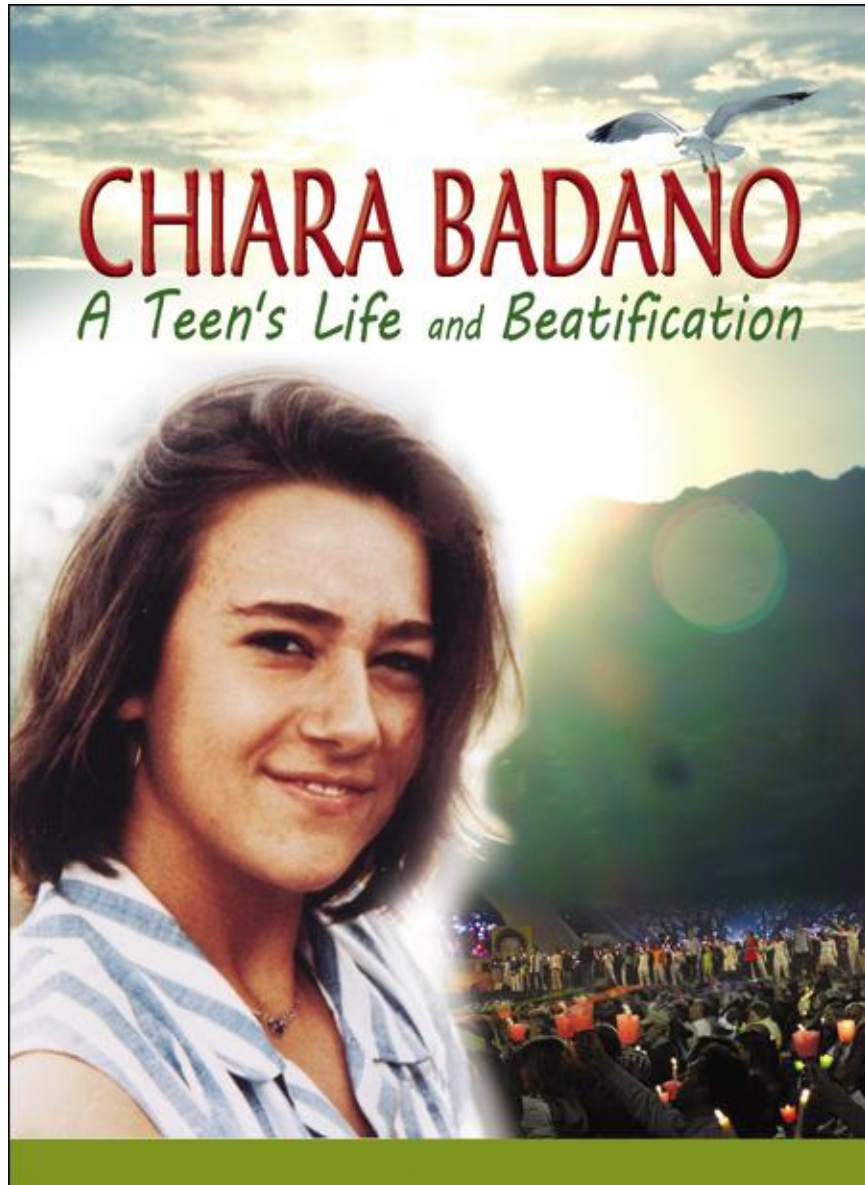


# Resource Materials for Group Leaders



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Biography of Chiara Luce Badano	3
2. Websites	3
3. Prayer for Chiara Luce Badano’s intercession	3
4. Topic 1: The Will of God / Suffering	4
5. Topic 2: Agape / Seeking the Kingdom of God	5
6. Topic 3: Authentic Christianity	6
7. Topic 4: Embracing the Cross	7
8. Topic 5: The Eucharist	8
9. Topic 6: Believing in God’s Love	9
10. Topic 7: The Present Moment / The Will of God	10
11. Topic 8: Making Ourselves One with Others / Our “Yes” to God (and each other)	11
12. Topic 9: Holiness / “Being Love” / Perseverance	12
13. Topic 10: Faith	13
14. Topic 11: Sharing Our Joy and Suffering / Going to God Together	14
15. Topic 12: Humility / Constant Conversion to God’s Will	15
16. Topic 13: Mary, the Mother of God and Our Mother	16
17. Topic 14: Jesus in Those Who Suffer / Union with God	17
18. Topic 15: Baptism / Christian Life	18
19. Topic 16: Saints Together	19
Appendix A: Brief Description of the Focolare (Work of Mary)	20
Appendix B: Bibliography of books quoted in resource materials	21

## THANKS

*Special thanks for the prayers and input of David Bearse, Jason Deramo, and Chris Stefanick.*

## **BIOGRAPHY OF CHIARA LUCE BADANO**

Chiara Luce Badano was born on October 29, 1971 in Sassello, Italy, an only child in a family who waited 11 years for her birth. She became an athletic, cheerful, determined young girl with many friends and dreamed of being a pediatrician to serve in less developed countries. In her very normal childhood she experienced both successes and failures, and early on in life learned to live the Gospel with authenticity, making every obstacle a springboard.

