

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, 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".

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).



Module n. 1:

The Wonder of Creation: There I am, too

God has always thought of us and He accompanies us from the time of creation to "the new heavens and new earths"

A) For the assistants.



Ideas from Chiara's themes: to be in a relationship with God who created us.

1) In order to pray, "to speak with God," I must know that God exists. In 1988, when speaking of prayer in the family, Chiara had emphasized this: "[...] For children to learn how to pray to God, it is, first of all, necessary that this reality is revealed to them, that they discover His existence. They need to know that He is there [...]."

2) Another point highlighted by Chiara in various themes is how prayer is **important in the life of man, as well as how it is an essential element of man: the relationship with God differentiates man from other creatures.** "Man is truly such if he prays."²

3) This relationship with God is found in various religions. Chiara highlights this "affinity," speaking to different audiences, such as to the Buddhists in 1981, or to the Muslims some years later. Here is an excerpt taken from her talk during the meeting with Muslim friends in Castelgandolfo in 1999. "[...] Prayer is an essential element in our spiritual life. Without it, there is no true spiritual life. One can live without eating but not without breathing, and prayer is the breath of the soul. I know that I speak to believers in God who know what prayer is. Indeed, it can be said—it seems to me—that Islam is the religion of prayer, not only because it—that which you do five times a day—is one of its five pillars, but also because any verse in the Qur'an, if recited with faith, has the value of prayer. [...] Prayer is an essential component of man, precisely of his being man. Man is truly such if he prays. Prayer is relationship with God. Created by God in his image and likeness, man has the possibility of a one-on-one relationship with Him. [...]"

4) Finally, to pray well, it is necessary **"to think of Paradise often,"** to be aware, not only of where we come from, but also of where we are going. In the same meeting in 1999, Chiara said to Muslim friends: "[...] In heaven, in fact, where we hope to go, life will not be so much apostolate or something else, as praise, adoration, thanksgiving to God. Therefore,

we must learn from now on to live as we will live up there. To pray well, it is necessary to think of Paradise often. To have that desire to see God, which I also found in the life and in the writings of devout believers of Islam. [...]"⁴

B) Objectives of the Gen 4 Meeting

- To discover the relationship of love between God and man: God created me, accompanies me and I can speak with Him

- To thank God for all that He has given us, for creation which bring us back to God and helps us know His love

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

- Sacred Scriptures:

- episode of Creation and presentation of the program "From creation to new heavens and new earths": There I am, too (put photo); experiences related to thanking God for everything that He has given us, on creation which brings us back to God (Attachments C1)

Spirituality:

- Answers of Chiara (Attachment C2):

A Gen 4: "Many children say that God does not exist. But God does exist. How can I tell them this?"

Chiara: Oh! This is important. This is an important question, [...]very important, Gen, because there are children who go around saying that God doesn't exist. So he wants to know, "What should I say?"

I would tell them: "Do you see the sky? It's immense. Look at the stars, they are light years away, far, far away. Look at the ocean, it is immense. Look at the mountains. They seem to touch the sky. Did you make them?" "No," he will say. "Neither did I. Did your grandfather make them?" "No," he will say. "Neither did mine. Did your ancestors make them?" "No." "Neither did mine!"

Can anyone on earth say that they made the sea, the sky and all the endless number of flowers? No, no one can say this. But someone must have made them! For example, I might tell you, "I have this model of a very beautiful little house." Then it disappears and so I say, "Someone came and took it." So then I say, "If the sky exists, if the stars exists, it means that someone made them. Who made them?" God made them! It's logical! It's the logical answer!

They might say, "But we can't see God. How can you say that he exists if we can't see him." Well, you can't see air either, but it exists because I can breathe, all of you can breath. If we didn't have air, we would all die, and yet we can't see it. There are things that we can't see but that exist, and that's how it is with God. So you have to convince everyone! (Applause) Here in this slide, you can see a little bit of the ocean, which I certainly didn't make. Then there are the mountains that seem to touch the sky. It must be the Matterhorn, I think, and then... and here there are many flowers, many flowers that only God could have made! [...]

