

Lesson 2 of RECOGNISING ONESELF, The Statutes: a Path and a Mirror

The second lessons of the "Recognising Oneself, the Statutes: A Path and a Mirror" course of the Popular Marian University (UPM) took place on 8th February. It can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhKKHiSeeh0>

The two key lessons explored the relationship between charism, rule and community life:

1. *The Charism and the Rule* by Fr Fabio Ciardi
2. *A Life Together Expressed by Law* by Sr Tiziana Merletti.

The Charism and the Rule

Fr Fabio Ciardi explored the significance of the Rule as an expression of a charism. From the origins of monasticism, the "life according to the Gospel" has been the foundation of religious communities. Saint Anthony the Abbot, for example, had no written rule, as the Gospel itself was his sole guide. Over time, written rules emerged, not to replace the Gospel, but to adapt it to specific communities. Founders, through their charism, illuminated particular aspects of God's Word, creating living and unique traditions. Chiara Lubich described this evolution as "*Christ unfolded through the centuries*," a lived Gospel continually actualized in new forms.

The Rule, therefore, is a "mediation" that allows the Gospel to be lived concretely, ensuring order, harmony, rhythm, and discipline. It is an educational tool and a means of transmitting the charism over time, ensuring continuity and fidelity to the original inspiration.

A Life Together Expressed by Law

Sr Tiziana Merletti addressed the theme of regulating community life, emphasizing that rules are not mere impositions but instruments of unity and coherence. Every Statute, such as that of the Focolare Movement, is the result of discernment inspired by the Holy Spirit and represents the Magna Charta of a community. To approach these texts, one must have an attitude of desire and depth: desire, because founders put their spiritual insights into writing, resonating in the hearts of members; depth, because each word is the fruit of centuries of experiences of consecrated life.

Statutes serve to:

- Define the identity of a community and ensure fidelity to the charism;
- Protect the dignity and rights of each member;
- Establish leadership roles based on service and co-responsibility;
- Promote inter-culturality that values different sensitivities.

Finally, Sr Tiziana highlighted the active role of members in revising the Statutes, ensuring they remain living instruments suited to evolving realities. The participation of all is essential to safeguarding the charism and making it fruitful over time.

An Invitation to Reflection

These lessons invite us to understand the profound value of the Rule and Law within a community experience. They are not merely organizational tools but living expressions of a shared evangelical journey. They form a bridge between past, present, and future, linking the charismatic gift of a founder with its embodiment in the daily lives of those who choose to follow its inspiration.

Texts of the lessons are available on the UPM site:

<https://www.universitapopolaremariana.org/en/courses/>