

2022 "Union with God and Prayer" 2023

Today, I discovered Heaven



**Modularized Gen 4 Program
on "Union with God and Prayer"
year 2022-2023**



Introduction:



To prepare the material, we started by rereading and meditating various themes prepared by Chiara¹ on this topic, highlighting those aspects which seemed to us more suitable for the gen 4. For many of these aspects, there are also specific materials prepared by Chiara herself for this age (ideas from her story and from answers that Chiara gave to the gen 4 over the years).

We have chosen 7 suggested points in consecutive modules, with a program that is also according to the Indigo formation on the Sacred Scriptures which we would like our Gen 4 to undergo.

For each module, we have indicated:

A) some ideas taken from Chiara's themes for the preparation—meditation for the assistants.

B) the objectives that these ideas suggested to us for the gen 4 meeting.

C) some content which can be used to help achieve these objectives, “drops of light” taken from the Sacred Scriptures (Indigo program for the Gen 4) and from the Spirituality (still material for the Gen 4). Specifically,



for every part, we indicate which excerpt from Chiara's story or which of her answers given to the Gen 4 can be used, which episodes in the Sacred Scriptures seem to fit this point. Every episode in the Sacred Scripture which is proposed is also accompanied by illustrated experiences which can be useful material to reinforce the point. D) Finally, through a beautiful collaboration with a team of assistants from all over the world, some ideas for conducting the meeting were also prepared, also to enrich it with songs, games, drawings and various activities.

The type of proposal that we can offer this year, being "modular" and not already structured as in the previous years, can also be more easily adapted to any situation. We are sure that the sensitivity of each assistant would know how to choose, among these proposals, the elements that are more suitable to the group of gen 4 entrusted to him or her. There are plenty of materials, precisely to provide the possibility of choosing: It is NOT necessary to do all of them!

As you will then see, also in the choice of Chiara's themes (to prepare the assistants), talks made for the most varied audiences were sought, in order to have interreligious and ecumenical richness in mind as



much as possible. We would like to remind you that the ecumenical dimension is very much present in all Indigo programs and in the revisions of the passages from the Sacred Scriptures suited to children, as well as in the contributions of the notes accompanying the text; there were contributions from focolarine and focolarini of various Churches.

The general title of the program which we propose for year 2022-2023 is: **Today, I discovered Heaven.**

¹Reference of texts consulted:

C. Lubich, Tokyo (Japan), December 28, 1981, to the members of Rissho Kosei Kai, "La mia esperienza spirituale".

C. Lubich, Faenza, April 10, 1988, to the families, "La preghiera in famiglia".

C. Lubich, to the focolarinos, Castel Gandolfo, December 23, 1988, La "Via Mariae".

C. Lubich, – Collegamento CH, February 23, 1989, "I quattro modi di pregare" (published in: C.Lubich, Cercando le cose di lassù, Rome 1992, 4th ed., p. 128-130).

C. Lubich, Collegamento CH, Mariapoli Luminosa, May 24, 1990, "Vivere il 'Già'" (published in: C. Lubich, Santi insieme, Rome 1995, 3rd ed., (1st ed.: 1994), p. 35-38).

C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, December 24, 1998, to the focolarinos, "V° tema della spiritualità collettiva – III° aspetto: 'L'amore eleva'".

C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, October 25, 1999, meeting of Muslim friends of the Focolare Movement, "La preghiera, la meditazione e l'unione con Dio".

C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, January 4, 2004, to the focolarinos and focolarinas, "L'unione con Dio si sente, si percepisce - La cultura della Risurrezione".

C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, February 16, 2004, to the Bishops friends of the Focolare Movement, "L'unione con Dio".

C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, April 18, 2004, at the Hindu-Christian Symposium, "L'unione con Dio".



Module n. 2:

Union with God and love for the brother

When I make an act of love, beautiful things happen

A) For the assistants.



