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### **Maria Voce re-elected President of the Focolare Movement**

The General Assembly has elected Maria Voce president of the Focolare. The re-election took place on the fourth ballot, on the morning of 12 September. In the letter of confirmation by the Holy See, Cardinal Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, said he was "pleased to reconfirm the appointment for the second consecutive term" and hopes for "a special assistance of the Holy Spirit" entrusting her service "to the maternal intercession of Mary."

Voting took place in the heart of the programme of the Assembly (1-28 September) at the Mariapolis Centre of Castel Gandolfo (Rome), with the participation of 494 delegates from five continents, representing the various branches of the Movement, the secretariats of the dialogues in which it is engaged and the works and activities that it animates.

At the moment of acceptance Maria Voce said: "I am so convinced that the Holy Spirit is in action in this Assembly, how can I say no to him? You cannot! It is the Holy Spirit that has expressed himself. I'm happy, confident that He will continue to help us on this journey we began together and that we will continue together, everyone, without exception. I accept."

As the Statutes state, the President of the Focolare Movement "is a sign of unity" of the entire movement and is its representative. She, aware that the "presence of Jesus among brothers united in His name" is the foundation of the Movement, governs "in unity with the Co-President", with whom she examines the most important decisions. By statute it must be a woman to preside over the Focolare Movement. She remains in office for six years and may be elected consecutively only once.

Maria Voce, who was born in Aiello Calabro, Cosenza (Italy) July 16, 1937, was the first president elected after the death of Chiara Lubich. She met the Focolare Movement in 1959. A law graduate, she later went on to study theology and canon law. She was in charge of the Movement in Turkey from 1978 to 1988, and maintained close relations with the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, with leaders of other Christian Churches and with the Muslim world. She worked with Chiara Lubich on the task of updating the General Statutes. She is a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Laity and also the Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

The Assembly continues now with the election of the Co-President and following that of the general councillors.

Great expectations for the audience with Pope Francis on Sept. 26, at 12 noon at the Vatican.

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