At age 9 she discovered that God is love through the young people of the Focolare. Its founder Chiara Lubich had challenged them to “become a generation of saints.” Chiara Badano took this message to heart and ran with it. Chiara Lubich later gave her a new name, “Chiara Luce” (clear light), the light of God which overcomes the world.

While playing tennis one afternoon, she felt a sharp pain which was later diagnosed as osteosarcoma, an extremely painful bone tumor. At the age of 17 she lost the use of her legs and with each new “surprise” the disease inflicted, she would say: “For you, Jesus. If you want it, I want it too.”

As her physical strength continued to weaken, she remained calm and determined. “I have nothing left except my heart,” she would say, “and with it I can love.” She refused morphine, explaining, “It takes away my lucidity, and all I have left to offer Jesus is my pain.” To the young people of her generation, she said, “I can no longer run, but I pass the torch ... we have only one life, it makes sense to spend it well.”

On October 7, 1990 she died. She had given her unconditional “yes” to God’s love. Her last words to her mother were, “Be happy, because I am!”

Her beatification process began in 1999, and on September 25, 2010 she was proclaimed “Blessed.” Her feast day is October 29. Pope Benedict XVI proposed her as a model of holiness for young people. “Chiara Luce Badano is a light for all,” he said on September 25, 2010.

## **WEBSITES**

- [http://focolare.org/En/sif/2000/20000323e\\_b.html](http://focolare.org/En/sif/2000/20000323e_b.html)
- <http://www.chiaraluce.org/>

## **PRAYER FOR CHIARA LUCE BADANO’S INTERCESSION**

O Father, source of every good, we give You thanks for the wonderful testimony of Blessed Chiara Badano. Filled with the Holy Spirit and guided by the radiant light of Jesus, she believed firmly in Your infinite love and wished to return it with all her strength, surrendering herself in complete trust to Your paternal will. We humbly beseech You that You may also grant us the gift to live with You and for You and ask of You, if it be Your will, for the grace of .... through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## Topic 1: The Will of God / Suffering

### From the video

*Won't I be able to run anymore? Won't I be able to walk anymore? Won't I be able to practice sports anymore? All my friends... my tennis... the mountains... the beach... Mom, is it fair to die at 17?*

### Scripture

- ≥ “ Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me” (Luke 22:42)
  
- ≥ He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:45)
  
- ≥ Now the natural person does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to counsel him?’ But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:14-16)

### Reflection

The cross, especially one of prolonged suffering, is one of the greatest gifts that God can send us. Immersed in that suffering, as though transported into the darkness above the atmosphere, our vision of the vast universe is made clearer.

When the cross is lacking, we may easily mistake fireflies for stars. We might think that all we do is in God's service, compatible with and even useful for his glory, but all the while we cater to our own ego and vanity. As a result, we offer God a life that mixes smoke with incense.

When, on the other hand, suffering comes to visit us and stays for a long time, we might understand the saints' words that speak of a life away from the limelight, of self-denial and of authenticity before God and our fellow human beings.

Such a realization can be so strong as to cause one even to offer acts of gratitude to the One who permits suffering.

The cross certainly brings us to the right path and is the guarantee that the roots of our life are expanding: the sign of new beauty about to blossom.

And we start to realize that the beatitudes are not merely promises or encouragements but a reality. One who weeps can really find blessings in this very weeping. It is a true beatitude, though not yet the one to come in eternity.

***Only at Night We See the Stars, pp. 74-75***

### In my life

- What is happening to me or someone I love that causes me to ask God, “Is it fair?”
- What does ‘fairness’ look like when seen with the eyes of God?

## Topic 2: Agape / Seeking the Kingdom of God

### From the video

One day, Chiara was playing in her room. I opened the door and said, “Chiara, you’ve got lots of toys, haven’t you? Why don’t you send some to more unfortunate children who have nothing to play with at all?”

She replied: “No, they’re mine!” After a while, she called me and asked me to bring her a plastic bag. I noticed that she was separating the toys. Into the bag, she was putting the new toys. I said, “Chiara, these are the new ones.”

She replied, “You know, unfortunate children shouldn’t be given broken toys.”

