

To understand this notion better, we should also attend to the way in which she presents the neighbor: (1) seeing Jesus in our neighbor, (2) the fraternity lived in mutual love, and (3) the presence of Jesus among his own. These are all aspects central to the spirituality of unity that are constantly present from the very beginning in Chiara's reflections. In particularly important talks, we find expressions such as "peoples who are brothers and sisters,"²⁹ and references to "the unity of the human family."³⁰ The idea of universal fraternity (brotherhood/sisterhood), as we can see, appears as soon as Chiara raises her gaze to the worldwide dimension of human problems and relations. We are dealing here not with a generic idea of fraternity, but with a precise one that Chiara expressed many times. We will cite, for its historic and political importance, how she summarizes it in an international conference call with members of the Focolare Movement on December 18, 1989. Referring to the collapse of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe, Chiara underlined the importance of rooting all ideals in Jesus Christ: ". . . in Him, who preached a society founded upon brotherhood [fraternity] among people, such that it can even be modeled on the life of the most Holy Trinity."³¹ For Chiara, fraternity is the name which expresses the Trinitarian relationship,

29. Chiara Lubich, "Queen of the World," in *Mary, the Transparency of God*. New York: New City Press, 2003, 104. It is a talk given at Fiera di Primiero (Italy) on August 22, 1959. The term refers only to "Christian peoples," so it does not explicitly mean universal fraternity.

30. For example: Chiara Lubich, "Seeds of a New People," acceptance speech upon receiving the 1996 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education, in *New Humanity Review* 12 (2006): 5–11. "Towards a Unity of Nations and a Unity of Peoples": her address to a Symposium at the United Nations, New York, May, 28 1997.

31. "Love one another," in Chiara Lubich, *Cercando le cose di lassù* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1992), 165–169. (Our translation.)

inasmuch as human beings can participate in it. Fraternity is the Love of God that human beings can live amongst themselves. It is only due to linguistic limitations that Chiara uses the masculine expression, using “fraternity or brotherhood.” Instead, she means brotherhood and sisterhood, a relation which regards both men and women.³²

This idea and this life of fraternity always existed in the Focolare Movement. What is new then in the fraternity that Chiara proposes in the year 2000 as the “specific characteristic” of the Movement for Unity in Politics? The important moment in this regard if we follow the order the documents, can be identified in a letter that Chiara wrote on May 7, 1998 from the little city of the Focolare Movement near Sao Paolo in Brazil. She says that we need to:

raise the two realities that we have, the Movement for Unity in Politics and the Economy of Communion in society, to true and authentic political and economic movements, with all that entails: first, to possess a true philosophy, a true theoretical and practical political science, a way of being in politics, of doing politics, of looking at the world of politics; to agree among many states to make a new politics; to organize periodic meetings or conferences on politics making use of the media in order to raise awareness; to prepare new politicians . . . knowing that everything cannot but be an expression of the Ideal [of Unity], which is beneath

everything. If this will become a great political current that takes you from every side, our people who are called to such an Ideal will have no difficulty in living their “lofty” commitments as expression of a true “vocation.”³³

Two years after the foundation of the Movement for Unity in Politics, Chiara expressed the need to elevate it to an “authentic political current.” To reach this goal, she outlined a two-fold path: one in theoretical research and the other in organization. Work in both areas continues. Within the Abba School, the effort is mainly related to the dimension of political thought. It was there during a session on February 5, 2000 that “fraternity” appears for the first time in its central importance for politics. The Abba School was reading the notes of Chiara concerning the Trinity. The human person is taken within the Trinity because God, Chiara explained, sees humanity in the Word; that is, within the heart of the Trinity. She wrote: “[T]he new commandment is to love our neighbor because this is loving the innermost part of God, the Heart of God.”³⁴ From these considerations of Chiara, there emerged the idea of Love as the divine bond which takes in even the human person. Interrupting what we were reading, Chiara said: “What do we ask from the Movement for Unity in Politics? Fraternity. Fraternity is the only bond.”

Starting from this first intuition of Chiara, we continued to deepen our research. The first step as we have seen was the congress of the Movement for Unity in Politics held in June of 2000 followed by other inaugural talks by Chiara which from time to

32. We do not have this problem in some other languages. Spanish, besides the word “Fraternidad,” has “hermano” and “hermana,” from which comes “Hermandad.” German, besides the word “Brüderlichkeit” from bruder (brother), can indicate both “bruder” and “schwester” (sister), by the plural “Geschwister” from which there is “Geschwisterlichkeit” (of brothers and sisters).