Ideas from Chiara's themes: Ideas from Chiara's themes: the characteristic of our union with God and the relationship with love for the brother

1) For Chiara, there has always been a very close relationship between union with God and love for the brother, and on many occasions, she has used the comparison of the plant with its roots and foliage. Here is how she explained it to the Buddhists, members of the Rissho Kosei Kai, in 1981: "[...] We have discovered that, like a little plant, the deeper its roots are in the ground, the longer its stems and the more its leaves open, **so it is with man—the more he goes towards his brother out of love for God, the more he rises towards God, the more his union with God increases.** So it is with us, too. The more we loved our brothers, denying ourselves, forgetting ourselves, the more we felt that in the moment of prayer, our union with God had grown [...]"¹

And in 2004, during a Hindu-Christian symposium, she underlined again how these two things—love for the brother and union with God—are linked. And in that occasion, Chiara said: "[...] **This is experienced throughout the Movement, even by small children three years old and above, because Christianity is also simple.** [...]"²

2) This relationship is very typical of our union with God. In the talk of 1999, already mentioned in the first module, Chiara said to Muslim friends: "[...] *It seems almost obvious to me, observing how much union with God there is in the believers of Islam. And this, therefore, pushes me to communicate with you, what union with God was, what it is for us and also the typical road by which He led us to Himself. First of all, we have always had the conviction that our spirituality must lead to a great union with God, precisely because it is the "spirituality of unity." Unity is the word that summarizes our entire spirituality. Unity with God and unity with our brothers. And specifically, as **our typical way: unity with our brothers to arrive to union with God. The Spirit, in fact, has revealed to us a way totally ours, fully evangelical, to unite ourselves with God. In general, we do not seek***

Him, and we do not immediately find Him in the depths of our hearts or in nature. We find Him by loving our brother. It is only in this way that we have guaranteed unity with Him. We discover Him alive and beating in our hearts. And it is this unity with God which pushes us, in turn, towards our brothers, which helps us to ensure that our love for them is not superficial, but radical, full, complete, always ready to give our lives for them. [...] ³

3) In the 2004 talk at the Hindu-Christian symposium which we mentioned above, Chiara gives an example taken from her story, an example that the Gen 4 know very well. This is how Chiara recounts it: “[...] **As a consequence of loving the brother, loving the brother, all brothers, all brothers of every race, of every religion, of every color, by this means, one reaches the point of having a lasting union with God. What does this mean? That one feels that I can talk to Him because He hears me, and He talks to me and I hear Him. You will say: “But how does He speak to you, Chiara?” I will give an example. I was 23 years old and I did not yet know my way, what God wanted from me, if I should get married or go to the convent or remain a virgin in the world; I did not know. I was at home with my younger sisters and my mother. It was a cold day, very, very cold. We were rather poor and so every day, we needed to go with a bottle to get milk, two kilometers away, in a farm. My mother wanted me to study always. She did not want me to do housework; the housework had to be done by my younger sisters. My mother told the older one of them, “Go and get milk.” “Mamma, with this cold, it is impossible! I will not be able to do it. There is the frost, there is ice.” We are from the North of Italy, from Trent. And my mother then said to the other: “But”—she said—“you go.” “But it is impossible, how can I do it?” **And so, I, with the thought of making an act of love—because it is always in loving that God manifests himself, as I said yesterday—I said, “Mamma, let me go.”** And my mother, who could not do otherwise, gave me the bottle and I left. It was a straight road, and at a certain point, there was a Shrine, that is, like a small chapel, with a little statue of Mary inside. The neighborhood was called White Madonna because it was white. And halfway through, I felt as if—but it wasn’t physically, it was spiritually—as if the sky was opening and I heard a voice. I felt that God was saying to me, “Give everything to me.” Then, I returned; I immediately spoke to my spiritual director, who said, “This is a person called by God.” And he allowed me take the flight to God, that is, the consecration to God. This is to say that it is truly possible to hear God.” ⁴**

4) In 1988 instead, in a talk to the focalari, Chiara emphasized this aspect—union with God and love for the brother—in the life of Mary, talking of the “[...] **visit to St. Elizabeth. Mary went, not to sing the “Magnificat,” we know it: to love.** But since she found a soul that was open, she immediately told her everything: “my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day, all generations will call me blessed.” **And as we know, there, she narrated her wonderful experience to Elizabeth. And in this experience, from the words of this experience, one understands how Christ, who lived in her, was already shedding light on the past, present and future of history.** [...]” ⁵

The words spoken by Elizabeth to Mary resound every time we recite the Hail Mary, and in the rosary, we can also address this praise to Mary, as Chiara recalled in a talk in 1988 on “prayer in the family,” already mentioned in the previous module: “[...] **Hail Mary, full of grace... blessed are you among women...**”. **And whoever has even just a bit of love for her in his or her heart does it voluntarily, because whoever loves is never satisfied with saying words of love to**

the person being loved. Mary, then, is the custodian of all graces and we can ask from her that which most preoccupies our human hearts: her glance on what we live today and at the hour of our death. **The Church still recommends the rosary. But, if this is too much, will it not be possible to recite, at least 10 Hail Marys every day? [...]**⁶

B) Objectives of the Gen 4 Meeting

- To discover that when we love, we succeed at hearing the voice of God more (N.B.: this is the specific objective in this module. In 3.a, the figure of Mary will be more predominant.)
- To understand how the relationship with God and love for the brother reinforce each other.

