

The
Art
of Loving

Chiara Lubich

The
Art
of Loving

Preface by
Cardinal Francis George

Introduction by
Amy J. Uelmen



New City Press
Hyde Park, New York

Published in the United States by New City Press
202 Comforter Blvd., Hyde Park, NY 12538
www.newcitypress.com
©2010 New City Press (English translation)

Translated by Eugene Selzer from the original Italian
L'arte di amare
©2005 Città Nuova Editrice, Rome, Italy

Cover design by Durva Correia

Biblical citations are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*
©1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of
the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lubich, Chiara, 1920-2008.

[*Arte di amare*. English]

The art of loving / Chiara Lubich ; preface by Francis George ;
introduction by Amy J. Uelmen ; [translated by Eugene Selzer
from the original Italian].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-56548-335-4 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Love—Religious
aspects—Catholic Church. 2. Christian life—Catholic authors.

3. Focolare Movement. I. Title.

BV4639.L77313 2010

241'.4—dc22

2010002958

2nd printing: October 2014

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Preface (by <i>Cardinal Francis George</i>)	9
Introduction (by <i>Amy J. Uelmen</i>).....	11

God Is Love

Charity	27
It Comes from Heaven.....	28
The Demands of Genuine Love	29

Love Everyone

The First Characteristic of Love.....	35
Divine Love and Human Love.....	36
One Human Family	37
Opening the Heart	38
Everyone Is a Candidate for Unity.....	39
Banish Judgment	40
Who Is My Neighbor?	41
The “Discovery”	42
One at a Time	43
Without Limit.....	44
To Serve	45
A Maternal Heart.....	46
Even Our Enemies	47

For a New World.....	49
Within Everyone's Reach.....	50
The Christian Revolution.....	51
Heaven on Earth.....	52
Like the Creator.....	53

Be the First to Love

Take the First Step.....	57
In Imitation of God.....	58
Toward the Least Lovable.....	59
He Taught Us.....	60
Gratuitous Love.....	61
In Love what Counts Is to Love.....	62
The Pact of Mercy.....	63
Daily Resolutions.....	65

Love as You Love Yourself

The "Golden Rule".....	69
A Law Written on Every Heart.....	70
For All People of Good Will.....	71
Over and Above Nature.....	72
You and Your Neighbor, Both Members of Christ.....	73
Love Creates Equality.....	74
<i>As Yourself</i>	75

“Make Yourself One”

True Love	79
God’s Own Chosen Way.....	80
Poor in Spirit.....	81
“Making Ourselves One” in Everything	83
Dying to the Self	84
Letting Go of God — for God	85
Have a Heart of Flesh	86
“Pruning” Helps Love Grow	87
Words of Substance	88
Hard Work.....	89
Take upon Yourself the Other’s Burdens	90
We Must “Be Love”.....	92
In Everything But Sin.....	93
The Risk of Speaking Out.....	94
The Gift of the Other.....	95
Believing and Enduring All Things	96
Even Suffering.....	97
Until Love Is Mutual	99
It Is Jesus!	100

Loving Jesus in Everyone

“You Did It to Me”.....	103
An “Other Christ”	104
Clear Sight	105
In Every Relationship: Charity.....	106
Until Morning.....	107
Our Neighbor: A Goldmine.....	108
The Pearl.....	109

Mutual Love

Unity: Effect of the Eucharist	113
The Law of Heaven	114
What He Asks of Us	116
Jesus Did It First	118
A Heroic Love.....	119
White Martyrdom.....	120
There Is Love and Then There Is Love	121
Giving One's Life	123
The Perfection of Love	124
Reviving Relationships	125
Nothing But Mutual Love	126
Giving Witness	127
The Dress of a Christian.....	128
“By This Everyone Will Know ...”	129
Unity in Thought.....	130
Mutual Love among Christians.....	132

The Risen Lord in Our Midst

If We Are United Jesus	
Is in Our Midst	135
The Kingdom of God in Our Midst.....	136
Trinitarian Life.....	138
Notes.....	140
Sources	141
Also Available	143

Preface

The *Art of Loving* could be an ambiguous book title were it not immediately followed by the name of the author: Chiara Lubich. Chiara's long life was testimony to a way of loving that extends to everyone because it was so completely immersed in the love of God. It begins with people rather than principles, with relationships rather than rules. It is an art that transforms the artist.

Chiara quotes most often from the Gospel according to St. John. "God is love," St. John writes and we remember. Too often, however, we might forget just how unique that claim is among world religions. In many faiths, God does love the world and its creatures; but the belief that self-sacrifice is the inner dynamic of God's own life is proper to a religion that worships one God in three divine Persons.

Because God is self-giving, those made in his image and likeness are called beyond generosity, the sharing of things, to self-sacrifice, the sharing of one's life. A sign of such love is joy. A fruit of such love is unity. The way that is the Focolare Movement is marked by joy and unity, with God and with others.

The family is a school of love, where we learn to give to others, to put them before ourselves, to make room for all. Chiara's spirituality embraces

the world and the God who freely created it and redeemed it so that we could be sanctified while sharing our lives in community. In the Focolare community and the Church that protects it, we come to know God by living with him and interacting with him regularly, habitually.

Pope Benedict XVI has made love the *leitmotiv* of his magisterium, linking love to ideas and principles that have sometimes been placed outside of it or even in opposition to it: eros, justice, economics and business, politics and government. If God is love, then in some sense the quality of free gift, of gratuity, must be intrinsic to every human action. Chiara Lubich knew this truth and lived it intensely.

Mothers are the first to teach the art of loving, and the Focolare is the work of Mary, Mother of God and our mother in God's family. This book is one more gift from the Focolare Movement to the Church and to the world; it celebrates the gift given everyone in Chiara Lubich. The book's simplicity can hide its depth, but spending time with it will help anyone acquire the art of loving.

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

Introduction

“So, can you bottle it?”

At a conference exploring resources to strengthen religious identity in youth, I had been chatting with a friend and sharing something about my own experience growing up with the Focolare spirituality and its ongoing activities and programs for youth formation. He responded, “So, can you bottle it?” Bottle it? I was a little taken aback. “Probably not,” was my initial reaction. At the root of the Focolare spirituality is a charism, a gift from God. It seemed to me that any attempt to contain it or to reduce it to a formula not only would be futile, but would miss the point entirely.

In fact, much of Focolare founder Chiara Lubich’s experience can be summed up in her courage and capacity *not* to “bottle it.” The narrative of her life is thick with examples of total availability and receptivity to the creative plans God wanted to work in her and in the movement that was coming to life. Chiara said more than once, “The pen does not know what it will write ... the artist’s brush does not know what it will paint. When God takes someone in hand to bring a new work into being, that person does not know what she will achieve; she is simply an instrument.” How can we harness something that