

Press Release – 8th August, 2014

**An experience of communion in Trent for 52 Bishops from 25 nations
The visit of the Pope to Asia and the 50° anniversary of *Ecclesiam Suam***

On the eve of the first visit of the Pope Francis to Asia and while celebrating the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* with reflections on its contents and novelty, 52 bishops from 25 nations met in Trent from the 29th July to the 7th August to learn about the spirituality of unity. This time Asia was represented solely by the Archbishop of Bangkok, Thailand, and by the Archbishop of Pune, India, since other bishops who were interested had commitments in their dioceses in preparation for the papal visit (14-18 August) in Korea. Among these was Mons. Lazzaro You Heung-sik, Bishop of Daejeon, whose diocese will host the Asian Day for Youth and the meeting with Pope Francis with the bishops of Asia.

The reason for the annual appointment for the bishops friends of the Focolare is in line with the call of the Holy Father during his visit to the Caserta in Italy on the 26th July, when he affirmed that “we bishops have to give the example of the unity that Jesus asked of the Father for His Church (...), a unity in diversity”. During the present meeting the bishops present lived this affective and effective fraternal unity among them, and shared the respective apostolic activities that helped everyone understand how to better serve the Church and reach out to the peripheries.

This 38th meeting of bishops was based on the central theme, “**The Eucharist, mystery of Communion**”, about which Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement gave her reflection, starting from the experience and spiritual doctrine of Chiara Lubich. The development of the movement was initially linked to the sacrament instituted by Christ in the Last Supper, and led Lubich to state more than once that the Opera that was born from this relationship between her and Jesus in the Eucharist”. The power of the sacrament of unity appeared as the root and nourishment of the Church, leading to the communion amongst brothers within the family of the children of God, inspiring all towards a profound dialogue with everyone, believers and non believers.

Through discussion with Maria Voce and co-president Giancarlo Falletti, the participants could deepen their understanding of the principle themes which will be the subject of the next General Assembly of the Focolari, during the coming September at CastelGandolfo (Rome).

There was ample time for reflection and sharing about the present challenges of the Church and the various shades that these can take in the different continents.

The 52 bishops then concelebrated the Eucharist in the Cathedral of Trent together with the Archbishop of the place, Luigi Bressan, who said that their cathedral had never contained so many bishops and cardinals since the time of the conclusion of the Council of Trent on the 4th December 1563.

An evening animated by the community of the Focolari of Trent showed the positive impact on the church and society of who is committed to live for the others, reaching out to meet in particular those who are emarginated. At the conclusion there was a historical and spiritual reflection about the relationship between Pope Paul VI and Chiara Lubich, confirming in those present their faith in the motherhood of the Church and in the action of the Holy Spirit.

FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

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The meeting was held as part of the initiative, started 38 years ago by Chiara Lubich and Mons. Klaus Hemmerle, Bishop of Aquisgrana. At present the moderator is Mons. Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok.

The city chosen this time was Trent, where the foundress of the Focolari was born and where the movement was started during the terrible years of the Second World War. In the dramatic scene of much conflict in the world, the return to the origins of the spirituality of unity has resulted in the participants from suffering regions finding a motive of hope and a confirmation that God never abandons his people.

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