

Press release - October 28, 2016

A celebration in Algeria to mark the 50th anniversary of the Focolare Movement in North Africa and the Middle East

The second International Congress of Muslims of the Movement at "Dar es Salam" Centre in Tlemcen

On October 16, 2016 a Citroën 2 CV arrived in Tlemcen, a city of Algeria. On board, there were two Italian focolarini, Salvatore Strippoli and Ulisse Caglioni, and Pierre Le Vaslot, a French focolarino. This was the beginning of an adventure that led to an experience now lived in many places of North Africa and the Middle East. The 50 years of this experience are being marked during these days.

Mourad, who is a doctor, relates: *"We were a group of young people, and we laughed because these seemed to have no idea about what exactly they wanted to do. One day we met Gérard who invited us to tea at his house, the focolare. Later we went there several times; we talked and sang songs which were very beautiful and had very meaningful words. And we got to know more about an ideal that filled our life and taught us how to live. I am 67 years old; I still live this ideal and I am very happy about this. It is an ideal that teaches us how to love".*

Samira, a student says: *«I am 21 years old. I'm very impressed, I feel very grateful and I am encouraged by the sane ideas of the Focolare Movement. I am impressed above all by the Movement's determination to build bridges among people and to transmit moral and human values that unite us to brethren who come from different horizons and above all, that unite us to Allah, our Lord, who is one.»*

Omar, a nurse in the operating theatre: *"Peace be with you. The Focolare Movement has taught me to consider the other, even if he is different from me, to appreciate one another and even enrich each other, and to go beyond prejudices, which at times have nothing to do with religion. I have learnt to take the first step towards the other, to approach him like a brother with a selfless love, which is the key of fraternity".*

Msgr. Henri Teissier, Archbishop Emeritus of Algiers says: *"The number of Christians that belong to the Church in Algeria is very small, and it is very important for them to be part of the Algerian society. The Focolare has focused on relationships and on dialogue, without hiding its identity, but the task of translating this into the Algerian culture has been left to their Algerian friends. I think that this responds to the expectations of the Church, but obviously it has led to its being a little bit left out from the Christian community gatherings. Undoubtedly, our goal is not the assembled community, but a community that seeks others to find ourselves in a reality that is beyond us".*

The two events that mark the fiftieth anniversary of this experience and hosted at "Dar es Salam", the Focolare Centre at Tlemcen, are:

- The second **International Congress of Muslims of the Focolare Movement** (October 28-30, 2016) with participants from Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Italy, France, Switzerland and Canada.
- **A feast to mark the fifty years of the Focolare Movement in Algeria** (November 1-2, 2016) with participants from various communities and some of the first witnesses of this adventure. Jesús Morán, the co-president of the Movement will also be present.

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