### Scripture

- Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. (Matthew 6:33-34)
- Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. (Matthew 6:19-21)
- This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood. (Mark 12: 43-44)

### Reflection

We often explained in the beginning of the Focolare that *people* are to us what the convent, the cloister, and the veil are to other Christians. Together with our neighbor, we can create an oasis of the supernatural, a touch of heaven in the world ... “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” (Rom 5:5) Through this love, we become another Jesus. This is exactly what God made us understand right from the start. We must aim at being another Jesus. Humanity and divinity are one in Him, so we have to aim at fusing the human in us with the divine, until they are one thing. We give God our humanity so he can bring his Son to life again in us. Here on earth we have to play the part of Jesus. When we will impersonate Christ in his complete obedience to the Father, then unity is accomplished in us. This love, which is God’s very own, has certain qualities: first it is extended toward everyone, so it is a universal love; secondly, God’s love in us compels us to be the first to love. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” (1 Jn 4:10)

We must fix our gaze always on the one Father of so many children, and then consider all creatures as children of that one Father. Our thoughts and affections must go beyond every human limit and acquire the habit of turning constantly to this universal brotherhood in God who is our Father.

***When Our Love is Charity, pp. 11-13***

### In my life

- What things in my life do I treasure more than I should?
- Are there things I think I’m entitled to?
- Have I given something away that was precious to me? How did it feel?
- Am I grateful when someone offers me something, or do I feel the need to “pay it back”?

## Topic 3: Authentic Christianity

### From the video

*There is one thing I'd like to be: an authentic Christian, one of those that never give up. I don't want to – and I can't be – illiterate about such an extraordinary message. Living the Gospel must be as easy as learning the alphabet.*

### Scripture

- ⊃ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven ... Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." (Matthew 7:21,24)
  
- ⊃ Be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching ... But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry ... I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:2; 5, 7)
  
- ⊃ Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:18)

### Reflection

What counts for us Christians is not how *much* we do but *how* we do it. The historical Jesus did not change the world either. On the contrary, sometimes he seemed to fail. What matters is to fulfill the plan God has for us – no more, but also no less.

Wherever we are, let us work adoring his will, which binds us to the present moment. This helps us to take care, one detail at a time, of what we need to achieve in the world.

If we move about like separate pieces, disunited, we will feel like we are achieving next to nothing. But if we are united, we will see that what one of us does is connected with what the others are doing. Then all our doing acquires fullness and a new dimension. A dimension which is not just universal but heavenly, since compared to heaven the universe is small.

Let us place love then into everything: the smiles we give, the jobs we do, the car we drive, the meal we prepare, the activity we organize, the tear we shed for Christ in our suffering neighbor, the instrument we play, the article or letter we write, the happy event we joyfully share, the clothes we clean . . . Everything, really *everything* can become a means to show God and neighbor our love. All has been entrusted into our hands and hearts so that like missionaries we may bring the gospel to the world.

***Here and Now, pp. 18-19***

### In my life

- How can I discern the will of God for me in each moment?
- Which Gospel value can I do a better job practicing? Forgiveness? Loving my neighbor? Loving my enemy? Trusting in God?
- Do I make an effort to know/study the Word of God so that I can put it into practice?
- How can I put love into each thing I do during the day?

## Topic 4: Embracing the Cross

### From the video

Chiara almost immediately had problems at school. She was very decided on attending a high school for Classical Studies. During her first year, she was very enthusiastic about this choice. After a few months had gone by, one of the teachers called her parents to tell them that it may not have been the right choice for her. She tried to convince them to have Chiara change schools. But Chiara was very determined and went ahead, which probably caused some friction with that teacher and which led to problems with her other subjects, which continued to get worse. By the end of the school term, her final grades were just not high enough, so she didn't pass the year.

*I flunked! What a shock! It took me quite some time to recover and still today, when I think about it, I feel sad. But this defeat made me understand an important thing Chiara Lubich had said years before. There are no joys if we don't face our sorrows as Jesus did on the Cross, Who felt forsaken by His Father. Now I want to choose Him as my only Spouse to be prepared to meet Him.*

### Scripture

- ≥ When I came to you, brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1Cor 2:1-2)
  
- ≥ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. (2 Cor 11:30)

### Reflection

Always look ahead, never back. What has happened in your life has happened, and God knows it. Now only one thing matters: not to miss the present moment, the only thing we really have in our hands. Only in the present can we love God with all our heart and do his will.

***Here and Now, p. 13***

God was calling us to Unity ... and Jesus Forsaken was its secret: he was the condition to fulfill Jesus' final testament: "May they all be one." ... I have experienced that every soul that finds itself in the front lines of Unity, and for Unity, knows how to stand supported only by a Suffering-Love as strong as that of Jesus Forsaken ... It is for this reason ... that we have chosen as our only purpose in life, our only aim, our everything: Jesus crucified who cries: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' It is Jesus in his deepest suffering! Infinite disunity ... to give us perfect unity that we will reach only relatively here on earth, and then perfectly in heaven ... Try ... to embrace him. ... Not everyone understands these words. Let's not give them to just anyone. Let Love forsaken see himself surrounded only by hearts who understand him ... During that time, we would come to define Jesus forsaken as the one ... whom neither heaven nor earth seemed to want ... and we concluded: he really can be entirely ours.

