

## **Pope Francis receives the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement**

A more than significant conclusion to the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement. Pope Francis received the participants of the Assembly this morning acknowledging the path they had followed, and whilst thanking them "for their generous commitment," he urged the Movement on to a contribution of responsibility, creativity and generosity.

The Clementine Hall was packed with 473 people from all the continents, of different ages, cultures, vocations, lay and consecrated. Also present were Cardinals João Braz de Aviz, Miloslav Vlk and Ennio Antonelli, with the Archbishop of Bangkok Mgr. Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij.

Presenting the work of the Assembly to the Pope, Maria Voce called it "an exciting experience of communion (...), a path of communitarian discernment, listening to the Spirit, in identifying the lines to be followed in order to respond to the pains and the hopes of humanity today" thanks to the specific charism of unity of the Focolare.

In this "school-workshop," added the President, "a particular stimulus has been the contribution of the youth of the Movement and guests from other churches, of different religions and non-religious convictions, who have helped to steer the work decisively towards a comprehensive dialogue" which is "the indispensable key to reaching unity and universal brotherhood." Maria Voce also entrusted Pope Francis with the hopeful search for "new possible avenues for greater involvement and participation in the life and the running of the Movement of the Christian brothers and sisters from different churches who are part of it."

The Pope, recalling the journey of the Church, called to a new evangelization 50 years after the Second Vatican Council, proposed three main ideas: "To contemplate, to go out and to school."

Contemplate God and live in the company of men, persevere in mutual love, the Pope said, quoting a writing by the founder Chiara Lubich who "inspired by God in response to the signs of the times," wrote, "This is the great attraction of our time: to penetrate the highest contemplation whilst mingling with everyone, shoulder to shoulder."

Then "go out (...) to communicate the love of God generously to all," with respect, generosity and creativity. "To do this - the Pope emphasized- we need to become experts in that art which is called 'dialogue' and that can not be learned cheaply. We cannot be satisfied with half-measures," but "with God's help, to aim high and broaden our vision." To go out with courage where there are "the groans of our brothers, the ills of society and the questions of the culture of our time." And, spontaneously, he added: "It pains my heart when, in front of a church, a humanity ... with so many moral, existential and war wounds (...) Christians begin to lose themselves in byzantine philosophical, theological, and spiritual considerations."

The third idea: to school. He recalled the words of Saint John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente* with which he invited the whole Church to become "home and school of communion" (cf. n. 43). And he added: "You have taken seriously this suggestion. We need to form, as required by the Gospel, new men and women and, to this end, a school of

humanity to the measure of Jesus' humanity is needed. (...) Without the adequate formation of the new generations, it is an illusion to think we can carry out a serious and sustainable project in the service of a new humanity." We must form "world-persons," he concluded, citing the expression "Chiara Lubich had once coined and that is still very relevant ... Men and women with the soul, the heart and the mind of Jesus and because of this they are able to recognize and interpret the needs, concerns and hopes that dwell in the heart of every person."

The Pope gave great encouragement to the new directors of the movement who greeted him. He had a warm and open exchange with the Christians of different churches and people of non-religious convictions who were present.

*Victoria Gómez (+39) 335 7003675 - Benjamim Ferreira (+39) 348 4754063*