

## Story of a discovery

In the beginning was a word – said to a young girl.

The name of the girl: Chiara Lubich

The word: "God loves you infinitely!"

This word became the starting point of a **journey of discovery**. Looking back, Chiara Lubich writes, "As for me, I can say that my Christian upbringing had certainly prepared me to take in this reality of God's love. But it did not break through until someone told me, 'God loves you infinitely!' – This realization was not limited to me. At the time I wrote, 'I will tell my friends.' And I kept telling them. 'God loves us infinitely, God loves you infinitely!'"

From that time on, the small group of young girls around Chiara Lubich discovered the **traces of God**, who is love, everywhere. "All day long, both at times when we were full of zest or made new resolutions, in pleasant or comforting moments, and in sad, awkward or difficult situations. God made us understand that everything is love: what we are and what matters to us. He is there – always and everywhere. We are His children and He is our Father; nothing is barred from His love, not even our faults, for He accepts them. (...) It was as if we had understood for the first time that God is not a distant, unreachable God who has nothing to do with our lives. No, He goes looking for us; He reaches me and us with His infinite love. More and more God, who is love, became the only true reality for us. And while the war showed us that everything is transitory and nothing lasts forever, we chose God, who is love, as our ideal of life."

This **love** was like a **light** that had been lit behind the words of the Gospel and that made these words shine forth in their beauty and power for the young girls. "We grasped the words we had heard many, many times during our lives in a new way, for example: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 19:19). As yourself: Who had ever done that?!"

During one of the long nights in the air raid shelters during the turmoil of war in Trent, the young girls read, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40) "We understood that **Christ** is embodied **in the poor** in a special way. So when there was no air raid warning, we went to the poor people of the city. We noted down where they lived so we would be able to help them. We went to the poorest districts of town to help Jesus in the poor people and many things were given to us. Clothes, flour, dry milk, wood ... We were able to take suitcases-full to the poor every day."

Another word went right to heart of the young Christians: "**Give, and it will be given you!**" Chiara Lubich recalls, "Once, someone brought us apples to our small apartment; we gave them to the poor and got more apples; we gave them to the poor and once again got apples; we also gave those to the poor and in the evening a whole crate full of

jesus beim  
**WORT**  
genommen

Life in colours



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above: Chiara Lubich  
(centre) with mem-  
bers of the first group

apples arrived. 'Give, and it will be given you!' We kept experiencing the truth of these words."

In the early 1940s, the young Christian women moved into a small apartment together that had been offered to them in Trent. This is where they shared their lives with each other and with the poor. The driving force of their lives was and remained constant love. "Above all, **clothe yourselves with love!**" had become the essential motto of their lives. Each of the young women contributed her character and her talents to life in the small community. An **inner order** evolved and lit up in this communal life. Chiara Lubich realized that there were different priorities in the lives of her companions, which were brought into harmony by the practice of love. She compared this love with light. When a ray of light hits a drop of water, it is broken down into the **colors of the rainbow**, into seven colors of light, each of which consists of countless shades. The red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet of the rainbow resemble the many aspects of love, the various expressions of the life of Jesus in us. All seven aspects appeared to be equally essential for the wholeness and the luminosity of the Gospel.

Let us imagine a conversation in which Chiara Lubich explained this discovery to her first companions. "Giosi, when I think of you I think of **RED**, the most striking color. You take care of our commune, and this commune is our most distinctive feature to the outside. Graziella, you're like the **ORANGE** of a glowing fire. Who has the gift to ignite others for the ideal of love, like you do? Wherever you go, you light the fire! Natalia, you embody the zealous love of God among us. You keep reminding us of the words of Jesus: 'Only one thing is necessary' (Luke 10:42), and love is eventually all that matters. You are our **YELLOW**. Aletta, what strikes me most about you is your motherly love. You take care of us like a mother when one of us is not feeling well. You make a family of us. You get the color **GREEN**, which stands for healthy nature. Marilen, the **BLUE** of the sky goes well with you. You always know how to prepare the room and space where we can feel comfortable, helping to light up a bit of the

heavenly harmony. Bruna, you have started to study theology. In our vibrant life together, your thoughts and ideas help the divine wisdom to permeate our small community with even more power. **INDIGO** stands for you. Eli, you are our secretary and with your help all of our experiences and events reach everyone and make the Body come alive among us. Yours is the last color of the rainbow, **VIOLET**.

Dear young friends, in the beginning there was the discovery that God is love and is close to everyone. "To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them." (Hosea 11:4) Anyone who makes this discovery will feel an urge to understand this God even better and to make a decision for God in all areas of life. Therefore, the coming months will give every one of us the opportunity to rediscover God in His personal love and to consider the various areas of life associated with the colors of the rainbow – such as work (red), leisure and health (green), studying (indigo) – in light of the Gospel. When all areas find equal expression, **life can reach a balance**. Everyone is invited to share their own experiences with others in small communities of the Way, and to receive experiences shared by others as a gift.

Heinrich Oest and Meinolf Wacker

### **Biblical sources**

John 3:14-21  
Hosea 11:1-11

1 John 4:16

### **Impulses**

- God loves me personally! – How and when did I make this discovery?
- What consequences did this discovery have for my life?
- Have there been situations in my life that made me doubt that God is love?
- What does the Gospel mean to you? – How do you live up to it in your life?
- Behind your everyday life is the plan of someone who loves you! Discover His traces!