***Essential Writings, pp. 24-25***

### In my life

- When was the last time I failed at something that was important to me?
- Have I tried to love Jesus during moments of suffering?

## Topic 5: The Eucharist

### From the video

Before the end of school, Chiara and I agreed to go on a trip to Spain. We spent some wonderful days together. She loved the beach, and I did too. We swam, I taught her how to dive, we took pictures and then went shopping, trying to speak the language. Even there, at 7 p.m., our hair still wet — as we would stay at the beach until the last minute — we would run to Mass. We felt that we could not miss it, because Jesus was watching over us and he was a fundamental part of our life.

### Scripture

- ⊃ According to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord ... (Luke 2:22)
  
- ⊃ While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. (Mark 14:22-24)

### Reflection

The Eucharist does not only bear good and beautiful fruits of love and sanctity; nor is its primary purpose to increase our unity with God and with one another (as unity is commonly understood) and thus serving to nourish the presence of Jesus in our midst. Yes, this too.

But the task of the Eucharist is something else.

This is the purpose of the Eucharist: to make us God (by participation). By mixing our flesh with Christ's life-giving flesh, which is given life by the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist divinizes us in soul and body. Therefore it makes us God.

Now God can only stay in God. This is why the Eucharist makes the human being, who is fed with it worthily, enter the bosom of the Father; it places the human being in the Trinity in Jesus.

At the same time the Eucharist does not do this only for the individual person, but for many persons who, all being God, are not many, but one. They are God and they are all together in God. They are one with him, lost in him.

Now this reality, which the Eucharist brings about, is the Church.

What is the Church? It is the "one" called forth by the mutual love of Christians and by the Eucharist ... the Church is a body, whose head is the glorious Christ.

*Essential Writings, p. 129*

### In my life

- Do I participate in the Sacraments of the Church?
- Do I make receiving the Eucharist a priority?
- Do I make choices in my daily life that reflect a belief that the Eucharist is divinizing me?
- Do I make choices in my daily life that reflect a belief that I am a part of the Body of Christ?



## Topic 6: Believing in God's Love

### From the video

"Your daughter has a tumor ... one of the worst kinds, an osteosarcoma." Upon hearing that I felt like...this drowning buzzing inside of me... I cannot explain it... I can't describe the anguish I felt deep inside. I can't find words for it. Ruggero and I just held each other tightly. And we said, "Now only He can help us say our yes!"

### Scripture

- ⊃ Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? (Matthew 6:25-27)
  
- ⊃ Even the hairs on your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. (Luke 12:7)

### Reflection

The greatest wisdom is to spend our time living the will of God perfectly in the present moment.

Sometimes however we are assailed by an unrelenting attack of thoughts about the past, present or future, or about places, circumstances or persons that we cannot handle directly. It requires our greatest effort to take the helm of our ship and maintain the course by doing what God wills of us in the present moment.

A perfect response on our part requires of us a will, a decision, but above all a *confidence* in God that can border on heroism.

"I can do nothing in that particular case, for that person dear to me who is sick or in danger, for that complicated situation ...

"So I will do what God wants of me in this moment. I will study hard or sweep the house well, and pray well, take good care of my children ...

"And God will tend to unraveling that tangled knot, comforting the sufferer, resolving that unforeseen problem."

This is a partnership of perfect communion. It demands from us great faith in the love of God for his children that enables God then, by our response, to have faith in us.

This mutual trust works miracles.

We will see that, before we even reach some crisis, Another has arrived there before us and done immensely better than we could."

*Essential Writings, pp. 70-71*

### In my life

- Do I feel like I have to solve the problems of those around me?
- When I am with someone who is suffering, do I try to 'make myself one' with their suffering, or do I try to make them feel better?
- Do I believe that God loves someone who is suffering?

## Topic 7: The Present Moment / The Will of God

### From the video

*Mom, if I happen not to wake up, make sure, when you are preparing the Mass, to tell all the Gen boys and girls to sing as loud as they can.*

The following morning I heard Chiara saying as she woke up: "Why Jesus?" I immediately got up and went to her bedside and I said: "Chiara, do you need anything?" I heard her replying: "If you want it, Jesus, I want it too."

