

Press Release – November 7, 2014

## **Globalize fraternity by seeking ways that lead to unity**

### **The Pope's message to Bishops of various Churches, friends of the Focolare Movement**

An audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican concluded the 33rd Ecumenical meeting of Bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement. During this audience Pope Bergoglio emphasized “the value, in a troubled world, of a clear witness of unity among Christians and an explicit acknowledgement of esteem, respect and, more precisely, of fraternity”. He stated that if Christians seek to respond to the many problems and tragedies of our time, they “must speak and act as brothers... This is a way – perhaps the first one for us – that leads us to respond to the globalization of indifference with the globalization of solidarity and fraternity”.

The lack of religious freedom in various countries, the persecution of Christians and other minorities, the phenomenon of terrorism, the tragedy of refugees, the challenges of fundamentalism and secularism “challenge our conscience as Christians and as pastors” and “are an appeal to seek with renewed commitment, with perseverance and patience the paths that lead to unity”. While referring to the central theme of this Ecumenical meeting, the Pope indicated that “the master path” that leads to unity is “the Eucharist as a mystery of communion”. He said that through the Eucharist “we feel that unity is a gift” and that at the same time “it is a grave responsibility”.

The 39 participants, who came from nine Christian Churches and had the opportunity to exchange a personal greeting with the Pope, received his message with much conviction. At the beginning of the audience, on behalf of all those present, Archbishop Francis X. Kriengsak Kovithavanij of Bangkok, moderator of the congress, spoke of the spiritual and fraternal experience lived during the previous days. The Metropolitan Theophilose Kuriakose of the Syrian-Orthodox Church in India talked about the immense suffering lived in Iraq, Turkey and especially in Syria. He recalled the two bishops seized 18 months ago and trusted that the Pope's imminent journey to Turkey might bring some sign of hope. Finally, Bishop Christian Krause, President Emeritus of the Lutheran World Federation voiced his desire that the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation would be celebrated together in the sign of God's love as a witness to all Christendom, and thus advancing on the path of unity.

The next Ecumenical Meeting will be held in Turkey, Istanbul around November 30, 2015 feast of St. Andrew.

These Ecumenical Meetings for Bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement were started in 1982 by Chiara Lubich and Mgr. Klaus Hemmerle, Catholic Bishop of Aachen, Germany, responding to a suggestion by Pope John Paul II.

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