

Fr Fabio Ciardi in Luxembourg for the jubilee of the “Oktav” pilgrimage

Fr Fabio's visit to Luxembourg was part of the Jubilee celebrations for the “Oktav” pilgrimage, which dates back to 1666, when people sought healing from a miraculous wooden statue of the Virgin Mary during a plague outbreak. Since then, this religious tradition has grown into a major cultural & historical event. In 2025, the Oktav celebrates its 400th anniversary. Fr Fabio was invited to contribute to the event's preparations by exploring the theme: "Mary in the Spirituality of Unity: Seat of Wisdom, Mother of the Home." The Communications Service of the Catholic Church of Luxembourg printed this article about the event:

When speaking about the meeting on Saturday, February 8th, the first word that comes to mind is "light." The light of the sun flooding the room on an exceptional day, while outside, winter and its grayness seemed never-ending; the light in the eyes of the participants, including Monsignor Fernand Franck, Archbishop Emeritus of Luxembourg; the light of the texts of Chiara Lubich (1920–2008), which framed the sharing. Presented by Father Fabio Ciardi, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI), the few words from the Servant of God, Founder of the Focolare Movement, were perfect for accompanying our meditations on the occasion of the Jubilee marking 400 years of devotion to Mary, Consoler of the Afflicted.

"To penetrate the highest contemplation and remain man among men, to lose oneself in the crowd to enlighten it with the divine, to weave patterns of light upon the crowd."

Certainly, the cloistered life is wonderful, but it is not for everyone. Father Fabio expanded on the thoughts of Chiara Lubich, with whom he collaborated for several years: *"Mary is in the highest contemplation, yet she remained among everyone. She mingled with the crowd. She was present in the Upper Room, among the others."*

Mary brings Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth. Before the Magi, she holds Jesus on her knees and becomes the Throne of Wisdom. At Cana, she shows her closeness to the people. She pays attention to everything and notices that the wine has run out. *"Mary's contemplation does not get lost in the clouds,"* Father Fabio continues. *"She is a creative person, attentive to others."*

And what about us? To conform to Mary, we must become like her. *"This goes far beyond devotion! We must live like her, in contemplation but always active. (...) Sing the litanies and try to imitate what they say about Mary's goodness."*

After a moment of meditation, four testimonies followed—simple yet profound experiences of daily life that touched each participant. Then, Bishop Franck was invited to share a few words. He recounted how, on the feast day of Our Lady, Consoler of the Afflicted, he experienced a transformation of the final prayer. The original text states, *"Let us remain with Mary under the Cross,"* but he heard instead, *"Let us remain in Mary under the Cross."*

"This is a program for daily life," he explained. *"Let us bring everything to Jesus, who receives what we say as if it were Mary herself speaking to Him."*

By the end of the morning, numerous questions provided Father Fabio with the opportunity to refine his reflections, concluding with these words:

"We can welcome Jesus in all His presences and perhaps discover and cultivate, above all, the presence of Jesus among us."