

PARISH MOVEMENT

DIOCESAN MOVEMENT

PRIESTS MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN

PARISH MOVEMENT

Make the parish a **«home and school of communion»**. This direction given by John Paul II in 2001 in his apostolic letter [Novo Millennio Ineunte](#), could summarise the significance of the Parish Movement's activity.

We are in the 60's. Many parish priests who encountered the Focolare Movement realised that its characteristic communitarian spirituality had an impact on their lives and began to give a new look even to parish activities and their parish communities.

Many of them attended the 13th July 1966 audience in which pope Paul VI encouraged them to bring the spirit of unity to their dioceses and parishes.

In response to this desire, Chiara Lubich launched the Parish Movement, inviting the Focolare members who offered their services at the parish level to animate this "Church cell" with the spirit of unity, paving the way for the first meetings of parish communities.

Thus began the Parish Movement with an agenda that would turn out to be profoundly in tune with pope John Paul II's direction in the above mentioned apostolic letter as well as with what Benedict XVI wished for: "The first and most important requirement is that the parish should constitute an 'ecclesial community' and an 'ecclesial family'".

In fact, when the evangelical spirituality of unity is lived in a parish by the priests and the laity, with full and joint responsibility, the feeling of family in the community is tangible. The ensuing effects of the Spirit are typical of one who lives a communitarian dimension: the need for a greater communion is

felt and one freely shares money, time, talents as well as needs; the community opens up to the various forms of poverties and social urgencies in the area; evangelization primarily aims at witnessing reciprocal love and the lived Gospel, and the atmosphere of joy and unity sensed in the community increases recourse to the sacraments and particularly to the Eucharist.

In this way, the parish become the home for all. Attention is paid to the harmony and beauty of the church and parish premises so that they may worthily to welcome Jesus present in every person and in the united community.

The contribution of associations and movements is valorised, each according to its proper charism at the service of the common good.

Catecheses and homilies are directed towards embodying the Word of Jesus in everyday life.

It brings about an openness to dialogue that knows how to listen and communicate with detachment, which tends to foster friendly relationships and aims at universal brotherhood.

At present members of the Focolare Movement offer their services in parishes as catechists, Eucharistic ministers, in the councils or commissions, in the Caritas association, in the recreational centres, in courses for engaged couples and families, or collaborating in the various parish initiatives and activities.

The parishes are principally located in Italy, many European and Latin American countries, but also in North America, various Asian and African countries, and Australia.

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DIOCESAN MOVEMENT

The purpose of the Diocesan Movement is to bring the charism of unity to inside the diocese. This Movement is composed of persons who belong to the Work of Mary and try to contribute to the renewal of the life of the structures of the diocese, promoting and nourishing an every deeper unity of the faithful around their Bishop, raising relationships of brotherhood and communion among everyone and promoting dialogue between the different entities that already exist within the diocese.

Like everything other expression of the Focolare Movement, this movement emerged from life. The Diocesan Movement **began in Ascoli, Italy in 1973**, with the youth school camps that were animated by a priest focolarino, who was involved in the pastoral care of the youth in his diocese. The positive feedback of the days spent in an atmosphere of great joy reached the ears of the bishop of Ascoli, Bishop Morgante, who, impressed by the life he found there, encouraged them to go forward with it.

The experience then repeated itself **in the diocese of Teramo in April of 1976** where the first school camp also received the official approval of the Bishop of the locality, Bishop Conigli.

The most important work of the Diocesan Movement is the formation of persons who live and are able to transmit the spirituality of communion to the parish and diocesan communities, looking forward to the realization of the Church-communion of which the Second Vatican Council and more recent Church documents have spoken.

During the next years it spread to another four Italian diocese. At present, the Diocesan Movement is present in six Italian diocese: Ascoli, Teramo, Fermo, Macerata and Pesaro.

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PRIESTS MOVEMENT

The Priest's Movement is one of the expressions of the outreach of the Focolare Movement and shares all the same nature, spirit and aims. It spreads within the diocesan presbyteries, seminaries and the various ecclesial environments a spirit of communion, to contribute to their renewal in the light of the Testament of Jesus: **"That all may be one"** (Jn 17:21). The priests Movement is made up of: diocesan priests, permanent deacons and Catholic seminarians and also, in line with their own churches, ministers from other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. Making the **spirituality of unity** their own, priests rediscover the importance of being first and foremost authentic Christians. As a priority before any priestly function they try to witness to: "By this all shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

The **evangelical style of life** that has arisen, has been confirmed "Presbyterorum ordinis" (Decree on Life of Priests, 1965) from the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterum emphasis ever since. In fact, making mutual charity the basis, it becomes spontaneous to put into common material goods and spiritual gifts; give witness to unity and pastoral charity; to live with joy the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience; to have as much care of self as for confreres, make of the house and parish harmonious places which can help communion; continued formation in order to be men of dialogue; to live as a members of the one body by keeping up contact with confreres and all the people of God.

