

Press Release – April 17, 2018

Christians and Muslims journeying together in the light of the charism of unity Together as a sign of hope

Christians and Muslims get together to focus on shared values and work for the common good in various fields: family, environment, ethics, mass media, art and culture, social commitment. This is the dialogue of life that nourishes concrete experiences of fraternity.

It will be discussed on Saturday, April 21, from 16 to 19 pm, within the wider context of a conference promoted by the Focolare Movement. The title of this event is **“Together as a sign of hope. Christians and Muslims journeying together in the light of the charism of unity”** and it will take place at the Mariapolis Centre in Castel Gandolfo, Rome from the 19 to 22 April. About 600 Christians and Muslims are expected to attend.

In a social context, particularly in the western world, marked by fear, prejudice and distrust that build barriers and by ideas that nourish clashes and divisions, witness of a shared commitment between Christians and Muslims, launches a message that goes against the current and sows seeds of hope. These Christians and Muslims unit for peace, solidarity, development and harmony among peoples of different faiths, cultures and traditions.

It is possible to live together in harmony, respect, solidarity and peace. It is also possible to work together, share common objectives and cooperate to achieve them, without weakening one’s identity and heritage of values, while exercising a fair and frank confrontation that strengthens mutual understanding and respect, and giving preference to that which unites over that which divides.

The driving force of this journey is the charism of unity of Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolari. On May 18, 1997, in her speech at the Malcolm X Mosque in Harlem, where she made a pact to work for unity and peace together with Imam Wallace Deen Mohammed and the Muslim community present, she said: *“Here I have experienced profound fraternity. Its beauty is so remarkable that it can only be God’s work. He has really made us one family for his plans”*. While speaking about the underlying principle of this journey of communion, she explained: *“Benevolence, compassion, or at least non-violence are present in various religions; but the so-called Golden Rule - ‘Do not do to others as you would not have them do to you’ - is common to almost all of them, even if with different versions. This Golden Rule is enough to guarantee our bond of love with each neighbour, and this love would be enough to make humanity become one family”*.

In the wake of that experience and of initiatives launched in various countries to promote Islamic-Christian dialogue, the coming event at Castelgandolfo aims at being a step forward in the journey towards universal brotherhood and a sign of hope for humanity.

“Religious education is attention to peace” says Adnane Mokrani, a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University and at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) and president of Cipax, who will be present at the conference. “With such an approach, there would be no divisions, but there would be solidarity, collaboration, unity among people of different faiths, called to work together for the common good of humanity and to serve everyone without any distinction”.

For the theologian Piero Coda, Dean of the Sophia University Institute of Loppiano, Florence: **“God’s plan for humanity is a plan of peace, love and unity”** and “a vocation for peace is inherent in all religions”. He also says that: “this dialogue is the highway that leads us to be faithful to Christ’s message and to contribute towards the unity of the human family”.

Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement, Cardinal Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Abdullah el Radwan, Head of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy, Izzedin Elzir, Imam of Florence and president of UCOII, Piero Coda, Dean of the Sophia University Institute and Mohammad Shomali, director of the London Islamic Centre will be among the speakers during this open gathering. Numerous experiences of dialogue and fruitful collaboration will be shared as fragments of unity to be multiplied.

For further information:

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