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Chiara Lubich's "Resurrection of Rome". Reflections in Light of Special Psychopedagogy

„Zmartwychwstanie Rzymu” Chiary Lubich. Refleksja w świetle psychopedagogiki specjalnej

Summary: The article undertakes a reflection on the significance of Chiara Lubich's text "The Resurrection of Rome" for special needs psychopedagogy. First, it responds to the question of the subject of this short "philosophical-theological thesis", i.e., what is the state of the contemporary human person, who observing "contemporary Rome" full of dirt, vanity and sin not only surrounding him or herself, but also within, simultaneously deciphers his or her destiny as being resurrection. Created in the likeness of God, the human person is free and called to free and joyful "gaining of Heaven" and to relationship with God. In the contemporary world, disability continues to be received as "bad" and a deprivation of the most important values; it draws negative social attitudes, and so it is important to offer a key to change this destructive attitude toward others. The second section of the article is devoted to an analysis of the suggestions which Ch. Lubich included in the text "The Resurrection of Rome", and which may be used in the process of changing attitudes

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towards people with disability. These suggestions correspond to the assumptions of Christian personalism in special needs education.

Keywords: Chiara Lubich; Focolare; the spirituality of unity; special needs psychopedagogy; disabled individuals; Christian personalism.

Streszczenie: W artykule została podjęta refleksja nad znaczeniem tekstu Chiary Lubich „Zmartwychwstanie Rzymu” dla psychopedagogiki specjalnej. Najpierw starano się odpowiedzieć na pytanie, co jest przedmiotem tego krótkiego „traktatu filozoficzno-teologicznego”, jaka jest kondycja współczesnego człowieka, który widzi nie tylko wokół siebie, ale też w sobie „współczesny Rzym” pełen brudu, marności i grzechu, a jednocześnie odczytuje swoje przeznaczenie do zmartwychwstania. Stworzony na podobieństwo Boga, jest wolny i powołany do wolnego i radosnego „zdobywania Nieba”, do więzi z Bogiem. We współczesnym świecie niepełnosprawność jest nadal odbierana jako zło i pozbawienie najważniejszych wartości, budzi negatywne postawy społeczne, dlatego ważne jest podanie klucza do zmiany tego destrukcyjnego odnoszenia się do drugich. Druga część artykułu została poświęcona analizie wypowiedzi Chiary Lubich, które zawarła w tekście „Zmartwychwstanie Rzymu”, a które mogą być wykorzystane w procesie zmiany postaw wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością. Korespondują one z założeniami personalizmu chrześcijańskiego w pedagogice specjalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiara Lubich; Focolare; duchowość jedności; psychopedagogika specjalna; osoba z niepełnosprawnością; personalizm chrześcijański.

Chiara Lubich (22.01.1920–14.03.2008), the founder of the worldwide and interreligious Focolare ‘Work of Mary’ movement of the Catholic Church present in over 180 countries of the world and incorporating several million people of varying levels of engagement, is the author of an immense number of texts, including the monthly *Words of Life* published for decades and translated into many languages. A particular expression of Chiara Lubich’s call for unity and St. John Paul II’s words: ‘We should make the Church a home and school of communion,’¹ is the publishing of the quarterly *Unity and Charismas* by the Mariapoli Foundation in many languages on the model of the Ital-

¹ Jan Paweł II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 43 (Poznań: Pallotinum, 2001).

ian journal *Unità e Carismi*, which serves the cause of spreading brothership, unity and peace. Over ten works incorporating the texts of Chiara Lubich have been published in Polish, two scientific publications on her life, the Work of Mary which she founded² as well as initiatives that arose around them such as the economy of the communion of goods,³ several books about her and the Focolari Movement⁴ and scientific publications.⁵ Mariola Kozubek discusses Chiara Lubich's spirituality in her publications, particularly from the pedagogical point of view.⁶ The author has made an attempt to relate this spiritu-

² Lucia Abignente, *Przeszłość i terażniejszość – historia jedności. Studium o duchowości Ruchu Focolarii* [*The past and present – a history of unity. A study on the spirituality of the Focolari Movement*] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL JPII, 2010); Mirosław Szewieczek, *Bijące serce jedności* [*The beating heart of unity*] (Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo AKANT, 2003).

³ Stanisław Grochmal, *Paradygmat jedności w kontekście zarządzania organizacjami* [*The paradigm of unity in the context of organizational management*] (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2013). S. Grochmal is also the author of articles on the economic, social, cultural and spiritual aspects of the economics of communion, which at the same time indicates its educational values, both for those who share goods that have been produced as well as those who are their recipients.

⁴ Eg., Armando Torno, *Chiara Lubich. Życie i dzieło* [*Chiara Lubich. Life and works*] (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 2012); *Przygoda jedności: z założycielką Ruchu Focolari rozmawia Franka Zambonini* [*The adventure of unity: Frank Zambonini speaks with the founder of the Focolari Movement*] (Kraków: WAM, 1995).