*Losing my friends and the possibility to share our lives was very tough for me. I couldn't stop that train taking me away from them. But another world was waiting for me and I had to abandon myself to it. I felt wrapped by a design of beauty that little by little was revealing itself.*

### Scripture

- ≥ Yet, not as I will, but as you will. (Matthew 26:39)
  
- ≥ Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. (Luke 23:46)

### Reflection

So, what do we do when suffering comes? I repeat, we must live the present moment. And so when suffering comes our way, we go deep within our hearts as we do when we pray. We know that God is everywhere; therefore he is also in the depths of our hearts. And so we say to God: "OK, I accept this suffering and I offer it to you, for you." and then, in the following moment we must continue to do God's will, which for example, might be to come here and listen or to go and do some shopping, to read, to study.... We must do this will of God immediately.

***Essential Writings (Speech at an international meeting of Muslims), p. 352***

It is the frequent experience of any Christian who one day understands that, if God is Love, and that he or she is the object of this love, it is impossible not to abandon oneself trustingly to him.

It is the moment in which life changes course, and people, disillusioned with their own efforts to shape their own destiny (that never was fully satisfying), decide to conform to the plan God has always had in mind for them. They remember that they have an enormous gift, freedom, and they realize that nothing could be more reasonable for a creature, the child of God, than the act of freely ceding its freedom to the One who gave it.

***Essential Writings, p. 67***

If God were to show a soul all the suffering that life has in store for it, the soul would die on the spot. If God were to show a soul all the joys it would experience in life, it would die on the spot. God knows this, and he measures things accordingly. The soul does not know, but it abandons itself in God who loves it.

***Essential Writings, p. 164***

### In my life

- Do I take the time to consider whether the thing I'm about to do is really what God wants of me in this moment?
- If my love for the will of God in the present moment begins to fade, how can I 'start again' to choose his will over my own?

## Topic 8: Making Ourselves One with Others / Our “Yes” to God (and each other)

### From the video

I saw her walking very, very slowly. When she opened the door, I asked: “Chiara, how did it go?” She didn't look at me and had a very dark expression. She replied twice: “Don't say anything now, don't say anything now.” She threw herself on the bed. I wanted to tell her many things: “Wait. You'll see ... who knows ... you are young.” But I had to respect her will. I could see from the expression on her face, the anguish Chiara was going through. She knew that she had to give Jesus her “yes” not only in joyful moments, but especially in sorrowful ones. But she couldn't. It's too natural for a 17 year old to want to live. After 25 minutes or so, she turned to me with her usual smile. Her face became radiant, full of light, and with a beautiful smile she said, “Mom, OK! Now you can speak.”

### Scripture

- ≥ There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)
- ≥ Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. (John 19:25)
- ≥ ... and you yourself a sword will pierce. (Luke 2:35)

### Reflection

So that we might have the light, you made yourself darkness.  
To acquire union for us, you experienced separation from the Father.  
So that we might have wisdom, you made yourself ignorance.  
To clothe us in innocence, you became sin.  
So that God might be present in us, you felt him far away from you.

*Only at Night We See the Stars, p. 66*

If you are suffering, and your kind of suffering puts a halt to everything you would be doing, think of the Mass. In the Mass, today just like then, Jesus is neither working nor preaching: He is sacrificing himself out of love.

There are so many things that could be done in a lifetime, so many things to say; but however silent and inaudible to others, the voice of pain, offered for love, speaks the loudest.

It pierces heaven. If you are suffering, plunge your pain into his: Offer your own Mass, and don't let it trouble you if the world does not understand. It is enough that Jesus, Mary, and the saints understand you. Live with them, and shed your blood for the good of humanity, as he did.

The Mass! It is beyond our understanding! His Mass, and ours.

*Only at Night We See the Stars, pp. 44-45*

When someone weeps, we must weep too. And if someone laughs, we too rejoice. Thus the cross is divided and borne by many shoulders, and joy is multiplied and shared by many hearts. Making ourselves one with our neighbor is a way, the way par excellence, to make ourselves one with God.

*Essential Writings, p. 233*

### In my life

- Even when something seems like a personal decision or choice, am I able to receive God's love through my neighbor who is “with me” in that choice?
- Do I realize that saying “yes” to Jesus is not a one-time event?
- Have I asked Jesus for forgiveness in sacramental confession for those times I did not say “yes” to him?
- When someone I know is suffering, can I love them by ‘allowing’ them to suffer?

## Topic 9: Holiness / “Being Love” / Perseverance

### From the video

*I felt so little. The path seemed so hard. I often felt oppressed by the pain, and I used to repeat: “Jesus, if you want it, I want it too. I want to play this game.”*

She had already undergone one chemotherapy cycle and lost her hair. I remember seeing her arrive, wearing a wig. She said: “You know I put my wig on because I think that a lot of people would feel uneasy.” She added: “When I had my hair cut, it was very hard for me. But I felt myself saying for each lock of hair falling. “Jesus, this is for you.”

Chiara Luce never talked about Jesus or God. She just lived the Gospel concretely. She welcomed you in her room with a smile. Only later on, I learned how much it cost her to sit up due to the sharp pains in her legs. Also psychologically, meeting us, her schoolmates, brought her back to all she had to leave behind. She knew she would lose this aspect of her life.

