

# Look at All the Flowers

## Editors' Introduction

Pope Francis presented the following reflection in his homily on July 25, 2013 at the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro: “With him [Christ], our life is transformed and renewed, and we can see reality with new eyes, from Jesus’ standpoint, with his own eyes (cf. *Lumen Fidei*, 18).” In her meditation, “Look at All the Flowers,” Chiara Lubich says that “to look at all the flowers is to have Jesus’ vision.” She presents a short yet deep and mystical reflection on her own experience of seeing reality with “Jesus’ vision.” In this meditation, she also presents the collective way to “discover” that vision through her spirituality of unity, an experience where the light of Christ arises in ways that illuminate reality at its depths, in God-Love. In this short introduction, we wish to present some background that may be helpful to the readers of the text. What is presented here is taken from papers given by scholars who are members of the Abba School, that studies Chiara’s mystical writings from “Paradise ’49,” a period of illumination

---

Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, Vol. 2, No. 2 (October 2013)  
7–11 © 2013

extending from the summer of 1949 to 1951.<sup>1</sup> The papers cited in this essay were presented on March 15, 2013 at the Mariapolis Center at Castel Gandolfo, Italy at an international conference of the expanded Abba School that focused on the seminal text “Look at All the Flowers.” The articles that follow in this issue of *Claritas* were also presented at that international conference.

### The Setting of the Text

Since the beginning of the Focolare, Chiara and her companions choose a passage from scripture and live it each day. They referred to this passage as the “Word of Life.” The Word of Life for November 1949 was drawn from Luke’s Gospel: “Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light. . .” (Lk 11:34). Fabio Ciardi, a member of the Abba School, points out a connection between Chiara’s commentary on this passage and her meditation, “Look at the All the Flowers,” which she also wrote that month:

The commentary Chiara prepared is surprising. The beginning and entire first page of the explanation of the Word of Life seems taken out of context with respect to the biblical reference. . . . The commentary begins: “If we are united,

---

1. In *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2012): 5–12 there is the publication of “Paradise ’49,” a translation of Chiara Lubich’s famous talk about her mystical experiences that began in 1949. It is followed in the same issue (13–23) with an “Editorial Essay: Contextualizing ‘Paradise ’49.’” The Abba School is an international group of scholars who meet regularly to study the yet unpublished texts of “Paradise ’49” and to publish articles presenting their findings in the Italian journal *Nuova Umanità*. *Claritas* is committed to publishing selected articles in English.

Jesus is among us” and it highlights the value of the presence of Jesus in the community linked to the practice of the New Commandment to the point of being entirely dedicated to the “making one of all and in all the One.” It is a commentary which seems not to be a commentary at all. Instead, the commentary seems to be entirely inspired by the spirituality of unity. . . .

The [commentary] continues referring explicitly to the evangelical passage: “If your eye is simple, the one who looks through it is God.” God sees in each person his Son, Jesus. To have an eye which is simple, according to Chiara’s commentary, means to have the vision, the gaze of God, to be and to live as God, and so to live in love, in the total gift of oneself. This is the contrary of the eye which is not simple, which looks at creatures and things to possess them. Through God’s gaze, his love passes, the love of a God who is Trinitarian, capable of generating Trinitarian relationships: “Look at every neighbor then with love, and love means to give. A gift, moreover, calls for a gift, and you will be loved in return. Understood in this way, love is to love and to be loved: as in the Trinity.” Love which springs forth from the gaze of God, becomes the gaze of the eye which is pure; it is capable of penetrating “hearts and making them perfectly one,” in such a way as to no longer find oneself in oneself, but in the other, or better, to find “Love, which is God living within you,” God in everyone, “and all will be one.” We glimpse here the communitarian value of this gaze: Jesus in the midst of those who live in unity is the true “pure eye”; most fit to see reality as God sees it.