⁵ Lucia Abignente, Dorota Kornas-Biela, Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “Pedagogiczne inspiracje Ruchu Focolari. W kierunku pedagogiki jedności” [“The pedagogical inspirations of the Focolari Movement. Toward a pedagogy of unity”], in: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Między tradycją a współczesnością* [*Christian education. Between tradition and the contemporary*], ed. Alina Rynio (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007), 1006–1026; Katarzyna Olbrycht, “Co może odnaleźć pedagog w zbiorze tekstów Charyzmat jedności Chiary Lubich” [“The findings of an educator in the collection of works by Chiara Lubich on the Charisma of Unity”], *Nowe Miasto* 2–3 (2008): 168.

⁶ Eg., Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “Wychowanie do wiary w rodzinie – propozycja duchowości jedności” [“Education to faith in the family – a proposal from the spirituality of unity”], *Homo Dei* 1 (2014): 23–36; Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “Środowisko wychowawcze rodziny i Ruchu Focolari w doświadczeniu choroby bł. Chiary Luce Badano (1971–1990)” [“The educational environment of the family and the Focolari Movement in the experience of the illness of bl. Chiara Luce Badano (1971–1990)”], in: *Cierpienie – tajemnica i wyzwanie* [*Suffering – the mystery and challenge*], ed. Antoni Bartoszek (Katowice: Emanuel, 2014), 142–160; Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “«Wspólnota» i «jedność» w wybranych obszarach życia społecznego – doświadczenie Ruchu Focolari” [“‘Community’ and ‘unity’ in chosen areas of social life – the experience of the Focolari Movement”], *Paedagogia Christiana* 2/36 (2015): 79–108; Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “Wychowanie do przebaczenia w pedagogii jedności”

ality to the mother-prenatal child relationship and so to use the paradigm of unity in the area of psychopedagogical prenatal unity.⁷

One of Chiara Lubich's publications which has been paid particular attention to by those dealing with her is 'The Resurrection of Rome.' It is a short text which came into being during her mystical experiences called 'Paradiso' in 1949,⁸ concretely on 29 October 1949 after her return to Rome from Fiera di Primiero (the Trident region). Chiara experienced the contrast between the beauty, purity and majesty of the mountains and the reality of life in Rome, and at the same time sensed the calling 'not to view the gift of God as utopia' and look upon the world without doubting the Ideal that was bestowed upon it.⁹

Several publications in other languages have already been published on the topic of 'The Resurrection of Rome.' It has also become the basis for reflection, among others, of a group of many scientists from Poland and Italy who attended the International Interdisciplinary Symposium 'The experience of the Resurrection of Rome. A Socio-philosophic perspective on the contemporary crisis of culture' organized in the Focolare Movement Center in Poland (Wilga-Trzcianka, 15–16.06.2017). In this article, I will address several statements of the attendees of this important scientific event.

With regard to the existing publications related to 'The Resurrection of Rome,' the present article takes up the analysis of the content presented by

[“Education to forgiveness in the pedagogy of unity”], *Paedagogia Christiana* 2/38 (2016): 107–126; Mariola Teresa Kozubek, “Wspólnota dzieci i młodzieży Ruchu Focolari miejscem kształtowania umiejętności pokonywania trudności” [“The community of children and youth of the Focolari Movement as a place for forming the ability to overcome hardship”], *Roczniki Pedagogiczne* 3 (2018): 57–73; Mariola Kozubek, Stanisław Grochmal, “Rodzina wspólnotą miłości w świetle pedagogii jedności Ruchu Focolari” [“The family as a community of love in light of the pedagogy of unity of the Focolari Movement”], in: *Wokół rodziny. Wychowanie, kultura, społeczeństwo* [Around the family. Education, culture, society], eds. Andrzej Garbarz, Grzegorz Grzybek, 255–273 (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Diecezji Rzeszowskiej, 2011).

⁷ Kornas-Biela Dorota, “The Paradigm of Unity in Prenatal Education and Pedagogy”, *Journal for Perspectives of Economic Political and Social Integration* 1–2/19 (2014): 193–206, DOI: 10.2478/v10241-012-0017-3.

⁸ “The Resurrection of Rome” was first published in *La Via* (36/1949) and later in the Focolari Movement journal *Nuova Umanita* 6/17 (1995): 5–8. This text was published twice in Polish – in the book *Look at all the flowers. A choice of theological texts from the bimonthly Nuova Umanita* (Kraków: Fundacja Mariapoli, 2007) 13–19 and in Chiara Lubich's book, *The charisma of unity*, ed. Michel Vandeleene (Kraków: Fundacja Mariapoli, Wydawnictwo M, 2007) 251–255.

⁹ Abignente, *Przeszłość i terażniejszość*, 279.