Chiara: Another Gen 4, Samuel. Oh, Samuel, hello.

Eli: "God made everything, but who made God?"⁵

Chiara: This is a beautiful question. Look, Samuel, look, I will tell you just this.

Come here, Samuel, so everyone can see you. Come here, Samuel.

So you say, "God made everything," and you are right. You have understood this, because I didn't make the stars, you didn't make them, your father didn't make them, not even your grandfather made them. And yet someone made them. God made them.

But you ask, "And who made God?" No one. God has always existed. Do you understand? Then remember it. [...]

Andrea: I'm Andrea from Grottaferrata. "Dear Chiara, how could God exist when heaven wasn't created yet?"⁶

Chiara: But God is the one who created heaven, also the blue sky that we see, even when there are clouds, even when a storm comes and everything is dark or when the sun is shining. God created it. He made everything. God is not the blue sky. He is a spirit so we can't see him, just as we can't see air. We can't see air, but it exists. I wouldn't be able to breathe without air, I would die, and you would too, of course. We would die if there were no air.

So air exists even though we can't see it. And even though we can't see God, he exists. He is spirit4, he is pure spirit. And because he is spirit, he also lives deep in our hearts. He is inside there. That's why, when we pray, we can go inside our heart where there is Jesus and talk to him. Remember this, all right? (Applause)

-Story of Chiara (Attachment C3): I too was your age, Gen 4

Narrator: Chiara was born in Trent, in the north of Italy.

Her first name was Silvia, and that was how her parents called her; her father's name was Luigi and her mother, Luigia; her older brother was called Gino, and her sisters, Liliana and Carla. But we have always known her as Chiara, the name she chose at 23 years of age when she wanted to love God the way a young girl from Assisi did, who then became a Saint: St. Clare ("Chiara," in Italian) of Assisi.

Since her childhood, Chiara loved⁷ the beautiful things of nature and hearing about God who created them. She often went to listen to Sister Carolina who gathered many little girls and spoke to them about God and about Jesus...

And Chiara also said that, when she was 7 years old, Sister Carolina used to take her and her little friends who were 4 or 5, or 6 years old, to a church in Trent, where there was the adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist for an hour. Chiara liked to kneel right in front, to see without being distracted and speak with Jesus in the Sacred Host that was exposed:

"Listen Jesus, you created the sun; the sun has light and warmth. I will fix my gaze on you and please will you put spiritual light and warmth into my soul." Chiara said this to Jesus every time she went there, staring at him, hoping that he would illuminate her, warm her heart.

And Sister Carolina also⁸ taught Chiara to do acts of love, giving her and the other girls a small dress made of paper for Baby Jesus. This dress had many tiny cuts in the form of "V's". For every act of love made, the tiny "V's" were folded up so that in the end the small dress seemed all embroidered by their many acts of love. When the whole dress was embroidered with love they brought it to Jesus.



D) Ideas and other material for conducting the meeting:

Attachments D

¹C. Lubich, Faenza, April 10, 1988, to the families, *"La preghiera in famiglia"*.

²C. Lubich, Castel Gandolfo, December 24, 1998, to the focolarinos, "V° tema della spiritualità collettiva – III° aspetto: 'L'amore eleva'".

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

⁴C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, June 18, 1988, Gen4 Congress, *answer no.*17.

⁵C. Lubich, Loppiano, May 5, 1989, to the Gen4 boys, answer no.7.

⁶C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, June 8, 1996, at the Gen4 Congress, *answer no.10*.

⁷See C. Lubich, Rocca di Papa, July 4, 1967, to the little Gen: "Her story as a child"

⁸See C. Lubich, Castelgandolfo, April 28, 1992, Gen 4 Congress, answer no.1