Being alert to the most urgent needs of the Church within the various pastoral fields or 'ecclesial worlds', the priests Movement organizes **meetings and courses** on an international and local level, based on the charism and the experience of the Focolare Movement in different pastoral environments, like evangelization, catecheses, formation etc. These meetings are a real life school, giving the opportunity to know significant experiences from the lay side of the Movement with young people, families, economy, health etc.

In recent years there have been some particularly noteworthy events:

- **Collaboration with other Movements and Communities** and with the diocesan representatives for clergy for a renewal of priestly life and pastoral care
- **The running of spiritual exercises** for priests, deacons and seminarians, inspired by the spirituality of communion
- **International congresses:**
 - 2006: "Church Today" with the presence of a thousand priests and seminarians
 - 2009: "There is a Way" with 500 seminarians, January 2009
 - 2010: "Priests Today", at the conclusion of the Year of the Priest, in the Paul VI Hall within the Vatican. 4,000 priests took part. With the support of the Congregation for the Clergy and organised together with the Schoenstatt Movement in collaboration with the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal and other ecclesial groups
- **Annual course for teachers in seminaries**, during the month of July, which inspires participants towards a style of communitarian formation
- **A range of publications**, such as "365 Thoughts on the life of priests" (Citta Nuova, Rome 2009),- "Priests in a changing world" – a book published and translated into 17 languages came out during the **Year of the Priest** (P.Coda, and B. Leahy, Citta Nuova Rome 2010), the result of an international study Seminar.

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MOVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN

Every now and then," wrote Chiara Lubich, "through a person or a book, through their writings, God makes us meet a saint. Little by little, it seems that the saints have approached our Work to encourage it, illuminate it, help it".

And: "If on the one hand we are aware that the charism of our Movement is useful to the whole Church, on the other hand we are also convinced that all the charisms of the Church are useful to us, children of the Church.

It is proper to our spirituality to learn from the saints, to become their children, to participate in their charism".

It is a relationship of reciprocity between the Focolare Movement and the ancient charisms, as can be seen from the above statements, and an experience of communion that is increasingly shared. This is also encouraged by the recent Pontifical Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life in *"Starting Afresh from Christ"*, which expresses itself in this way: *"A new richness can spring from an encounter and communion with the charisms of ecclesial movements. Movements can often offer the example of evangelical and charismatic freshness such as the generous, creative initiatives in evangelization. On the other hand, movements as well as new forms of evangelical life can learn a great deal from the faithful, joyful and charismatic witness of consecrated life which bears a very rich spiritual patrimony, the many treasures of experience and wisdom and a great variety of apostolate and missionary commitments."* (nr. 30).

It is thus clear that the Movements of Religious are an integral part of the Work of Mary, that they share its aims and spirit to contribute to the realization of the prayer of Jesus, *"That all may be one"*.

Religious men and women, consecrated members of secular Institutes, nuns and monks and young people in their first formation, who in various ways are sensitive and willing to share the spirit and the purpose of the Work of Mary. They participate in some of her activities or even just show her esteem, love and help. Their bond with the Work is essentially of a spiritual nature.

Those who participate in it deepen the Spirituality of communion, which they feel is suitable for their vocation to be in the Church today. They live it first of all by fostering communion within their own community or Institute, between the old and new charisms and by establishing relationships of unity with all the people of God. They feel they can implement the recommendation that John Paul II made in 1996 to a large group of religious, members of the Focolare movement, gathered from all continents: "The Spirituality of communion that the Work of Mary promotes and fosters is an essential dimension of Christian life. I encourage you to grow in it, to live it in your communities, in the different environments in which you work".

The religious men and women of these Movements promote every initiative to increase the spirit and culture of communion, days of study, discussion and witness; they organize conferences, weeks of spirituality, formation-courses that are inspired by the Spirituality of unity, the ecclesiology of communion. One of the most recent events was "Charisms in Communion", held in Assisi on 23 October 2010.

The religious men and women, called "experts in communion" (Plenary SCRIS 1978, Religious and Human Promotion, n. 24), seek the dialogue of life with all people and they are sensitive to the

ecumenical dialogue, the interreligious dialogue and the dialogue with people of different convictions and with people of different cultures.

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