Chiara Lubich from the perspective of their application in the psychopedagogy of special needs education. This is possible because the text, as the entire deeply Christian spirituality of Focolare, is related to every person, independent of their level of functional ability. Chiara Lubich herself received the UNESCO Education for Peace Prize in 1996 as well as 16 *honoris causa* doctorates, including one in education on 10 November 2000 from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.¹⁰ Chiara Lubich is also the author of texts about Jesus the educator and the relationship of the charisma of unity to pedagogy and psychology.¹¹

Due to the fundamental importance of the philosophical-anthropological understanding of the human being, so crucial to pedagogy as a basis for further analysis on education and development, it is worth emphasizing that the conception assumed here is Christian personalism. With its broad and integral view on the human being, Christian personalism lies in the humanistic tradition of Polish pedagogy as well as in the fields dealing with handicapped individuals. In other words, an analysis of the content of the text ‘The Resurrection of Rome’ will be undertaken in the context of its relationship to special needs education, as inspired by Christian personalism.

1. The subject of Chiara Lubich’s reflections in the text of ‘The Resurrection of Rome’

In the text ‘The Resurrection of Rome,’ Ch. Lubich speaks of the major philosophical-theological issues related to each human being. She conducts a reflection on the condition of the human person as a contingent being, susceptible to weaknesses, sin and death; on the essence of God – a perfect and eternal Being; and on their mutual relationship; and even more deeply, on the relationship that links the Eternal Being with a finite being, Life with the futility that succumbs to death, Light in the darkness, Fire with the kindling that it can burn.¹²

This reflection takes the form of a short poetic philosophical-theological treatise on the drama of the human being, who while walking through

¹⁰ *Dottorati honoris causa conferiti a Chiara Lubich. Laudationes, Motivazioni, Lezioni magistrali*, eds. Florence Gillet, Rosalia Parlapiano (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 2016), 309–329.

¹¹ Lubich, *The Charisma of Unity*, 308–326.

¹² *Ibidem*, 251, 252.

contemporary Rome notices the stark contrast between the completely dirty and wretched city and the ‘great sin’ prevailing in its houses, and the Ideal for which people were able not only to build such impressive and visually delightful buildings two thousand years ago, but also ready to give up their lives.¹³ We can seek various means of remedying the currently depressing reality, but they are secondary to the most important, to allow God to incarnate Himself in us and maintain Himself among us. Ch. Lubich sees hope for the world and the ‘solution to every human and Godly matter’ in the awareness of God-Love in each person and its preservation between brothers.¹⁴

Four years have passed since the end of the ordeal of the Second World War. Ch. Lubich, while staying in Rome destroyed in tens of ally air attacks, sees not just the ruins, the dirt, but also the futility of what was so easily destroyed and what was rebuilt, and its transiency. She sees the contrast between the mutual love of the first Christians who were ready to give up their lives for their Ideal and the currently prevailing venom of hatred, unrest and various types of sin. Walking through Rome, she does not fall into despair; she does not allow herself to be moved by feelings of regret, fear, tension or hopelessness. To the contrary. She tears her gaze from the city. She unites spiritually with Jesus, Who looked upon Jerusalem just as she looked upon her city. He saw the sin disseminating around Him, its eventual downfall, felt the contempt of others, was rejected and killed, and yet did not doubt, did not escape to vengeance. He prayed for the city, for its residents and gave up His life for them, for all people as children of God, so that they may be with Him in eternity.¹⁵

Chiara looks at God Who became human out of love, and she connects with the Holy Trinity living in her spirit. She allows herself to be permeated by God, to make herself be a second Christ, so that it is no longer she who looks at the world, but Christ Who looks through her at the world. And then she sees humanity with the eyes of God, and in the same, discovers Himself in her fellow man, Him – as Love, Fire, Light and Life. Her fellow human becomes a beloved brother in whom Christ lives. In relations with her fellow human, looking at him or her through the eyes of Christ arouses life and love in him.¹⁶ Mutual love is what allows for the resurrection of the beauty and life of Rome.

¹³ Ibidem, 251.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 255.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 251, 252.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 253.

In her text, Chiara Lubich uses a language characteristic of the mystic – poetic, illustrative, metaphorical, full of symbols and at the same time simple, relating to human experience and sensual perception. She describes her spiritual experiences with the help of phrases relating to the sense of sight (eyes, pupils, sight, gaze, blink of an eye, see, look, look out, enlighten, shine forth, radiate, light, shine, dark, visible, blind, visible, extinguished) and hearing (speech, silence, mute, hear, address, deafened). She relates to senses and feelings (love, joy, happiness, hatred, unrest, sadness, unfulfilled desires, feel, sense, love) and cognitive abilities (think, understand, doubt, uncover, unaware). To the degree that one rereads this text and probes its message, one can discover ever new perspectives on understanding the human being and his/her relationship to God.

