

Press Release – October 26, 2014

**The 33rd Ecumenical Meeting of Bishops,
friends of the Focolare Movement from 8 different Churches**

**Central theme “The Eucharist, mystery of communion”.
Audience with Pope Francis on Friday 7, November.**

The 33rd Ecumenical Meeting of Bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement, takes place between the 3rd and 7th November at the Mariapolis Centre in Castelgandolfo (Rome). The 39 participants (Catholics, Orthodox, Syrian-Orthodox, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans and Heads of other ecclesial Communities) come from 29 countries; among them, Mgr Francis X. Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok; Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, Archbishop Emeritus of Prague; Catholic Bishops of Ireland, the Czech Republic and Lebanon; Theophilos Kuriakose, Syrian-Orthodox Metropolitan for Europe; Serafim, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania; Metropolitans of Syria and India; Anglican Bishops of Great Britain, Australia, Ireland and South America; Methodist and Evangelical-Lutheran bishops and others of Free Churches from various parts of Europe and of Latin America.

On Friday, November 7 they will be received in audience by Pope Francis.

“The Eucharist, mystery of communion” is the theme these bishops will study in depth, with full awareness of the greatness of the mystery of Jesus’ presence among those united in his name, and without ignoring the fact that the hour when all Christians share in one Eucharist is still very far-off. In this painful experience of division, particularly at the “mensa domini”, they will live an aspect of that abandonment that Jesus suffered on the cross and Christians are asked to follow.

The Word of God, living the Gospel will be the core of this meeting, and thus reciprocal love, that generates the presence of Jesus in the midst and leads to that spiritual ecumenism that transcends barriers and opens new horizons, even in theological dialogue.

Mgr. Klaus Hemmerle, Bishop of Aquisgrana, Germany started to promote these meetings for Bishops of different Churches in 1982; later on it was Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, now Archbishop Emeritus of Prague that continued this initiative, and presently these conferences are moderated by Mgr. Francis X. Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok (Thailand). This initiative promotes communion among hundreds of bishops in every part of the world, the greatest number of them being Catholics. During these last years, Ecumenical Conferences were held in Jerusalem (2013), Cairo (2012), London (2011), Castelgandolfo (2010), Eisleben-Wittenberg (2009), Lebanon (2008), and previously in Istanbul, Lausanne-Geneva, etc.

They are based on “an ecumenism of life” that urges bishops and pastors, priests and lay people to assume their responsibility and be at the service of universal brotherhood, and offer concrete help to victims of disasters that are shaking humanity, especially in the Middle East, in order to spread the Gospel and the light of Jesus in every corner of the world.

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