

## **Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement in audience with Pope Francis**

This morning Pope Francis received in a private audience Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement, accompanied by co-president Giancarlo Falletti.

At the end of the audience Maria Voce said, *“A conversation with familiar tones. We could see the great importance the Pope gives to a Christian life of commitment and communion”*.

The president of the Focolare Movement continued to say, *“ The life of the Gospel is of particular importance to him. He encouraged us to keep going ahead with joy, because a Christian without joy will not attain anything. So, a Christianity of commitment, communion and joy”*.

This meeting provided an opportunity to present the Focolare Movement and its initiatives in different parts of the world, highlighting its specific contribution in different places. Maria Voce said, *“Pope Francis thanked us for the work of the Movement all over the world”*.

They were able to speak about the various aspects of the Movement's commitments: from its material and spiritual capillary action in favour of families and youth in many places in Syria to its cultural initiatives promoted in China; from its interreligious dialogue with Buddhists, Muslims and Jews to its involvement in the project “Amazzonia” launched by the Brazilian Episcopal Conference for the evangelization of this vast area; from the testimony of forgiveness and reconciliation in various African countries struck by war to the revitalization of fraternal relationships in anonymous districts of various metropolis in the West, to the enterprising initiatives in the social sphere, such as the Economy of Communion.

When speaking about their latest visit to Jordan, where they met the Focolare Communities of the Middle East and North Africa, Maria Voce shared with the Pope the experience of those days of tension and uncertainty. Even there, on September 7, the members of the Movement present in Amman and belonging to various churches and religions lived the day of fasting and prayers for peace. “One could feel the Pope's open-heartedness and his great desire to embrace all humanity through this prayer,” commented Maria Voce. “And the Middle East was present in this embrace”.

Maria Voce concluded: “The Pope's words made us realize how much he appreciates the Movements. When speaking of any situation, he remarked on how important it is that the movements sustain these situations. You can see that the Pope recognizes their ability to put the radicality of the Gospel in the foreground”.

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