By contrast, in order to express the essence of God, Chiara refers to the images of Life (6 times), Fire (6 times) and Light (7 times), describing the characteristics of God and even His Being and His activity in relation to human beings. God is the Father, the Holy Trinity, God-Man, the perfect Man, Light, Fire and Truth, the Word, Love, Life, full Life, the true Being, the reality of Everything, Eternal and Uncreated, the Lawgiver, the eternal Master, the One ‘Who is and Who has Value.’ The large richness of phrases used by Chiara Lubich for the being of God indicates her close unity with Him – God is known, loved, and imitated by her and she feels fused with Him. In order to be united with her brother, she first opens herself up to the grace of unity with Him.

2. The condition of the contemporary human being and the world

Concerning herself with the condition of humanity, Chiara Lubich describes it from the point of view of the contemporary human walking through Rome. The city symbolizes the world here, but also the human as such and the contemporary world. The experience Chiara shares in this ‘treatise’ is universal. Every human in every era lives in Rome, that is, in a world ‘full of dirt and futility.’ He or she also finds ‘Rome’ in himself – as a symbol of their real condition, which is characterized by being controlled by ‘hatred, unrest and all sins.’¹⁷ The human is ‘Rome’ called to resurrection. But the

¹⁷ Ibidem, 251.

contemporary world in particular has been marked by sin, rejects God and treads on human dignity.

The experience of the world as Rome leaning toward collapse is the common experience of people of all eras. Human nature – sinful and weak, was and has been the same since the Garden of Eden. The human viewing the world sees so much evil in it that ever more and ever more often he or she desires to escape from it so as not to see its mediocrity and futility. Looking from her human perspective, she sees rampant ever-present, noisy and victorious evil, impossible to overcome, ready for vengeance against those who want to fight against it. The consequence of gazing at existing evil continually spreading in the world is the loss of hope, lack of faith in oneself, one's fellow man and the future of the world.

The experience of Rome in itself is the neverending experience of the human being through the ages. Through the experience of life, the human sees Rome in him or herself – as a contingent being, susceptible to illness, suffering and death, with the inclination to chase after vanity, his weakness leading to sin. Weakness and sin make the human dirty and discouraged, lacking the desire to live as one who is conquered by evil and death. The human person is Rome, 'full of sadness and unfulfilled desires,' chasing after 'nothingness which passes away' and everything in him moves toward collapse.¹⁸ He or she exists as unconscious, unknowing, paralyzed, lame i mute, 'remaining with extinguished sight,' because darkness reigns in the spirit.¹⁹

The dirt of sin and the futility of evil attachments meets the human not only when viewing the actions of those and others, but also when noticing them 'even more so in the concealment of homes,'²⁰ that is in human hearts, in what is invisible, one's motives, desires, aspirations, intentions, aims and attempts. It is there where the source of all sin lies.

3. The relationship of God to the human person, and visa-versa

Such is the human person, but this is not the entire truth of this human 'Rome.' The human person is a thick-skinned creature, and yet God is his advocate. God himself entered the history of his chosen people many times

¹⁸ Ibidem, 252.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 251.

²⁰ Ibidem, 251.

during Israel's wandering through the desert to the Promised Land. When 'the fullness of time had come' (Ga 4:4), God entered the history of humanity. And today, He enters into the lives of each of us and goes before us, showing the way; He goes behind us, protecting us from the enemy; and He is with us, within us as our Savior and simultaneously Brother and Friend. The challenge for every human is to notice the presence of God with thankfulness, His grace in our own life.

The human being, created in the likeness of God, is free and called to a free and joyful 'winning of Heaven.'²¹ The freedom of humans results from their similarity to God – in His resemblance, they experience the joy of creating their own happiness. Humans were created to raise their humanity to the highest measure, called to be the 'eternal city' of God. The actualization of this calling has been revealed in the life of the saints and martyrs, who 'radiated their eternal light' and have been witnesses to 'uniting love.'²² For each of us there is no other road to building ourselves as an 'eternal city' than through trying to be witness to this uniting love. It is not an easy task in a world full of divisions (religious, national, family), but the Ideal is not far, it is close to us, it is in us and we can draw strength to overcome what 'starkly contrasts'²³ with Him.

Chiara points to a path – not separating from one's Root and Source of life, but entering into contact with Him, allowing oneself to be fused with him, become one with Him, through one's nothingness to view oneself, the world, Him, with eyes of God. Creating an internal vacuum and becoming transparent draws God-Fullness, Who returns life to the human person and bestows Love on him. When Christ lives in the human person, one's fellow human becomes a brother – a second Christ, and mutual relations are filled with love, witness to the love of the Trinity. Such supernatural love full of life raises the human-Rome from the dead to be the Eternal City of God and to build eternal 'cities' in the Mystical Body of Christ. Jesus, the 'deepest personality of every human person'²⁴ is the *raison d'être* of his resurrection.

The human being, in order not to be overwhelmed and crushed by the 'Rome' which he or she finds within and without, must tear away from focusing on oneself, on the evil that is rampant in the world, and place his or her gaze on the Lord. She speaks of 'extinguished sight' which stops being

²¹ Ibidem, 251.

²² Ibidem, 251.

²³ Ibidem, 251.

