

Intercontinental Meeting of Bishops Friends of the Focolare Movement

Mariapolis Center, Castel Gandolfo (Rome), 8th - 11th February 2011

“Rediscovering God’s Plan Today”

75 Bishops and Cardinals from 40 nations will gather between the 8th and 11th of February 2011. The topic of this 35th meeting of bishops is “Rediscovering God’s Plan Today”.

What is the reason for this meeting? In these times of social change, crisis, but also of seeking for new ways of witnessing to the faith, many bishops feel the need to share their experiences and viewpoints. There is a need to rediscover the mystical and spiritual side of the ecclesial realities – they say – which bring new hope as well as new approaches.

“There is a need for a more constructive reading of the signs of the times,” affirms **Cardinal Miloslav Vlk**, convenor of the meeting. “Today’s world is rich with stimulating challenges that call for deeper study, for they can offer us new perspectives.

There will be presentations given by such bishops as **Cardinal Marc Oullet**, Prefect of the Congregation of the Bishops; **Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi**, Prefect for the Pontifical Council for Culture; and from **Cardinal Kurt Koch**, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

Aside from presentations by bishops from those regions of the world which are most under trial in the present moment, there will also be a presentation by **Maria Voce**, President of the Focolare Movement, on “Adherence to the Will of God in the Life of the Christian.” This is the theme of the year for the Focolare Movement, and it invites everyone to say a free and responsible “yes” to the plan of God.

A special moment will be the audience with Pope Benedict XVI, during the Wednesday audience, which provided an opportunity for expressing that “effective and affective” communion which links the bishops to the Pope.

The program includes various sessions of theological and philosophical reflection, of updating concerning the present situation of the Church (like the Year for Priests and priestly formation) and the presentation of concrete experiences of evangelical living. The meeting will be interspersed with moments of mediation, celebration, common prayer and recreation thus aiming to be a restful time physically and spiritually.

After the meeting, a large group of the bishops will visit Loppiano, near Florence, where Sophia University Institute is located, which promotes the culture of unity.

This year, meetings of bishops will be held in different countries of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and South America.

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