33. Chiara Lubich, “Letter to the Little City of Araceli [Brazil],” May 7, 1998 (Our translation.)

34. Chiara Lubich, *Unpublished Writings*, October 26, 1949.

time opened up new dimensions of fraternity. Links have been built between scholars throughout the world who, little by little, have joined in the research in a real and truly enlarged Abba School. The first academic books were produced and other schools of thought were met bringing their own original contributions. Political thought on fraternity is such, first of all, in its fraternal methodology. It is not born exclusively within one culture or country, but has from the very beginning grown from the contribution of varying views and different ways of being brothers and sisters. This political thought is spread through books, though these books are always collaborations between more than one author. There is a collaboration of men and women authors thinking together and in different ways, according to their various disciplines and cultures. This work stems from a relational principle that defines what it means to be a human being.

As one can see from the preceding article's introductory review of the scholarship concerning fraternity, the first text of the Abba School was released in Argentina in 2006.³⁵ Before her death, Chiara could see her thought enter universities through the main door of scientific competence which she considered essential. Courses on, and chairs for, fraternity developed which could begin to educate young people who were not content with what they saw around them. Today these studies on fraternity have reached an impressive level. Let us indicate some of the main sectors of research currently underway, limiting ourselves to the realm of politics and related areas.

³⁵. Antonio M. Baggio, ed., *El principio obstinado: La fraternidad. En la política y el derecho* (Buenos Aires: Ciudad Nueva, 2006).

Study began on the roles of brothers and sisters in the original myths of various civilizations. These roles created archetypal behaviors, that is models of relationships that are transmitted to cultures and that are capable of casting light on contemporary behaviors. The philosophical aspects of fraternity are also studied, such as the history of the concept and its relation to other great principles such as liberty and equality which comprise fundamental categories of politics. Considering the triptych of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the wake of two centuries during which liberty and equality have been seen not to work successfully together, allows the development of the perspective of political systems wherein fraternity acts as the regulating principle of the other two. The principle of fraternity is currently being developed within juridical systems—both as the principle of public law as well as in its application to civil and penal law, areas in which the term did not even exist or was unknown because people no longer knew how to interpret the intentions of their Constitutional Fathers. The principle of fraternity supports the concept of “relational justice” and permits the interpretation of political-judicial appeals coming from the experience of a justice that, not limiting itself to punishment, includes remedy and restitution.

The principle of fraternity establishes, at its very least, the equal dignity of brothers/sisters and of their right to be different from one another, as happens in a family. In this sense, fraternity acts as a principle of reality in political theory, because one's brothers and sisters cannot be chosen. Studies focus on the conditions capable of guaranteeing their equality and their difference. Fraternity, that deals in a dynamic way with both freedom and equality, allows the birth of a non-binary logic. A binary logic regards freedom and

equality as oppositional along the lines of “friend-enemy,” “slave-master,” “citizen-foreigner,” “with me or against me.” These are the ideological thoughts of a conflictual nature that have infested politics over the last two centuries. Instead, we are presented with the possibility of a thought that does not exclude, does not level differences, but instead recognizes and puts them in communion. Fraternity can give life to a thought capable of understanding complexity.

Finally, fraternal behavior in society is itself being studied. There is an attempt to identify the political approaches through which a fraternal society can be encouraged and developed. We are facing the challenge of passing from the philosophical level of principles in political science to the application of fraternity within the empirical sciences. So, today we are studying and living this unique bond of love that Chiara showed to us, one that allows us to free ourselves from all relationships of subordination and injustice, one that permits oppressed peoples to gather their strength and to bring freedom and equality into communion. This bond helps them start again after the violence of nature or of human beings destroys what had been built.

From Chiara, we have learned that fraternity is the bond for the most difficult of moments. But it is also the bond in daily politics because fraternity authorizes the writing of laws, raising up of institutions, and inventing what is new when our brother or sister expresses a need unknown before. We have realized that when the “love of all loves” is lived, when a city is united, when the discourse of its citizens is sincere, and when the common good is desired by all in different but fair ways, then politics seems to disappear. One no longer sees institutions, but persons. We see the open blossom

and not the stem alone. This is the moment in which politics is fulfilled; and in this way it spreads and leaves space for beauty.

*Antonio Maria Baggio received degrees in philosophy at the University of Padua and the Pontifical Gregorian University. His doctorate in philosophy is from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas (Rome). He has been Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University from 1992 to 2008. He is presently Professor at the Sophia University Institute, and editor of the journal, Nuova Umànità. Baggio is author of eight books and numerous articles on political thought, the latest book being *Caino e i suoi fratelli: Il fondamento relazionale nella politica e nel diritto* (2012).*