²⁴ Ibidem, 255, footnote 186.

such if ‘My humanity melts into what is of God.’²⁵ Chiara Lubich uses the word ‘look’ 10 times, four of these being ‘Christ looks,’ three ‘she looks,’ and twice ‘she looks with Christ’s eyes,’ ‘But I no longer look, but it is Christ who looks in me.’²⁶ She uses the word ‘I see’ similarly. First she indicates that the human may behave as if ‘blind,’ if he or she does not see ‘God in oneself and around oneself.’ Then the view of ‘Rome’ may lead to discouragement, bring up fear of losing the Ideal. Returning the sight with which ‘Jesus looked on this world’ is possible if I try to see with His eyes. Then when ‘Christ in me looks,’ ‘He sees anew.’²⁷ Then I too ‘See and discover in others the same Light which is in me, my true Reality, my true ‘me’ in others.’²⁸ Thus, help for man is looking at the Lord and through uniting with Him looking at the world and at oneself, at one’s internal self with His eyes, seeing oneself as He sees, loving oneself as He loves. In other words – loving the child of God in himself.

4. The reality of disability – ‘Rome’ arouses negative attitudes

In the contemporary world, the idea of integration and inclusion of individuals with disability to society has become popular. It would not be necessary if disabled individuals were treated with the respect due them as any other human, if their rights were kept and their needs alleviated, if they were included in the flux of family, neighborly, local and religious life where they live. Unfortunately, we meet up with a large disparity between the declared attitudes of those who are generally positive and attitudes that arise in daily life, particularly towards some groups such as the mentally ill, the heavily chronically ill, people with multiple disabilities, the elderly and children who have received an unfavorable prenatal diagnosis. Publicly expressed and verbalized attitudes sometimes stand in stark contrast to private attitudes that are actually revealed in life.

In contact with the disabled, sometimes similar feelings arise to those which Chiara Lubich experienced viewing postwar Rome. Her experience in contact with Rome destroyed by the wartime inferno may be an inspiration

²⁵ Ibidem, 252.

²⁶ Ibidem, 252.

²⁷ Ibidem, 252.

²⁸ Ibidem, 253.

to thinking about the reality of disability in today's world and emphasizing important issues from the perspective of Christian pedagogy.

The first feeling that was born in Ch. Lubich at the view of Rome, a feeling which appears in us in contact with a disabled individual, is noticing the stark difference between what should be and the real state of things. The sense of contrast may deepen if we pay attention to the differences, focus on what is lost, destroyed, what does not meet the norm, what does not fulfill the canon of beauty, what deviates from the standard of efficient functioning. Accentuating the differences creates a sense of alienation, 'being from another planet,' inability to mutually understand, leads us to behave watchfully in contact, have an official and emotionless relationship with someone. What can change this destructive way of viewing another person? Chiara takes the decision not to look any further at Rome with such an 'extinguished sight;' then in her heart darkness ends its reign. She views Romans as herself, the children of one Father, which He wants to unite.²⁹ This is a very key suggestion for us regarding the direction of change of attitude toward individuals with disability. This change allows us to look at the disabled not through the lens of the differences that divide us, but through the lens of the similarities – we have all been created in the image and likeness of God, and we are children of one Father; each of us is 'more a child of God [...] than a child of our fathers.'³⁰ God cares the same for each of us, is the Giver 'of all good for all children without difference – as the Father;'³¹ we all have a chance for 'life through all Eternity as children of God;' we are all gifted with free will and as much as possible we can 'be creators of our own happiness.'³²

Looking at an individual with disability from the perspective of our common childhood in God allows us to notice their subjectivity, value and personal dignity, which no kind of disability can take away or infringe upon. Disability can negatively affect the sensual, motor, intellectual, psychological sphere, but it does not affect the personal structure of the human being. Independent of the extent or level of limitation of the sphere of functioning of the human being, he or she is ontologically always an individual who is categorically due human rights. One cannot be existentially disabled, as infringing on the essence of human existence would cause his/her annihila-

²⁹ Ibidem, 251.

³⁰ Ibidem, 255.

³¹ Ibidem, 253.

³² Ibidem, 252.

tion.³³ Viewing the human person from the perspective of the general theory of existence and Christian personalism which Ch. Lubich presents allows for the redeeming of the ‘person within the human person.’

