

Editorial

On November 14, 2019, the academic community of Sophia University Institute had an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican. In the course of his address,¹ the pope congratulated Sophia on its first twelve years of activity. He emphasized the importance of the charism of unity to the life of the institute and of the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*. His speech emphasized three aspects of the institute's work—*wisdom*, *pact*, and *going forth*—and exhorted the community to continue this work with “joy, vision, and decision.”

Pope Francis began by noting that the first of these aspects, *wisdom*, is embodied in the university's name, “Sophia,” and in its

1. The Italian text of his address can be found at: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2019/11/14/0869/01818.html>

ambition to communicate wisdom through its actions and to imbue all areas of study with the pursuit of wisdom. Referring to the liturgy of the day, he noted that wisdom is “the Light of God's face illuminating the face of humanity: the mystery of humanity, the questioning of humanity, the suffering of humanity, the destiny of humanity.” He indicated that while for Christians wisdom is “Jesus crucified and risen,” this light illuminates *all* human beings, “all religions, all cultures, all authentically human activity.” For this reason, he urged the community to “walk with everyone, not *against* everyone.” Some people, he said, tend to look for those against whom to walk. The message of Christianity is different: it calls us to walk together with others “to build a true and harmonious culture of encounter.” This culture is much needed in today's world.

Pope Francis associated the second of the three aspects, *pact*, with one of the key initiatives of 2020, the Global Compact on Education.² His words on *pact* were clearly related to preparation for this initiative. This pact is taught by the Word of God and constitutes

the pact between God and human beings; the pact between generations; the pact between peoples and cultures; the pact—in schools—between teachers, students and parents; the pact between humanity, animals and plants and even inanimate objects which make our common home beautiful and rich in variety. Everything is in relation with everything else, everything is created to be a living icon of God who is the Trinity of Love.

2. <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/en/>

For this reason, he said, we must prioritize educating ourselves to live this pact and indeed to “be this living pact in all of its dimensions.” In this way, we open the path to a “new civilization that embraces humanity and the cosmos in universal fraternity.”

The third of these aspects, *going forth*, Pope Francis established as the foundation for the other two. If we do not “go forth,” then we do not encounter wisdom, and if we do not “go forth,” then the pact does not reach everyone in “ever greater and more inclusive concentric circles.” Only by “going forth” do we encounter the faces of our brothers and sisters, “with their wounds and aspirations, their questions and gifts.” We must study and learn with “heart, mind and hands” to go to Him “outside the camp” (Heb 13:13), to encounter the “face of God ‘outside the camp’ in every brother and sister.”

It is easy to relate this message to the contents of this issue of *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, which explores various expressions of these three aspects of our work and their interrelation.

The first contribution to this issue of *Claritas* is the translation of a talk by Chiara Lubich that was recently published for the first time in Italian.³ In 2012, *Claritas* 1, no. 1 (2012) published one of Lubich’s earlier accounts of her 1949 mystical experience, drawn from a talk in 1961 in which Chiara spoke publicly about this experience for the first time. On the occasion of the talk we now publish, however, Chiara expressed some dissatisfaction with that earlier version. In this more recent talk, Chiara speaks with intense emotion, as though she is reliving the experience, almost whispering at times and linking her phrases with words like “and” and “so.” The translation has avoided “smoothing out” the English to

preserve the tone of the original presentation. Chiara is speaking from memory and was not aware at the time of the presentation that many writings from this period had in fact been preserved. Later, in the context of the Abba School, when she collaborated in the production of a canonical text of *Paradise ’49*, this talk was adapted as the basis for a narrative introduction to the experience that was elaborated in 1986 and incorporated into the text in 1991. For part of this text, especially as it relates to the Pact between Chiara and Foco, see *Claritas* 2, no. 1 (2013). An overview of the whole text, by Fabio Ciardi, is found in “Traveling Paradise,” *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2019).

The text published here will be of interest even after the canonical version of *Paradise ’49* is published, for it expresses Chiara’s memory of the events twenty years later. In it, we find an expression of wisdom speaking, and the whole experience is built on a pact: on that between Chiara Lubich and Iginio Giordani but also on a more expansive pact that takes on cosmic significance.

The connection between this mystical experience and the theme of “going forth” is elaborated in the articles that follow. Peter Casarella offers his overview of the figure of Chiara Lubich and her spirituality, as well as its relevance to a number of concrete situations, including dialogue and the economy of communion. Roberto Catalano situates the life of the Focolare Movement in the broader context of the ecclesial movements that emerged around the time of the Second Vatican Council and renewed attention to the church’s mission and dialogues. Piero Coda takes up the theme of mission and dialogue in the context of a specific experience of dialogue with Shia Muslims organized by the Sophia University Institute and the Islamic Centre of England. Finally, Cherylanne Menezes recounts the history of contact between the

3. It is published as “Paradiso ’49: Una narrazione vent’anni dopo,” *Nuova Umanità* 234 (2019): 15–34.

Focolare Movement and various representatives of the Hindu tradition from the 1980s to today.

In these experiences of mission and dialogue, the pope's exhortation to "go forth" and expand in ever wider concentric circles rings true and clear. It is in this encounter that we come ever more into contact with wisdom and discover ever new dimensions of this pact. In this issue, the emphasis is on interreligious dialogue, but the truth of the interconnection between the three aspects is apparent in various fields. It is the task of Sophia University Institute to spell out this interconnection in various disciplines, and it is the task of *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* to give expression to this effort.

With this issue of *Claritas*, the journal concludes its fruitful relationship with Purdue University, which has published the journal from its inception to today. Beginning in 2020, the journal moves to Sophia University Institute, which will oversee its publication. It is therefore incumbent on me to express the journal's sincere gratitude to Purdue University Press for its generous hospitality over these years, especially to Justin Race, director of Purdue University Press, and Katherine Purple, who is responsible for the full production process of *Claritas*. With this move, from Purdue to Sophia, we also recognize Donald W. Mitchell, the founding editor of *Claritas* at Purdue University, for creating and building the journal into what it is today. In one sense, the move to Sophia is a move back "within the camp," as Sophia is the journal's natural home. In another sense, though, the journal continues its mission to move "outside the camp" by publishing contributions that express the encounter with wisdom and how it illuminates today's culture in all of its dimensions.