### Scripture

‡ I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end. (Psalm 119:112)

### Reflection

There are those who do things “for love.” There are those who do things trying “to be Love.” Those who do things “for love” may do them well, but, thinking they are doing great service for their neighbor, who is sick for instance, they may annoy with their chatter, their advice and with their help. Such charity is burdensome and inappropriate.

They may gain merit, but the other is left with a burden. This is why it is necessary to “be Love.” ... Love, which is God, is light. And with the light we see whether our way of approaching and serving our brother or sister is according to the heart of God, as our brother or sister would wish it to be, as they would dream of it being, if they had beside them not us, but Jesus.

*Essential Writings, pp. 84-85*

Just as an apple fulfills its purpose only when it is ripe, a Christian can offer true decisive, competent help to humanity only when perfect as the “heavenly Father is perfect,” because when perfect as the Father, he or she is another Christ and, therefore, another “Son of Man.”

And this is wonderful because it means that only a true Christian turns out to be a “complete” man or woman. But that is not enough. Here it is necessary to draw out all the consequences. The authenticity required by these times demands it: the perfect Christian is also a saint. Therefore, we must conclude that in God’s eyes “human being,” “Christian” and “saint” are synonyms.

“Holiness! It’s just a word...” say many, very many people.

No. Christ does not ask us the impossible! Furthermore, we must rid ourselves of a certain idea of holiness inherited from the past. Phenomena such as miracles, ecstasies, visions do not constitute holiness. Holiness lies in perfect love.

*Essential Writings, pp.272-273*

### In my life

- Do I ask Jesus to help me to “keep loving” when times are tough?
- In conversation, do I allow other people to speak, or do I dominate the conversation? Do I allow the Holy Spirit to speak?

## Topic 10: Faith

### From the video

I was amazed by her serenity. We thought that she smiled for our sake. Then I thought of watching her through the keyhole to see, really, if she was always like that, even when no one saw her. And I realized she was always like that. From there I began to understand that Jesus was granting Chiara a special grace.

*Time passed by, and I turned 18 years old. It might seem absurd, but I felt that I had it all, and I could give much more...*

### Scripture

- Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:5)
  
- Everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in [the ones you have given me]. And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are." (John 17: 10-11)

### Reflection

The soul that loves well – and therefore puts Jesus' words into practice – knows where to find God. If it is an exterior will of God, for example a job, it throws itself completely into it, to be God's living will. But the soul does not forget that God is in itself and in every brother or sister. The soul knows that God is present everywhere and always sees it. And despite having projected itself into the divine will where God primarily wants it, the soul loves him everywhere and knows how to leave him in one place, if the will of God changes, to meet him in another.

*Essential Writings, p. 124*

### In my life

- Do I realize that God knows the "real" me? that I never need to put on a show for God?
- Have I given my whole life to God in a way that makes me feel that "I have it all"?
- Do I really *believe* that Jesus' sacrifice draws me into the life of the Trinity here on Earth?

## Topic 11: Sharing Our Joy and Suffering / Going to God Together

### From the video

For months, a number of us had already been sharing in this experience of Chiara's. It was as if Chiara, through this sudden illness of hers, was leading our climb up the mountain, linking us together, drawing us to follow her on her way to reach the top, the peak... to reach God.

### Scripture

- ≥ The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. (Acts 4:32)
  
- ≥ When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters, and they reported what God had done with them. (Acts 15:4)

### Reflection

Precisely through his suffering, Jesus has given joy to every person: joy here on earth and unending joy in the next life. In the same way, by accepting and offering to him our daily worries and concerns, we obtain happiness for ourselves and for others.

*Only at Night We See the Stars, p. 82*

The style of sanctity for today's Christian goes beyond that of perfection sought individually, and they often express it like this: we want to become saints together, we desire a collective sanctity. So here and there we see committed Christians forming groups who, in unity, go toward God.

In fact it seems to us that this is what God really wants, so long as it all has the stamp of openness, the pulse of the entire Church, a loving unity with the hierarchy.

*Essential Writings, p. 117*

Those who enter the way of unity do not climb a mountain with exhausting effort, but through an initial and total commitment, made out of a love that brings about a death to their own selves, a total emptying of themselves, of their entire humanity into God (and only total emptying is love), come to find themselves instead already at the top of the mountain. It is impossible to go any higher and it is rest ("Come to me ... and I will give you rest"). Their journey begins on the mountain crest going all the way to God, always starting again, in the same way as before, if they should stop.

*Essential Writings, p. 36*

### In my life

- When people spend time with me, do they come closer to or further away from God because of me?
- Do I share my joy and suffering with others?
- Do I share the joy and suffering that my friends undergo?