Taking steps through war-destroyed Rome leads Chiara to reflect on the transience, finiteness and fragility of what exists. Her response is not, however, to reject the Ideal, view important life values to be utopian, or to fall into depression and despair. To the contrary – she knows that she cannot be separated from the One who is the ‘root of creation and the Life of everything.’³⁴ She unites herself with the Holy Trinity and gains a new view on the world and her fellow man. When relating to a disabled individual, each human being has the opportunity to notice the contingency of human existence, and so their own. This contingency is a metaphysical category which points to the lack of existential self-sufficiency of the human being and the lack of necessity of life, human frailty and finiteness. A disabled individual is a sign of contingency for all, a *momento mori*; that is, because of their difficulties and limitations, they make each human person aware of their own contingency, and so point them to values that are constant, objective, absolute, toward a supernatural perspective, toward a complete Being, strong and eternal.³⁵ The sense of community of ‘abled’ people with the disabled through the mutual existential experience of contingency leads people to cling to the One who Is, who is Life, complete Life, Who bestows it to all of his children. It also allows for the affirmation of life even in the most simple form, particularly when it is deformed, encumbered by defects and facing immediate death.³⁶

³³ Wojciech Chudy, “Sens filozoficzny kondycji człowieka niepełnosprawnego” [“The philosophical significance of the condition of the disabled person”], in: *Osoba niepełnosprawna i jej miejsce w społeczeństwie* [The disabled person and their place in society], ed. Dorota Kornas-Biela (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1988), 105–122.

³⁴ Lubich, *The Charisma of Unity*, 252.

³⁵ Wojciech Chudy, “Powołanie osoby niepełnosprawnej w nauczaniu papieża Jana Pawła II” [“The vocation of the disabled person in the teachings of Pope John Paul II”], in: *Osoba niepełnosprawna i jej miejsce w społeczeństwie* [The disabled person and their place in society], ed. Dorota Kornas-Biela (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1988), 123–149.

³⁶ Dorota Kornas-Biela, “Afirmacja życia w kontekście jego zagrożeń po niepomyślnej diagnozie prenatalnej” [“The affirmation of life in the context of its dangers after an unfavorable prenatal diagnosis”], in: *Życie i śmierć. Wyzwania działalności charytatywnej* [Life and death. Challenges of Charitable Activity], ed. Józef Stala (Tarnów, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Polihymnia, 2012), 171–188; Dorota Kornas-Biela, “Hospicjum perinatalne jako forma afirmacji życia” [“Perinatal hospice as a form of affirmation of life”], in: *Życie i śmierć. Wyzwania działalności*

Focusing on the futility, frailty, dirt and sin of the city which is the human person does not permit us to notice the real needs of those who are its residents as blind, deaf, mute, lame. Viewing the city and world full of futility and turning away from the Light may discourage and turn away those who are our brothers. A similar process may take place in contact with disabled individuals. Focusing on deficiencies, injuries, disorders and impairments leads us to skew our vision – we only notice part of the reality of disability, only certain aspects of the person with a disability, only the range of his or her functioning, which was affected by illness or disability. Then this person is treated as someone different and worse and that raises fear, a sense of misunderstanding and inability to communicate, distance (avoidance, not engaging), desire to avoid contact or shorten it to the necessary minimum, devaluation, delegitimation (consolidation of negative opinions, habits), and passing laws that encumber full access to services and the ability to be treated, rehabilitated, educated, engaged in work and personal development.³⁷ Following Chiara's footsteps, we should view the disabled individual as Christ views him or her. Then 'I see and discover in others the same Light that is in me.'³⁸ Then it is possible not only to experience existential communion, which is the same for every human condition, but also to notice the natural value and supernatural value of the disabled person, their calling in the world,³⁹ their role in mutual relations when Christ is the third Person among us and creates us as one, and so their role in creating the cells of the Mystical Body of Christ.⁴⁰

Because Chiara permitted God to live in her, fill her with all of Heaven, she gains a perspective on the world and the people of Christ – 'But I no longer look, but it is Christ who looks in me,' 'I look upon humanity with

charytatywnej [Life and death. Challenges of Charitable Activity], ed. Józef Stala (Tarnów, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Polihymnia, 2012), 201–216.

³⁷ Dorota Kornas-Biela, "Niepełnosprawność w rodzinie – czym jest, co znaczy, trudne początki" ["Disability in the family – what it is, what it means, difficult beginnings"], in: *Rodzina. Bezcenny dar i zadanie [Family. A priceless gift and task]*, eds. Józef Stala, Elżbieta Osewska (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne), 643–645.

³⁸ Lubich, *The Charisma of unity*, 253.

³⁹ Dorota Kornas-Biela, "Osoba niepełnosprawna, chora, cierpiąca: nauczanie Jana Pawła II" ["The disabled, ill, suffering person: the teachings of John Paul II"], in: *Rodzina: źródło życia i szkoła miłości [Family: a source of life and school of love]*, ed. Dorota Kornas-Biela (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 357–384.

⁴⁰ Lubich, *The Charisma of unity*, 253.

the eyes of God.⁴¹ In this way she doesn't focus any more on the physical imperfections of the world, but also notices its spiritual blindness, deafness, paralysis, inability to speak. She senses the urgency to return sight to those who cannot see God, hearing to those who cannot hear the World of God, the power of speech to and for those who are speechless at the words of God, the power of action to the lame, in relation to the will of God and active loving. The U-turn that Chiara takes in order not to focus on 'the external cleanliness of the cup and bowl' while not noticing that the 'inside is full of extortion and wickedness' (Lu 11:39) encourages a similar shift of our gaze from the external signs of physical, sensory or mental disability, directing the heart to noticing illnesses of the spirit, handicaps in the area of loving, hearing the Word of God and fulfilling it – in ourselves and others. Others, drawn into the daily bustle, sometimes very wealthy with a high social status and reputation, may suffer much in spirit and need help in order not to lose themselves in the goods of this world, which 'moths and rust destroy' and thieves steal (Mt 6:19).

