

Lisbon (Portugal), August 2, 2023

**World Youth Day**  
**“Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39)**  
**“Rise Up” Meeting - Integral Ecology**

**Speech by Jesús Morán, Co-President of the Focolare Movement**

**Joel:** the theme of this World Youth Day is «Mary arose and went with haste». This is the response to a vocation, that is, to God's call to become the Mother of Jesus, in short, it is a consequence of it. What does following a call mean to you?

**Response of Fr. Jesús Morán:**

There is a song by a Cuban singer, Silvio Rodríguez that I like very much. I think it is full of wisdom. It could be an allegory on vocation. It talks about three brothers who went "to discover and to found". The first one always looked down so as not to make a mistake and, of course, with his limited vision he did not get very far. The middle one, on the other hand, was very focused on the horizon, but, not paying attention to the road, he always stumbled and he grew old without going very far. The smaller one, who was craftier, looked at the horizon and the earth at the same time, with the sad result that, in the end, his gaze was confused and he didn't know where to go. The refrain of the song asks: "And you, what do you think?".

Well, I think vocation is not a matter of vision but of the heart. It is not something external, but something that comes from within. The eye looks outside and runs the risk of getting lost. The heart looks inside and goes into depth. With the heart you see more clearly, the heart has more light. Our culture is very much imbued with external things, and that is why there is a lot of confusion and disorientation.

At some point in life, one feels that something strikes the centre of your heart. It comes from outside us, but not from the outside; we feel it within us and yet it calls to us and transcends us. It comes to fill a kind of emptiness that we are born with, and it makes us restless until it is filled. It is something so strong that it awakens you from your existential slumber and says, 'now walk'. Such an imperative can only come from God himself. Before you wandered around aimlessly, now you walk towards a goal, even if you do not know the way.

When I was 16 and a half and I met the young people of the Focolare Movement, the centre of my heart was struck by something really strong. It was an encounter with Jesus. And I started to walk. More or less three years later, the road led me in a new direction: to follow Jesus by living the same life as he did. I was 19 years old. I kept walking. When I was 21, I got my philosophy degree in Madrid, and it was time to put into practice what I had felt two years earlier. So, I left my homeland and my loved ones. Then later, I made a huge leap to a new continent, to America. With time, the path became arduous and tiring. Trials came, I fell in love, my health was quite frail but I kept walking. The light did not diminish, and I knew where I was going. I was 33 years old, I said my definitive 'yes' before God and before my brothers and

sisters, because my journey has always been personal and communitarian at the same time: alone and in deep communion. We always follow Jesus together with others, being church. As I kept walking, years later, another surprise came: God and the community wanted me to be a priest. I kept on walking. And here I am. I would never have thought the path would lead me to become the Co-President of the Focolare Movement. I always felt more like a formator than a leader. The truth is that I did not stop walking, even when it seemed that I had exhausted all my energy. Three words have always guided me along the way. The first is freedom. Freedom given and freedom conquered. The second has to do with me: faithfulness. The third, the most important, has to do with God: mercy. Yes, I say it strongly, my vocation is the triumph of God's mercy in me.

"And you, what do you think about this?"

I think vocation is a game that is played by two players, that becomes a game lived in community. It coincides with a mission that only ends with life itself, because it is not static but dynamic.

One last idea. Men, women, [we are all] beings of desire. Desire is the driving force of life and of the soul, it's the "invisible fuel". Well, vocation concerns our deepest desire, an absolute desire, the desire to love and to be loved. St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe said: "desire, yes, but desire without limits". God and his human face, which is Jesus of Nazareth, fills this thirst for desire: "Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life". (Jn. 6:54)

This is the most beautiful adventure that can happen to us.