## Topic 12: Humility / Constant Conversion to God's Will

### From the video

It was St. Valentine's Day. Chiara told me: "Mom, you must go to the hairdresser." 'No,' I said, 'I won't.' She remarked: "You're afraid of what people would say: 'Look at her. Her daughter is dying and she wants to go to the hairdresser'." You know, it was a small village. Then Chiara said: "You must go because tonight you should celebrate with Dad." When I was on the stairs and ready to leave, she added: "Forget me. Look into each other's eyes and say: I love you." I never cried, but at that moment, Ruggero noticed it, saying, "Now you're starting to cry?!" I'm crying, I told him, because Chiara is getting us used to being by ourselves.

### Scripture

- ≥ "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)
- ≥ A crowd seated around [Jesus] told him, "Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and [my] brothers? And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. [For] whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3: 31-35)
- ≥ "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you." (Matthew 6:16-18)

### Reflection

Let us say it before every action: "May it be done. May your will be done." Then, moment by moment, piece by piece, we will be crafting the wondrous, unique, and unrepeatable mosaic of our life that the Lord had in mind for each one of us.

***Rays: Short Reflections on Living God's Will, p. 37***

Complete trust in God doesn't mean we become passive. Quite the contrary: once we grasp God's will, we make it our own and carry it out with all our heart, soul, and strength, staying faithful to it even though it's constantly changing.

***Rays: Short Reflections on Living God's Will, p. 41***

### In my life

- Am I worried about what other people will think of the fact that I choose to love Jesus?
- Do I try to hide my faith from others?

## Topic 13: Mary, the Mother of God and Our Mother

### From the video

I was hospitalized once again for several days. But this wasn't an ordinary visit. It is something more. We were entering the operating room. I was really scared, but then I understood it was going to be a small operation, with local anaesthesia, nothing special. But I became kind of scared because I didn't know really, what it was all about. It was a beautiful experience because when the doctors started the surgery, a bit unpleasant as it was, a lady arrived. She had the brightest smile, she was beautiful. She came closer to hold my hand, encouraging me. At a certain point, in the same way she had arrived, she disappeared. I did not see her anymore, but I was taken by such a joy that my fears disappeared. She seemed like an angel that Our Lady sent to stay with me. It was a very profound moment of God.

### Scripture

- ≥ And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:43)
  
- ≥ And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Revelation 12:1)

### Reflection

Mary is not understood because she is too close to us. She who was destined from eternity to bring graces, the divine treasures of her Son, to humanity, is near to us and waits, always waiting for us to notice her gaze and accept her gifts. If anyone is fortunate enough to understand her, she carries them off to her kingdom of peace, where Jesus is King and the Holy Spirit is the life-breath of that heaven.

*Essential Writings, p. 136*

### In my life

- Do I encourage my friends to have a relationship with Mary, the Mother of God?
- How do I react to *other* people's experience of union with God? Do I believe them? Am I jealous?
- Is my eye "simple" and "clear" enough to see the mercy of God in small things that happen each day?



## Topic 14: Jesus in Those Who Suffer / Union with God

### From the video

Chiara refused, at this stage, to take morphine, because she wanted, for one thing, to remain completely lucid ... I was astonished, because generally, one of the first things girls around her age ask is not to suffer and to be in their own home.

### Scripture

- They gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. (Matthew 27:34)

### Reflection

Only this foolishness saved mankind, and it is this which formed the saints. Saints, in fact, are people who understand the cross. They are those who, following Jesus, the God-man, took up their daily cross as the most precious thing on earth. At times they brandished it like a weapon, as soldiers of God. They loved it all their lives, and they knew and experienced that the cross is the key, the only key to a treasure, the treasure. The cross gradually opens our soul to union with God ... The cross, in short, is the necessary instrument whereby the divine may penetrate into what is human, and man may participate more fully in the life of God, entering into the kingdom of Heaven already on this earth.

***Meditations, p. 17***

I don't think we can love *suffering* because suffering is a non-being. For example, we can say that illness is non-health and suffering, anguish is non-joy. It's always a negative. Instead, what must be loved is Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, who is present in every person who suffers ... we must embrace *Jesus* in suffering and not so much the suffering itself.

**From a response to a question asked at Grachen on July 21, 1995**

### In my life

- When I am in pain or discomfort, do I offer these sufferings up to the Lord?
- Do I understand how *loving Jesus* is very different than *loving to suffer*?
- How can I remember to keep loving my neighbor even when I am suffering?

## Topic 15: Baptism / Christian Life

### From the video

One thing made me happy – a letter from Chiara Lubich. I had asked her to choose a new name for me, helping me to live the Gospel better. “Luce – Light,” she replied. It is God’s light that wins over the world, she explained. Chiara Luce Badano. It felt like a new baptism.