An interesting aspect of the text 'The Resurrection of Rome' also relates to freedom. Chiara writes of the freedom of the human being in creating their own happiness and attaining full unity with God. Here, we refer to the human likeness to God, Who 'had to leave them the joy of the free attaining of Heaven.'⁴² The creative freedom which the human was gifted with is closely related to his or her existential condition as a human being, with his subjectivity and dignity. 'The autcreation of the person is projecting their own path of becoming a child of God, their own participation in God's omnipotence. The human being's freedom reveals the potential of self-creation before them,⁴³ and developing it, the human person 'can be the creator of their own happiness.'⁴⁴ Some handicapped individuals are incapacitated, that is legally prevented from deciding about themselves and conducting legal actions. Every person, however, remains a free being in the area of the spirit, independent of the degree and extent of the impairment, as limitations in the

⁴¹ Ibidem, 252, 253.

⁴² Ibidem, 251.

⁴³ Arkadiusz Wąsiński, "Zmartwychwstanie Rzymu – widziane z perspektywy osobowego wymiaru autoformacji i autokreacji człowieka" ["The Resurrection of Rome – as seen from the perspective of self-formation and self-creation of the human person"]. Report, International Interdisciplinary Symposium *The experience of the Resurrection of Rome. A philosophical-social perspective on the contemporary cultural crisis*, Wilga-Trzcianka, 15–16.06.2017.

⁴⁴ Lubich, *The Charisma of Unity*, 252.

area of awareness and freedom only relate to the functional sphere. It is critical for the parents and the medical professionals of the individuals whose awareness is limited to help them open to grace, entrust themselves to God and life in unity with Him. A decided majority of handicapped individuals may discover and grow in their humanity in an aware and free way, work on their character, conduct a choice of values which make the human person a ‘second Christ,’ attain spiritual maturity and continue to grow beyond oneself and perfect oneself.

Every professional working with people with disability and their families, and particularly their educators, teachers or counsellors must remember that the reality of disability relates to the sphere of functioning and not existence, while deep disability and its consequences which inhibit communication, daily life and conducting even simple activities may conceal this truth. Treating incomplete dysfunctionality in the intellectual, sensoral or motor spheres as disability in the spiritual realm, as complete disability – encompassing the entire person, leads to individuals with disability being deprived of the particularly human element which distinguishes the human from the world of animals – spirituality. This ‘despiritualizing’ of those with intellectual disability results in the fact that they are not perceived as ‘the same,’ equal to others who have the same rights; to the contrary – as others, strangers, worse, second category, less significant. Not noticing the spiritual sphere of individuals with disability frees parents and educators from the necessity of creating conditions for children and youth that would support the development of deep human needs and competences; it also frees institutions from concern for the spiritual development of their patients/students, whose development is an integral part of the development of their person and their maturity. Not appreciating the spiritual sphere in the life and education of disabled individuals deepens their devaluation, stereotyping and stigmatizing in society, causes the entrenchment of psychological and social barriers that exist between able and disabled individuals. It is then difficult to expect that promotion of the integration and inclusion will find its full actualization.

A further theme contained in the analyzed text is the issue of hope. Chiara wrote, ‘Opening our eyes to the external world, I see humanity with the eyes of God, which believes everything, because He is God.’⁴⁵ God believes in every human being, in the good that is in Him, in the human being’s aim to love and be loved, as he or she was created in His image and likeness, and

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 253.

so was called from love to love. This hope of God is a well-spring of solidarity and love towards individuals with disability. Enlivened with this spirit of hope – parents, loved ones and professionals become joyful witnesses of the Gospel of hope. They do not focus on what is lacking, imperfections, injuries, impairments, disabilities, but on what remains, what is healthy, able to be developed, healed and rehabilitated, on so-called physical, psychological and spiritual reserves; facing the future with trust in spite of adversities, they become joyful witnesses to the Gospel of hope. Evangelical hope gives life meaning, life which is focused on ‘being’ and not on ‘having.’ When something does not go well in the proces of education, development or rehabilitation, or the desires of the disabled individual do not materialize, they don’t see progress in their development, hope protects against despair, hopelessness, motivates to actualizing expectations and seeking other solutions. And with this hope, God comes with His indestructable hope.