We could hypothesize that “Look at All the Flowers” is a fruit of that specific Word of Life lived for an entire week, even if the first idea of the eye which is pure was already present in Chiara’s spiritual journey.<sup>2</sup>

What did Chiara see, though the grace of God, when the eye of the unity between her and her companions was pure? She saw many realities of heaven and earth.<sup>3</sup> But here it is enough to mention what Ciardi quotes from Chiara:

Therefore: the plants are love, the animals are love, the stars are love, the stones, the rocks, the flowers, food, the table, the bed, clothes etc. are love . . . and all are my children. . . . everything must be treated with the love of the Father towards His Son! What an open heart and what a smile of God on created things through our eyes! The substance of everything is love.

Chiara understood that to see the true reality of each creature implies a vocation to live this reality, and to assist each other in finding and living this love that links all things in a hidden unity. But to succeed on this journey, a deeper understanding is necessary. Ciardi points out that for Chiara, the gaze of God on the world passes through Jesus forsaken, the pupil of God’s eye on the world. It is here that “God’s creative and re-creative gaze onto the

---

2. Fabio Ciardi, “An Insight at the Root of the ‘Collective Spirituality,’” (Unpublished paper delivered in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, March 15, 2013), 2.

3. See footnote 1 above.

world is fulfilled” and wherein one can find God and be “elevated” into the Trinitarian life.<sup>4</sup> It is also though this pupil, the wound of Jesus’ forsakenness, that the divine is poured out on humankind and unity is restored. When one places himself or herself in God through Jesus forsaken for the unity of the world, for the realization of its true reality, one finds, together with others in the communal spirituality of Chiara, Jesus among them bringing this life of love and unity into the world.

### The Text Itself

Turning to “Look at All the Flowers,” we find that in the Ideal of the spirituality of unity about which Chiara is writing, spiritual life is no longer centered only in the soul where Christ dwells. The center that is emphasized for a life of unity and the realization of that unity in the world is among persons. In that communal place is the dwelling of God, Jesus in the midst, the one who can make those who choose this path one in him. This “one” is the life of the Trinity that Jesus brings to us through his forsakenness. But this does not negate the importance of the presence of God within. On September 6, 1949, Chiara wrote: “Our inner life is nourished by our external life. Inasmuch as I penetrate into the soul of my neighbor, I penetrate into the presence of God within me; inasmuch as I penetrate into God within me, I penetrate into my neighbor.”<sup>5</sup> Here is the theme developed in “Look at All the Flowers.” Lucia Abignente, another scholar of the Abba School, quotes a beautiful passage also written on September 6, 1949 by

4. Ciardi, 3.

5. Ibid., (Unpublished writing by Chiara), 4.

Chiara that expresses her discovery of this oneness of God within oneself and in all:

I feel living in me all the people of the world, all the Communion of saints. Really. Because my self is humanity with all those who were, who are and who will be. I feel and live this reality because in my soul I feel both the joy of Heaven and the anguish of humanity which is all one great Jesus Forsaken. And I want to live all this Jesus Forsaken.<sup>6</sup>

Anna Pelli, another Abba School member, presented a philosophical reflection on the actual “gaze” that produced this insight for Chiara. First, she notes that what is discovered is God in the unique “flowers” which refer to the inner being of all creatures. She turns to Plato, who speaks of the “sight of the soul/mind”: “to indicate, analogously, the eye’s capacity to grasp things in their shape and immediate presence, and the intellect’s capacity to grasp their intelligible form, their inner essence.”<sup>7</sup> Turning to Heidegger, Pelli notes that the essence of one’s being “shows itself” illuminating in that revelation.<sup>8</sup>

Pelli then points to Chiara’s text to show the unique collective turn in this philosophical tradition: “Chiara’s text urges us to make a further close examination: in order to reach the essence, the truth of being, we need to look at not ‘*only one flower*’ but at ‘*all*

6. Antonio M. Baggio, “Il pensiero ‘nuziale’ di Chiara Lubich,” *Nuova Umanità* 30 (2008): 335.

7. Anna Pelli, “A Glance that Becomes ‘Sight’: Philosophical Prospects,” (Unpublished paper given at Castel Gandolfo, Italy on March 15, 2013.), 1.

