

# Editorial

This double issue of *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* (2018/1–2) represents a new step in its history. After seven years in the capable hands of Professor Donald Mitchell at Purdue University, the journal now passes into the unproven hands of myself, Professor Declan O’Byrne at Sophia University Institute (Loppiano, Florence, Italy). Donald Mitchell and his collaborators expressed the desire to bring the journal closer to the Sophia University Institute, for reasons that this issue hopes to introduce. The current issue is conceived of as an introduction to Sophia itself, in hopes of showing the extent to which it shares the same basic inspiration that encouraged the original foundation of *Claritas*.

To emphasize the founding inspiration that Sophia and *Claritas* share, we feature here a 2001 address by Chiara Lubich. This was her inaugural speech at a summer school for young people of

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the Focolare Movement. In it, she introduces the main inspirations and features of a summer school for young people (“Istituto Superiore di Cultura”), the first of a series that ran from 2001 to 2007, in Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, and involved more than 250 young people of the Focolare Movement. In this inaugural speech, Chiara Lubich conceived of these summer schools as a pilot for what was to become the Sophia University Institute, inaugurated in 2008. This article may be considered as a foundational document, setting out the vision and approach to university that Sophia strives to embody.

Both the journal and the university share the inspiration of the Focolare Movement, which promotes a culture of unity and dialogue. Both aim to offer space to the founding charism, as well as to people who are not necessarily members of this movement, and to explore themes of common interest. In the case of our journal, this takes the form of peer-reviewed scholarship. This issue will show how broad these interests are.

Lubich’s address was delivered in a specific context and presupposes an audience of members of this movement. For this reason, we also include a commentary by the current rector of Sophia University Institute, the Italian theologian Piero Coda. In this article, Coda offers a rich reflection on the content, structure, and implications of Lubich’s talk and shows its significance for the very idea of university education itself.

Following this, we include a series of papers produced in the context of Sophia Global Studies. One of the developments at the institute during its tenth anniversary (the academic year 2017–2018) was the inauguration on October 24, 2017, of a new area of study, Sophia Global Studies. This series of papers explores this new center and illustrates its significance and relevance to the

interests of this journal. This center has become an international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary laboratory for dialogue and the study of themes such as unity, peace, and fraternity and their relation to the challenges that a global world faces in our times.

In the opening contribution, Pasquale Ferrara (Italian ambassador to Algeria and president of Sophia Global Studies) and Paolo Frizzi (academic coordinator of Sophia Global Studies) outline and justify the foundation of a center for global studies at a moment in history where global perspectives appear to be threatened by isolationist trends. This contribution is followed by the keynote speech of the inaugural event of Sophia Global Studies given by Olivier Roy (political scientist, European University Institute). Roy addresses the complex question of religious identity in the European context, identifying important shifts in the meaning of Christian identity throughout the twentieth century and the challenges arising from changing demographics and increasing religious plurality on the continent.

There follow further contributions from the Sophia Global Studies inauguration event. Fabio Petito (University of Sussex) offers a reflection on the changing place of religion in a global world that, contrary to expectation, has not followed the secularization thesis that had been the “uncontestable assumption” of many sociologists of religion. He sees Sophia Global Studies as uniquely positioned to comprehend the positive contributions that different religions can make to questions of global interest. Léonce Bekermans (University of Padua) focuses on Europe’s place in a changing world and on the values that best characterize the European Union during the current crisis in democracy and erosion of the postwar international system. He regards Europe as being well placed to represent on the world stage how these values might be

promoted. Adnane Mokrani, an Islamic theologian teaching in a Pontifical University in Rome (PISAI), traces the complexity of arriving at a full understanding of belief in a global world. He pays attention to the importance of dialogue among people of religious faith and among the secularized cultures in which religious believers find themselves. Roberto Catalano (Urbaniana University) highlights the importance of the so-called “renewal movements” that arose in religious contexts during the twentieth century and outlines their importance in a new and more open understanding of religious identities, and their strategic value in promoting dialogue. Together, these papers highlight the importance of Sophia Global Studies and the contributions this center can make to this journal and to the culture and dialogue in today’s complex world.

We are happy to publish an article by the former editor of this journal, Donald Mitchell. We are grateful for his continuing collaboration as managing editor. He writes on the need for a path toward global citizenship that avoids both exasperated secularism and fundamentalism. Mitchell’s interests and concerns accord with those expressed in papers from the Sophia Global Studies inauguration but attend more closely to the context of the United States and Asia. Here, too, the ambiguity of religious identity is evident. Mitchell argues that tendencies toward conflict and violence are to be resisted and that the inner resources of religious traditions open to dialogue are to be favored and developed. The final article, by Bernhard Callebaut, a professor of foundations of social sciences at Sophia University Institute, reflects on Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement and the extent to which the Movement’s growing impact should be related to contextual factors and to the unexpected and disruptive appearance of a charism on the stage of history. He recounts the main stages of the Movement’s growth

up to Lubich's death in 2008 and concludes with a reference to the foundation of the Sophia University Institute.

Thus, this issue offers contributions that demonstrate the journal's thematic convergence with its new home at Sophia University Institute. *Claritas*, of course, wishes to host studies from further afield and in no sense wishes to reflect solely the point of view of its home in Sophia, in Europe. This issue, nevertheless, elucidates the meaning of the journal's new association with Sophia University Institute and its ongoing interest in the challenges and opportunities that *Claritas* and Sophia together offer to culture and dialogue in the broadest senses of those terms.