During the process of shaping and educating disabled individuals, it is easy to get the burnout syndrome. The educational professional experiences similar feelings as Chiara, looking at the war-destroyed Rome. It seems that the Ideal is a Utopia, because accepted plans, goals and educational ideals are impossible to attain; everything is lost. One can feel struck by the lack of success, discouraged, embittered, broken. But beyond the sphere of feelings is the sphere of the will and decision. Similar to Christ, Whom contemporaries rejected, Who it seemed was conquered by evil,⁴⁶ the teacher/educator may not let themselves become discouraged. They cannot doubt in the reality of the Ideal, in the goodness existing in their fellow man, in the calling to eternal life, the calling to love the abandoned Jesus present in him or her.⁴⁷ Imitating Jesus in His relationship with the Father, the educator has faith that they haven’t been abandoned, although in daily life they may sometimes feel defeated, resigned and depressed. Beyond this, they must realize that any ideals and goals are far off; only Jesus is close. The educator is called to bring Him to their students. This can happen if they accept them, open themselves to them, and show them the life of God-Love, if they are His witness, a second Christ. Then the student will be able to say – my Ideal is not a utopia.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 251.

⁴⁷ Chiara Lubich, *Jezus Opuszczony [The Abandoned Jesus]*, ed. Hubertus Blaumeiser (Łąka: Indygo S.A i Fundacja Mariapoli, 2017); Chiara Lubich, *Krzyk Opuszczenia [The Cry of Abandonment]* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2001).

⁴⁸ Lubich, *The Charisma of Unity*, 251.

And one more issue – Chiara did not rebuild Rome, she did not clean it of its dirt and iniquity, but she changed her experience with it thanks to the fact that she looked upon it with the eyes of God. Similarly, the parent, teacher or educator is not able to remove the disability or chronic illness from the individuals’ life, but is able to change their relationship to it, and so their view of their own selves. This change is possible due to the love that is anchored in God. Chiara wrote elsewhere – ‘love of our brother is the royal road leading to God. Since we are all His children, nothing is more dear to His heart than brotherly love. We cannot cause him greater joy than when we love our brothers,’⁴⁹ especially those who are pushed to the margin, undervalued, rejected. An ill or handicapped individual is our brother from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lu 10:30–37). Christ identifies with him, and so we are called to reveal Christ to the sufferer, Christ who leans over him, is deeply moved, bandages him and takes care of him. God mutually entrusts us with each other. We are responsible for each other and obliged to give our fellow human what God has dedicated to him or her and mutually entrusted to us, in order to show him sensitivity and tenderness of God Himself. Actions taken on behalf of our brothers in need are a measure of our love to God and service to Him. Bringing the living God to others and being His reflection in the world is a noble service akin to the priestly calling.⁵⁰ Thanks to the particular identification of Jesus with the weak, ill, disabled individual (‘whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me,’ Mt 25:40), on Judgement Day those who showed mercy (e.g. ‘I was ill and you visited me,’ Mt 25:36) shall be called the ‘Blessed of the Father’ and inherit the Kingdom (Mt 25:34).

Conclusion

Concluding these conducted analyses, it should be emphasized that the text ‘The Resurrection of Rome’ relates to mutual relations between abled and disabled individuals in particular. It shows the need to build a new humanism in which the human is the center as the second Christ. Then there will no longer be differentiation between people based on the level of func-

⁴⁹ Chiara Lubich and Christians from different countries, *Pisać Ewangelię życiem* [*Writing the Gospel in life*] (Kraków: Mariapoli Foundation, 1998), 96.

⁵⁰ Kornas-Biela, “Osoba niepełnosprawna”, 377–379.

tioning; each will be respected as an individual deserving the right to life, absolute respect and love.

In the ‘Resurrection of Rome,’ Chiara emphasizes that Christ cannot be just a crucifix hanging on the wall, playing the role of an amulet, but must be alive in us. We need to allow Him to ‘live in us, live in others, because life is love – and when love does not circulate, life dies.’⁵¹ There is no avoiding it for the Christian – who must notice Christ in every human being and love Christ present in him or her, allowing Christ to love him/herself in return. Who should not so much speak of the fact that God is Love, but be Love, be Jesus for the other person. Bring Jesus into the reality of the ‘Eternal City,’ and so wherever there is evil, weakness, imperfection, the Christian brings the city back to life, returns life to the dead – the Father to children and children to the Father. He, who is ‘Life, Life in full,’ bestows life, renewed by the Spirit, builds bridges and paves roads.⁵² Chiara Lubich’s text analyzed here ends with the words ‘It is enough to love Him.’ Years ago she wrote similar words: ‘Holiness comes as a consequence of love. And we can only achieve it this way. If we wanted to seek holiness for itself, we would never attain it. And so love, and nothing else. Lose everything, as well as the attachment to holiness, in order to try to only love!’⁵³

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⁵¹ Lubich, *The Charisma of Unity*, 254.

⁵² Ibidem, 255.

⁵³ Agnieszka Bugała, “Chiara Lubich – świętość to konsekwencja miłości” [“Chiara Lubich – holiness is a consequence of love”], *Niedziela Ogólnopolska* 11 (2015): 16–19.

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