8. Ibid.

*the flowers*. . . .”<sup>9</sup> This gives us the possibility of experiencing the “irrevocable otherness” of all creatures, to know the truth about them that lies at the deepest level is their being: “the presence of God, of Love: *‘because he is in them all.’*”<sup>10</sup> Chiara sees this as possible through a “communal act” of participation with the other in love. She states: “In the fulfillment of the dynamics of love, a new image of being and of truth emerges, of which Chiara highlights the triune paradigm.”<sup>11</sup> Pelli’s conclusion is profound:

The explicit mention of the triune nature of God introduces the very form of love on the model of the Trinity, that is, of love as the continual giving of one to the other, as the fathomless losing oneself in the other, to find oneself again in the mirror image of the other, in a further form—the One—that is not only simply greater than them but which, while it contains them, is at the same time contained by them.<sup>12</sup>

In this “space” that is the One, the subjects are united. The unity is an event of the One that happens between and within them, “a reality that is real transcendence with respect to what preceded it. This truth is made attainable in unity.”<sup>13</sup> Here is the Copernican revolution in the charism of Chiara Lubich where in Chiara’s words, the perfection is not just God in oneself, but “God in God”: God in me in God in the other; God in the other in God

in me; God in God where “two heavens meet” and “a single Trinity comes to be, where the two are like Father and Son and among them is the Holy Spirit.” This is the perfection that Chiara sought in the spirituality of unity.

### Implications of the Text

Many of the papers presented at the March 15 conference dealt with the implications of this mystical and communal vision of Chiara Lubich expressed in the text “Look at All the Flowers.” Persons from different fields of studies such as communication, mathematics, psychology, education, and so on spoke of how the new spirituality could be leaven for changes in their fields and for interdisciplinary work as well.

In a paper by Pál Tóth, a member of the Abba School and scholar of communication theory, he discusses how Jürgen Habermas’s notion of the “inter-subjective human capacity” was developed in Chiara Lubich’s vision of human potential. She saw that the rapport and sharing with other persons is “an essential key in the relationship with God and vice versa.”<sup>14</sup> The result of this communication is an “integration” among persons and social diversities. The place of this integration, the unity in diversity, “offers a common ground of content, fundamental truths that are able to illuminate the true identity of the different participants.”<sup>15</sup> The mutual illumination of identities takes place in a deep form of communication that is more than the words expressed. Tóth gives

---

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 2.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

---

14. Pál Tóth, “Criteria for a Normative Theory of Ideal Discourse,” (Unpublished paper given at Castel Gandolfo, Italy on March 15, 2013.), 1.

15. Ibid., 5.

the example of a social worker inspired by Chiara's spirituality who in working with gypsy women moved beyond providing only goods and skills, and welcomed them into her heart as sisters "the same as me." For Chiara, communication's goal in dialogue is not the exchange of views, negotiations, and so on, but "a reciprocal *deepening*, that is at the same time a *coming closer* in view of a common growth."<sup>16</sup>

Judith Povilus, another member of the Abba School and dean of the Sophia University Institute, looks at the methodology of mathematics as practiced in a study group as a model for disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research. She interprets Chiara's position that we must become "empty" of our own views in order to let in others in the following way: "I cannot enter into the mind of another researcher to fully grasp the truth he or she wants to convey if I am rich with my own point of view or my own knowledge, without making a gift of it to my neighbor."<sup>17</sup> Rather, in forming a "cell" with other researchers following the spirituality of unity, she and the others find a "superior light" in which to communicate their views. Povilus writes that it was like what Chiara noted: a cell transcends its individual components, which, in their turn are "lost" in giving themselves over to another to form a new "whole." As an example, she writes that one day a member of their group was explaining his research as a gift to the others. In setting his views aside and not being defensive, listening to the comments of the others, "he came to a clearer understanding of the meaning of

---

16. Ibid., 6.

17. Judith Povilus, "From Methodology to Mathematics: A Contribution to an Inter-disciplinary Approach," (Unpublished paper given at Castel Gandolfo, Italy on March 15, 2013.), 1.

the interactions in the mathematical model of the physical system he was investigating."<sup>18</sup> Povilus comes to the conclusion that "if all the various areas of study are like 'narratives,' i.e. ways of speaking about the truth, it is in their interrelation that reality is more fully revealed and new light is shed on all . . . in being mirrored in others, in entering into others."<sup>19</sup>

---

18. Ibid., 2.

19. Ibid., 4.