C) Gen 4 Meeting Content: drops of light with the Sacred Scriptures and with the Spirituality (answers / story of Chiara)

- Sacred Scriptures:

- **Annunciation and visit to St. Elizabeth:** Mary listens to the call of God and begins to love at once, going to help her cousin Elizabeth. And with this act of love, God made Mary understand beautiful things (Attachments C1)

Spirituality:

- **Story di Chiara (Attachment C2): When someone does acts of love, beautiful things happen**

Narrator: Chiara was then a bit older. She studied to become a primary school teacher and taught for a year in a small school in a mountain village. Then she started studying again, and at the time she was at home, together with her sisters and mother.⁷

It was a very cold winter day. Her Mom realized that they had run out of milk. At that time, people had to walk a long way to buy it at the farm, bringing the bottle to be filled.

Her younger sisters were playing, and Chiara realized that they didn't want to go out because it was cold and tiring. So, even though she had to study, the desire to do an act of love was greater and so she immediately said: "Mom, let me go to get the bottle of milk!"

She put on her coat and scarf, went out, and started walking. When she was halfway, right near a place called "White Madonna," Chiara felt she heard, not with her ears but in her heart, as if God was saying to her: "Give yourself to me! Be all mine, give yourself completely to me." And Chiara replied: "Yes." And she felt very very happy.

*"Then I understood that when someone does acts of love, beautiful things happen. I did that act of love to go and buy the milk, and Jesus called me. He called me to follow him forever."*⁸

- Answers of Chiara (Attachment C3):

Gen 4: Ciao, Chiara, I am Francesco from Sicily (Italy). "When you pray the rosary, doesn't it make you sleepy?"⁹

Chiara: [...] "When you pray the rosary, doesn't it make you sleepy?" You see, Gen 4, we are all

Gen, but you are Gen 4 and I am a Gen 1 and I am much older than you are. So, of course, I get less sleepy than you do. I like to pray the rosary. Do you know why? Because once, when Mary was expecting Baby Jesus, she went to visit Saint Elizabeth. (...) As soon as Saint Elizabeth saw Mary, she told her: "Everyone will call you blessed! You are blessed, because you are the Mother of Jesus; you are blessed, you are blessed." Now, when we say the "Hail Mary" in the rosary, we say the same thing: "Blessed are you among women; blessed are you among women." This is what Elizabeth told Mary: "Everyone will call you blessed," and so I, too, call Mary "blessed." I am happy to repeat these words many times: "Blessed are you among women, blessed are you among women." I like to say this to Mary. But little children, the Gen 4, don't have to say the whole rosary. It's enough for them to say ten "Hail Mary's" or just five, and to say them well. It's better to say just five "Hail Mary's" well than to say the whole rosary when you are sleepy. [...] (Applause) [...]

D) Ideas and other material for conducting the meeting:

Attachments D

¹C. Lubich, Tokyo (Japan), December 28, 1981, to the members of Rissho Kosei Kai, "La mia esperienza spirituale".

²C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, April 18, 2004, at the Hindu-Christian Symposium, "L'unione con Dio".

³C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, October 25, 1999, meeting of Muslim friends, "La preghiera, la meditazione e l'unione con Dio".

⁴C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, April 18, 2004, at the Hindu-Christian Symposium, "L'unione con Dio".

⁵C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, December 23, 1988, to the focolarinos, "La Via Mariae".

⁶C. Lubich, Faenza, April 10, 1988, to the families, "La preghiera in famiglia".

⁷See C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, April 28, 1992, Gen 4 Congress, answer no.3

⁸C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, April 28, 1992, Gen 4 Congress, answer no.3

⁹C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, April 28, 1992, Gen4 Congress, answer no.5.

