

Editorial

What does *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* bring to the world? Why has this new academic journal been launched? In short, *Claritas* seeks to offer a platform for scholarly inquiry from a fresh perspective—that of unity. It must be said at the outset that this unity, to be true to itself, requires diversity. This unity is the perspective that *Claritas* seeks to offer and that its editors feel has immense value for scholarship as well as for addressing the current debates, crises, and questions that the world faces.

The inspiring spark for *Claritas* is the life and thought, dialogues and initiatives of the Focolare Movement. For this very reason, the journal is open to any scholar who wishes to contribute. It is not an internal publication. Rather, it is a peer-reviewed academic journal that intends to be a forum for serious scholarship and conversation between people who share a similar vision of the value of a more united world. Consequently, *Claritas* also seeks to facilitate critical and constructive dialogue between scholars from

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all research disciplines and to encourage cross-disciplinary and intercultural collaboration.

In this way, the journal hopes to contribute to building an international “culture” of unity. The building of such a culture of unity that respects and requires diversity needs the contribution of rigorous scholarship. *Claritas* takes up this task. Being inspired by the work and writings of Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare, the journal has a special interest in her experience of unity, particularly from a period beginning in 1949. *Claritas* will therefore regularly publish scholarship concerning those writings.

The founding of the journal itself is related to a project that explores the dimensions of such a culture of unity—the “Abba School.” This research group began in 1990 in Rome and has grown to include twenty-four scholars from a range of disciplines, among them theology, philosophy, the social sciences, economics, mathematics, psychology, and the arts. The Abba School publishes the results of its studies in books and in an Italian-language journal, *Nuova Umanità* (<http://www.rivistanuovaumanita.it>).

In point of fact, the concept for *Claritas* emerged from two parallel discussions. One included those involved in *Nuova Umanità*, and the other emerged among North American scholars. In November 2010, both groups came to Rome for the Abba School’s biannual international conference for academics. Together, they saw the possibility of establishing an online English-language academic journal. This idea was welcomed by other scholars who research and publish in English. During 2011, an editorial board was established and the journal before you now is the result.

Our inaugural issue includes three items under the first section entitled “To the Source.” This section, devoted to the work of Chiara Lubich, includes the translation of a particularly important

talk she gave in 1961, an editorial essay that contextualizes that talk and an article that presents one aspect of the experience to which Lubich refers in her talk. As to the text itself, it is from a private presentation Lubich made about a foundational and mystical period in her life that began in 1949. This event has come to be known as “Paradise ’49.” The talk was first published in *Nuova Umanità* only after her death. The first part of the text describes the initial few days during which her mystical experiences began, experiences that gave her and her companions a more complete understanding of the Trinitarian life. The second part goes on to present some “pictures” of a few of the other experiences Lubich had during that time.

The “Editorial Essay: Contextualizing ‘Paradise ’49’” situates this period of illumination in the larger context of Chiara Lubich’s thought and writings about unity. It first places her experiences in the history of Christian spirituality, and then examines letters about unity that Lubich wrote from the founding of the Focolare in 1943 to the summer of 1949. Finally, it looks at the text of the 1961 talk itself in order to help clarify the meaning of the mystical experiences presented therein.

Callan Slipper’s article, “Towards an Understanding of the Human Person According to the Mystical Experience of Chiara Lubich in the Paradise of ’49,” explores the notion of “person” in Lubich’s unpublished notes about “Paradise ’49.” The article begins with an overview of created reality in relation to uncreated reality from a Trinitarian perspective. Then, it examines the specific characteristic of the human person in light of Lubich’s mystical experiences, demonstrating how this characteristic is focused in Mary as the perfect example of a human person. Finally, it explores how the individual person is fulfilled in the Trinitarian life.

