

## Promoting the “culture of encounter”

The commitment of the Focolare Movement expressed by the president Maria Voce at the conclusion of the Pentecost meeting where Papa Francesco met movements, new communities, associations and lay groups.

«We are all committed to live to the letter what you have said, especially to go out and meet people, so that they can encounter Christ». This is what Maria Voce told Papa Francesco this morning at the end of the Mass at Casa Santa Marta. She wanted to express the Movement's gratitude for the Pentecost meeting with him. “This is what is needed”, the Holy Father replied, “the culture of encounter!” The president, together with the co-president Giancarlo Falletti, were invited to participate in the celebration of the Mass said by the Pope.

This brief greeting concluded the intense experience lived by 200,000 members of movements and lay groups during the Pentecost meeting with Papa Francesco. Maria Voce said that during this event, “we have felt the impulse of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit”, and on behalf of the Movement, she expressed “the joy for having participated in this event, and even more, for having contributed towards assuring the Pope of the liveliness and the vitality of the Church, despite the difficulties it encounters”. At the end of the Pentecost vigil on Saturday, she had the opportunity to assure him that “the Movement wants to give witness of a Christianity full joy and courage”.

Maria Voce continued to say, “The Pentecost message delivered to us by the Pope through the three words newness, harmony and mission is a very strong one. I was particularly impressed by the word “newness”. It is the one that challenges us most of all. We are tempted to lean on the experiences lived or on the progress achieved. Instead, the Pope urged us to be open to the surprises of the Spirit, to listen to what the Spirit tells us and to follow him on the many outskirts of existence”.

“I believe that it is only through communion lived with other movements and associations and with all the other realities of the Church, that today we can witness Christ and reveal his presence to those who seek him or those who ignore him or those who have never heard of him “outside the walls”. So “we need new courage to make ourselves available to the least of our society. We have received a strong confirmation that communion is an essential mark of today's Church. Hence our commitment to live more and better the specific charism of our Movement, and to live it as a service to the whole Church. Communion requires the practice of mutual love among Christians. It is Jesus among us, who does not remain confined to the churches – so to say – but comes out to encounter people”.

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