

Summary of the first lesson of the 2025 Popular Marian University (UPM) Course

Summary of the first lesson of the 2025 Popular Marian University (UPM) Course, “*Recognising oneself: The Statutes: a path and a mirror*” held on 11th January, 2025.

The focus of this year’s UPM lessons is on the statutes of the “Work of Mary”, referred to as its “identity card,” exploring their spiritual and organizational significance. This initiative aims to deepen understanding ahead of the 2026 General Assembly, the Movement's most important governing body.

1. Purpose of the Course:

- Equip members of the Movement with a better understanding of their identity and purpose.
- Enhance participation and preparation for the upcoming General Assembly.
- Reflect on the ongoing evolution of the Movement in light of its statutes and charism, aligning its mission with contemporary needs.

2. Key Presentations:

- **Francisco Canzani**, Councillor of the Movement, emphasized the foundational role of the statutes, describing them as a “mirror” to reassess and refine the Movement's spiritual and operational journey.
- **Renata Simon**, Councillor of the Movement, highlighted the importance of active participation and understanding of the statutes, rooted in mutual love and a commitment to the Opera’s mission.
- **Maria Voce**, Emeritus President, urged members to engage with the statutes prayerfully and collectively, as a way to sustain the life and unity of the Movement.

3. Structure of the Course:

- A five-session journey exploring the statutes' spiritual roots, their history, and their application in the life of the Movement.
- Topics include the Gospel as the primary rule, the relationship between statutes and freedom, and methods to interpret their legal language effectively.

4. Central Message:

- The statutes are not just legal documents but embody the spirit of the Movement, with mutual love and unity as their foundation.
- They guide the Movement's actions, fostering a shared identity and vision, while serving as tools for responding to the evolving needs of humanity and the Church.

1st Lesson Highlights and Reflections:

The course, “*Recognising oneself: The Statutes: a path and a mirror*”, focuses on deepening the understanding of the statutes of the Work of Mary, often described as its “identity card.” The sessions aim to prepare participants for the 2026 General Assembly, foster engagement with the Movement's mission, and reflect on its unique identity amidst global and ecclesial contexts.

Insights from Speakers

1. Lucia Abignente (Chiara Lubich Centre):

She emphasized the importance of the statutes' preamble, which Chiara Lubich herself described as the foundation of the Movement's life. It highlights mutual and continuous charity as "the norm of norms" and the basis for all other rules. Lucia connected this principle to the spiritual legacy of Chiara, especially the concept of "Jesus in the midst," which permeates the statutes and serves as the starting point, constant presence, and ultimate goal of the Opera's spirituality. Reflecting on the charism of unity, Lucia explained its profound roots in the Gospel and its relevance in fostering fraternity and communion in the world. This charism, though new in expression, is deeply grounded in the Church's tradition, bridging past and future in service to humanity.

2. Adriana Cosseddu (Professor of Criminal Law, member of the Abba School):

Adriana highlighted the beauty and richness of every article in the statutes, focusing on Article 2, which explains the dual name of the Movement: *Focolare Movement* and *Work of Mary*. This reflects its universal mission to embody Mary's presence on earth by fostering unity across different faiths, beliefs, and cultures.

She likened the Movement to a tree with roots (hidden yet vital), a trunk (the central structure), branches (diverse expressions and initiatives), and flowers (ongoing innovation and beauty). At its core is the "lymph"—the life of mutual love and shared mission, which Chiara described as preceding and informing all legal and structural frameworks.

Adriana stressed the interconnectedness of the statutes, likening them to a mosaic where each piece gains meaning in relation to the whole. She underscored the role of the statutes in guiding the Movement as a community rooted in Gospel principles, transcending boundaries, and fostering universal brotherhood.

Structure of the Course

- **Five sessions** covering topics such as:
 - The Gospel as the Movement's primary rule and its historical journey to its current statutes.
 - How the Church integrates specific charisms into its broader mission.
 - The liberating nature of rules when grounded in love and truth.
 - Practical tools to understand the legal and spiritual dimensions of the statutes.

Core Message

- The statutes are not merely legal instruments but living documents that encapsulate the Movement's mission to live and share mutual love, unity and fraternity.

- By engaging with them, members can better contribute to the Opera's mission and respond to the evolving needs of the world.

Watch the lesson here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk_zhjlBo5Q&list=PLKhibJTNojHqf1uctKbhRacLDeVHQI9Pp&index=2&t=1574s

Further information: <https://www.universitapopolaremariana.org/>