

THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

The Focolare Movement (officially entitled “The Work of Mary”) is an ecclesial movement that began in the Roman Catholic Church in 1943. Its goal is to fulfill Jesus’ prayer, “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:21), and thus to work towards the unity of all people. Indeed, the goal is to make humankind one family.

The Movement was founded by Chiara Lubich (1920—2008). When she was in her early 20s, during World War II, she dedicated her whole life to God. It wasn’t long before other young people followed her example and together they formed the first community that was called a “focolare” (the Italian word for “hearth”). It was made up of both celibate and married people, who spiritually shared in the community while living fully their commitment to marriage.

Ever since the Movement’s beginnings, people of many cultures, vocations and roles in society, coming from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, have actively participated in it. Most are laypeople (adults, families, youth, children), but there are also consecrated men and women, priests and even bishops.

To bring more unity to the human family, the Focolare has opened up dialogues with as many people and organizations as possible, including:

- Building unity within the Catholic Church
- Seeking communion and visible gestures of unity among Christians of different Churches
- Working to accomplish unity among the world’s religions, through a common commitment to live the Golden Rule found in many sacred texts: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”
- Collaborating with people who do not have any specific religious affiliation, but who want to promote basic human values that aim at the common good
- Supporting and providing space for meetings and dialogue among persons of various professions.

Spirituality: The first fundamental principle of the “spirituality of unity” – also called “spirituality of communion” – is rediscovering God as love and putting him at the center of one’s life. This choice calls for the practice of “mutual and constant love, which makes unity possible and brings the presence of Jesus among all (...).” (Premise to the Statutes of the Work of Mary). By applying the words of the Gospel in one’s daily activities, a lifestyle is created that contributes to building unity and peace, both locally and on a worldwide level.

Extent: The Focolare is present in 157 countries, with permanent centers in 92. Christians from 350 different Churches and ecclesial communities are part of the Movement. Members of other religions share the Movement’s spirituality and objectives in a variety of ways. People who do not have any religious affiliation are also part of the Focolare.

Centers of formation and shared experience

- The Focolare has 23 established communities, which are actually “small towns”, located in as many countries. Those who live in these towns share the commitment to create a society based on a fraternal lifestyle. The small towns include homes, businesses and workshops and provide courses in the spirituality of unity, which form people of various ages and vocations in how to live the Gospel and share their experiences with others.
- There are Mariapolis Centers in 35 countries in which members of the Movement meet for retreats or ongoing formation. These centers also offer courses of formation in the culture of unity, which are open to both members of the Movement and all those who would like to learn more about its spirituality and activities.

Engagement on cultural and institutional levels

- **The Abba School** is an interdisciplinary study center composed of professors and scholars, whose objective is to clarify and develop the doctrine drawn from the charism of unity.
- **Sophia University Institute** is a training and academic research center located in the Focolare’s international town of Loppiano near Florence, Italy.
- **International networks** bring together scholars, experts, students and professionals from a number of fields, including philosophy, economics, politics, communication, law, art, medicine, education, psychology, architecture and sports. These groups promote conferences, courses of formation and publications related to these fields, which are studied in the light of the Focolare charism of unity.
- **The Economy of Communion (EOC)** is an initiative in the field of economics that inspires people who own or are employed in approximately 900 businesses worldwide, promoting best practice shaped by a spirit of communion, reciprocity and generosity. Sixteen business centers have grown up in 13 countries with the purpose of giving mutual support and being incubators for new startup EOC businesses.
- **The Movement for Politics and Policy for Unity (MppU)** provides an opportunity for political reflection and action among people from different parties, including diplomats, elected officials, scholars and citizens. They want to propose fraternity as a political category on which to base institutions as well as legislative and administrative initiatives. Among their projects are courses to form young people in the skills of political participation and good citizenship.
- **New Humanity** is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that since 1987 has enjoyed special consultative status on the UN’s Economic and Social Council, and general consultative status since 2005. It has been recognized as an UNESCO NGO partner since 2008.

International solidarity efforts

- More than 1,000 social projects are ongoing in various countries
- More or less 35 projects and “micro-activities” are promoted by **Azioni per un Mondo Unito ETS** (*Projects for a United World*), an NGO which operates in 30 countries
- 93 projects provide financial support to children in 48 countries. Almost 11,000 children have been helped, primarily through local support services, such as schools, meals, medical clinics, etc. In addition, the **Associazione Azione per Famiglie Nuove ETS** (“Association for Projects of the New Families”) promotes training courses and supports initiatives to benefit families and disadvantaged children.

Publishing Houses

- *Città Nuova* ("New City") is the Italian publishing house and others operate in 16 countries. In Great Britain, it is known as "New City" and in North America, "New City Press."
- *Città Nuova* is the name of the Focolare magazine published in Italy. The Movement in 23 countries produces other magazines in 17 languages. The English editions are entitled *New City* in Great Britain (also online free of charge at newcity.co.uk), the Philippines and Kenya and *Living City* in North America (available online at livingcity.com).
- *Nuovo Umanita'* ("New Humanity") is a quarterly cultural journal in Italian that offers research and studies on a variety of topics.
- *Ekklesia* ("Church") is a quarterly magazine on ecclesial and religious life.
- *Teens* is a bimonthly magazine created by teens for teens.
- *Big* is a quarterly magazine for children up to 9 years of age.
- The *Word of Life* is a monthly commentary on a phrase of Scripture, translated in approximately 90 languages and local dialects, reaching millions through printed copies, radio, television and online.
- The international website, focolare.org, is translated into five languages.
- An international videoconference call (in Italian *Collegamento CH*) periodically brings together and shares news with the wider Focolare family throughout the world.
- CSC Media is the Focolare's audiovisual production center.

The President: Directing the Movement is a female president, assisted by a co-president and a general council made up of 55 counselors, each with a five-year term. The current Focolare president is Margaret Karram, Israeli, of Palestinian origin, and the co-president is Roberto Almada from Argentina.

Pontifical approvals: The Focolare Movement ("Work of Mary") received its first approval from the Holy See in 1962. In its General Statutes, which were approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity on June 29, 1990, it was approved as "a private, universal association of the faithful, a juridical entity in the canonical order by decree of the Holy See." On March 15, 2007, approval was given for further modifications to the Statutes.