The second section of this issue contains four articles. First is an article by Antonio Maria Baggio: “Truth and Politics: The Loss of Authoritativeness in Contemporary Politics.” It deals with the sharpening conflict between politics and truth as a problem interwoven with the progressive loss of authoritativeness in contemporary politics. Baggio discusses how the reducing of truth to opinion in democracy obscures the element of shared truth that lies at the origin of every political community. He argues that expansion of power contributes to forgetting this truth, that should instead be brought up-to-date in order to give a sense of direction to communal life. He suggests that the dialectical method can serve as an aid in a communitarian quest for the truth. Baggio also argues for the use of renewed insights from Christian revelation in the analysis of human and political relationships.

In his article, “Globalization and Post-Secularism: Religions and a Universal Common Identity,” Pasquale Ferrara addresses the view that the “return” of religion on the international scene confirms the hypothesis of a “post-secular” era. He argues that what is missing is a reflection on the functioning of religions in connection with a systemic analysis of international relations in global transformation. Taking religions seriously in international relations requires their role as a structural element rather than a mere cultural phenomenon with only a secondary influence. In particular, Ferrara clarifies the distinction between two diverging paradigms (globalization and universalism) embodied in many world religions today, showing how religions can contribute to a global collective and pluralistic identity.

“Economy of Communion: A Sociological Inquiry on a Contemporary Charismatic Inspiration in Economic and Social Life,” by Bernhard Callebaut, seeks an answer to the question: Is the

Economy of Communion (EoC) an example of a “sudden invention” in the field of economic activity? The EoC, created by Chiara Lubich, has some charismatic elements that bring together the economic and social aspects of society represented by the entrepreneur and the poor. In his sociological analysis of the EoC, Callebaut addresses this issue using Max Weber’s work on charismatic leadership, as well as works by other scholars on the relationship between economy and charism. He also addresses the EoC’s influence at the level of economic rationality and for building a culture of communion.

Cinto Busquet’s “A Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue of Life in Japan: Finding Shared Values for Global Collaboration for the Common Good” analyzes the dialogue between members of the Buddhist Risshō Kōsei-kai (RKK) association and the Focolare Movement in Japan. The success of this encounter, he argues, is based on a shared commitment to living one’s religion while being open to that of the other. Busquet shows how the RKK and Focolare both affirm a fundamental unity to life in ways that lead to valuing universal compassion; harmony between peoples, nations and cultures; and gratitude as a core religious attitude toward life and its ultimate source. While the two groups hold quite different worldviews, these shared values, Busquet argues, have become the foundation of a successful interreligious collaboration in search of solutions to global problems.

The third section of this issue of *Claritas*, “News and Views,” provides a platform for articles from academic conferences and other kinds of scholarly work presenting viewpoints we think will be of interest to our readers. We have included two articles in this issue. The first, by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, was originally presented

at the Twelfth Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2011. Her article, “Mother Teresa and the *Bodhisattva* Ideal: A Buddhist View,” explores the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta in relation to the Buddhist notion of the *bodhisattva* as articulated within a Mahāyāna Buddhist framework. Tsomo addresses the question of whether the criteria for qualifying as a *bodhisattva* can be superimposed upon a figure who is both saintly and of another religious tradition. In the end, she suggests that persons who are models of compassion within their own traditions and others challenge us to expand our cultural understandings of religious ideals.

The second article is Abraham Skorka’s “Jewish Identity and Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A View from Argentina.” It was presented in 2011 at the Fourth International Symposium on Jewish-Christian Dialogue that was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This article argues for the importance today of a substantial dialogue between Christians and Jews. Skorka looks to Abraham Joshua Heschel’s call for such a dialogue in his famous “No Religion is an Island.” He goes on to show that despite clashes between Jews and Christians over the centuries, generations of great Jewish scholars have stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue for the construction of a better humanity based on an awareness of a transcendent God and biblical values. A review of the development of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue in Argentina since *Nostra Aetate* is also presented.

Finally, we have included reviews of three books that underline the fundamental importance of unity as a reality and an ideal. First is John Polkinghorne’s *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology* (2010). Second is David

Walsh's *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (2008). Third is Brendan Leahy's *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance, and Issues* (2011).

Claritas needs, of course, both readers and writers. We hope that all who come across its pages will feel inspired to appreciate and, in whatever way they can, to share in the project of dialogue that constructs a culture of unity.