

## **The Assembly of Priests Focolarini: A New Page**

*Castelgandolfo (Rome), 13-17 October 2014*

For the Focolare Movement it is time for assessment and new prospects. The diocesan priests and deacons focolarini concluded their assembly on October 17. This followed the Movement's General Assembly held during the month of September and its 90 participants came from 30 countries, representing about 800 members of 140 priest focolari.

After assessing the performance of the last six years, the assembly viewed future priorities with clear reference to the guide-lines that resulted from the Movement's General Assembly and summerized in the three key expressions: going out, together, well prepared. With this perspective in mind, the participants reflected on the life and work of the diocesan priests and deacons focolarini: exercising their pastoral ministry; spreading the spirituality of communion in the Church; relationship with the young, the elderly, the sick; communion with other members of the Focolare Movement, united as one "people" living the spirituality of unity; specific commitments of priests and deacons focolarini that guarantee communion in the priest focolari, even when circumstances do not permit community life; spiritual, pastoral and cultural formation.

The assembly was asked to go deeper into the life of pastoral activity, the renewal of ecclesiastical structures and the theological renewal, especially through the words of Jesús Morán, the co-president of the Focolare Movement. "These elements", he said, "are part of the mission of the priest focolari and are linked to the commitment of living the ministerial priesthood, not only in the light of the Petrine profile of the Church but also of its Marian profile", the perspective of priesthood that emerges from the charism of unity, but "that needs also to be well-founded theologically". He added: "The Holy Father should find in you that kind of priest who contributes to the Church's thought in a new way".

In her closing speech, the president Maria Voce focused the attention on the particular vocation of those present "to be *focolarini* and thus bearers of the charism", who carry the responsibility of maintaining alive the flame of mutual love, so that others who come into contact with it, may also become bearers of it. "We spoke of challenges, questions, problems, needs" but for all these "the primary answer is life; solutions are not discovered through discussions. Before words, structures and organizations, we must aim at life: life has to be at the forefront of our thoughts!" These strong words sounded like a mandate. The president concluded by saying: "We are not called to give answers but to ensure that our life is an answer".

The election for the delegate at the Centre indicated a handover and the choice fell on Antonio Bacelar, a priest from Portugal, who pronounced: "With the grace of God, I accept and I am ready to give my life for each one of you". It was a very moving moment. Born in 1960 in Paredes de Coura (Portugal), Antonio grew up in Porto. He met the Focolare spirituality at the age of 15, when he was at the seminary. Ordained priest in 1986, he was entrusted with several tasks. Currently he is responsible for the diocesan youth and university campus ministry. He has a bachelor's degree and a licentiate in theology.

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