### Scripture

- ≥ John 8:12 “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.””
  
- ≥ None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. (Romans 14:7-8)

### Reflection

“Perhaps there are times when we want to say: ‘That’s enough, I’m tired of loving. I’ll live my own life. I’ll turn on the television. I’ll watch it. I’ll go get a drink...’ And this is what Saint Paul calls the ‘old self.’ In other words, it is that purely human behavior which is inclined toward self-centeredness and toward our passions. Instead, when we love, when we live our Ideal, we have the ‘new self.’

But we need to train ourselves, to be athletes of the spirit. If we do so, little by little we are able to live as our ‘new selves’ all day long. Of course, not perfectly, because we are still sinners, but we will get there. Therefore, you will find the first obstacle within; it comes from our ‘old self.’”

***Essential Writings (Speech at an international meeting of Muslims), p. 350***

“The statistics concerning baptized Catholics who do not go to church make you shudder. But we do not wish to speak here about those who are non-practicing already or already secularized. No, let us speak about ourselves and about those who like us are called ‘the faithful,’ ‘church-goers,’ or even ‘good Christians’ ... In the beginning we are Christians because we have been baptized. Then we become, so to speak, ‘developing’ Christians ... But only when Christ’s life, his law and his holiness have triumphed in us can we truly call ourselves Christians. If this is how things stand, it is no wonder we feel ourselves to be ‘underdeveloped Christians.’ And the way, the manner, the means to improve our spiritual situation? The means are not lacking. The Church offers them in abundance ... [but] the grace of God still requires our cooperation. We are often so tremendously undernourished to the point that we no longer feel the pangs of hunger. Yet the Eucharist is there, waiting for us to be nourished by the very flesh of Christ. We are frighteningly defenseless and exposed to every sort of spiritual illness, which we frequently transmit to one another. Yet the sacrament of Penance is there to heal us and give us new strength ... We have in our hands the code to life, to every life: the gospel. All we have to do is want it.”

***Essential Writings, pp. 270-271***

### In my life

- Do I believe that God has won over the world?
- Do I take advantage of the sacraments in order to renew my life in the Church?
- Do I start again to do the will of God when I realize I have gone ‘off the path’?
- Do I find ways to keep learning about and studying the teachings of the Church?

## Topic 16: Saints Together

### From the video

*I've realized that if we could constantly keep our soul open and ready for everything, how many signs God would send us. I have also understood how many times God passes next to us and we do not realize it ... Young people are the future. I cannot run anymore, but I'd like to pass them my torch, like at the Olympic games. The youth have one life to live, and we should spend it as best we can.*

### Scripture

- ≥ For I long to see you, that I may share with you some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by one another's faith, yours and mine. (Romans 1:7)

### Reflection

At the beginning of our community, the Focolare, we were in constant danger of losing our lives, because we were not adequately sheltered during the air raids. So when the question arose as to when we had to do God's will in order to love him, we immediately understood that the answer was: now – right now. For we did not know if we would still be alive later.

The only time in our possession was the present moment. The past was already gone, and we did not know if the future would ever come. We used to say: the past no longer exists; let's entrust it to God's mercy. The future is not yet here. By living the present, we will also live the future well when it becomes present.

***Here and Now, pp. 45-46***

### In my life

- Do I want to be a saint?
- Do I live my life like I want to be in heaven (and build the kingdom of God here and now)?
- Do I try to see others as God sees them?
- How can I help my friends become saints?

## APPENDIX A

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FOCOLARE (WORK OF MARY)

#### History

Since 1943, the Focolare (Italian for “hearth”) has grown from a budding community in Trent, Italy to a vast ecclesial movement in the Catholic Church. Its spirituality of unity is based on Jesus’ prayer for unity, “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). Founder Chiara Lubich (1920-2008) opened new dialogues in the Catholic world; with members of different Christian churches; with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and the faithful of other religions; and with all people of goodwill. For the many social and academic contributions of the Focolare, Chiara received the 1977 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, the 1996 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education and numerous honorary doctorates, citizenships and awards. Through local and global initiatives by its 16 branches and 9 mass movements, the Focolare fosters universal brotherhood in all areas of ecclesiastical and secular life including family, youth, politics, economics and more.

#### To learn more

<http://www.focolare.org/en/>

<http://www.focolare.us>

#### How can I contact the Focolare in the United States?

<http://focolare.us/us/contact-us>

## APPENDIX B

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The materials in this resource guide include quotes about the spirituality of unity that informed Chiara Luce Badano's life. This bibliography does not include the entirety of Chiara Lubich's writings or of writings by or about the Focolare. It only includes the resources quoted in these pages.

For more resources, please visit: [www.newcitypress.com](http://www.newcitypress.com) or [www.livingcitymagazine.com](http://www.livingcitymagazine.com)

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