

## Focolare Movement, the Courage to Proclaim that Jesus Unites

**On 27<sup>th</sup> March, the Participants of the Ecumenical Conference “Called to Hope” prayed for the Peace of in the Church of St Paul Outside the Walls** by Beatrice Guarrera – Vatican News

(unofficial translation, interviews in italian here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2025-03/focolari-il-coraggio-di-annunciare-che-gesu-unisce.html>)

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### A Long Journey

The event was part of the conference *Called to Hope – Key Players of Dialogue*, an important meeting for the faithful from 20 Christian Churches from over 40 countries across 4 continents. The commitment to ecumenism, carried out by the Focolare Movement for more than 40 years, takes on a special character this Jubilee year thanks also to the conference: it allows people to meet “with a spirit of forgiveness, of reconciliation, because that is what we lack,” explained Margaret Karram: “It is undoubtedly a long journey, but this occasion gives us the opportunity to get to know each other, seeing the richness of every person, of every Church, and this makes us more united.”

### In the Footsteps of Saint Paul

On the second day of the conference, which concluded on 29<sup>th</sup> March, the participants went on a pilgrimage to the Basilica of San Lorenzo and the Tre Fontane Abbey, before the moment of ecumenical prayer at San Paolo fuori le Mura. The pilgrimage, therefore, embodied the “desire to walk together, to make this journey here in Rome as well, asking for forgiveness for our divisions, for having caused each other pain over these centuries,” said the President of the Focolare Movement. An inspiring figure in this sense is undoubtedly Saint Paul, the “man of conversion,” “who then proclaimed Jesus Christ with all his might, with courage.” In his footsteps, “we must have the courage to proclaim that Jesus is the one who unites us, that Jesus is our hope in this Jubilee,” she continued. Thus, the faithful had the opportunity to experience the beauty of encountering God in every church, to pause in prayer. “I think that sometimes we also lack the time to be silent, to adore, to contemplate. There are so many things that unite us and this also gives us courage, strengthens our faith,” said Margaret Karram.

### A Witness to the Origins

Among the conference participants, from all over the world, were also someone testify to the history of the Movement, such as Callan Slipper, an Anglican priest deeply committed to dialogue among Christians in the United Kingdom. He was present at the meeting in London where, many years ago, Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, felt a strong desire

to engage in ecumenism. “Chiara saw before her a thousand people, who were from all the Churches,” recounted Rev. Slipper and there she felt a profound sense of love and unity among all the members of that gathering. “The reality of the Church that we live is that of Jesus who welcomes us into the bosom of the Father, through our love for one another,” he explained. That encounter, experienced by Chiara in a prophetic way, “also opened up a vision of how to live ecumenism,” a divine life to be shared with everyone, the “people’s ecumenism,” which takes shape through dialogue in the daily life of individuals. In a time of conflicts “the only realistic way to reach peace is to generate relationships that are truly deep and filled with love,” he continued: “It really takes ecumenism to change the reality experienced by the Church, so that it is more like what God wants, not only for our benefit, but because the world needs this kind of love, a mutual love that transforms relationships and is truly capable of bringing about peace.”

### **United to Work Together**

There are many challenges that the Christian Churches face in this very historical moment of tensions, which makes it evident that there is a need to come together to work as one. As in the Philippines, where the ecumenical movement is engaged “in caring for creation,” Julius Batista, Pastor of the Methodist Churches Union, explained to the Vatican media. He emphasized the closeness to the Holy Father at this time: “The majority of the population in the Philippines prays for the Pope for a swift recovery.” “It is so important to come to meetings like this,” commented Bishop Charles May of the Anglican Church of South Africa, “because we learn about what other countries are doing in the ecumenical field. Ecumenism is about unity in Christ, the love of Christ for others, and the awareness that Christ is not divided. The image of God is real when we come together.”