

4th lesson of the “Recognising Oneself, the Statutes: A Path and a Mirror” course of the Popular Marian University (UPM)

Navigating Governance, Freedom and Rules in the Focolare Movement

These two lessons presented on 12th April explored the relationship between governance, freedom and rules within the Focolare Movement, emphasizing their foundation in love and service.

Tommaso Bertolasi, Researcher in Philosophy at Department of Theology, Philosophy and Human Sciences Sophia University

Tommaso Bertolasi's contribution delved into the philosophical and even paradoxical relationship between freedom and rules. He began by exploring the contemporary understanding of freedom, drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" and the metaphor of a buffet to illustrate the overwhelming multiplicity of choices in today's world.

Tommaso argued that unlimited freedom, while seemingly desirable, can lead to anxiety and a sense of being constrained by the very abundance of options. He then transitioned into a discussion of rules, explaining how they emerge from habits and social styles, ultimately serving to guarantee justice and define rights within a community.

In the context of the Focolare Movement, Tommaso emphasized that the Statutes, as a set of rules, are founded on love – a concept that seems paradoxical given the inherently free nature of love. He connected this to the figure of Jesus Forsaken, symbolizing a fragile love that gives itself freely.

Finally, Tommaso offered advice on how to approach the Statutes, advocating for a focus on living mutual love as the key to understanding and embracing the freedom they offer.

Elisabetta Scomazzon, Canon Lawyer, expert on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in the Church, member of the Focolare's International Study Centre, “Scuola Abba”.

Elisabetta Scomazzon's input on *Government: at the service of unity*, focused on the operational and structural aspects of governance within the Focolare Movement. She began by carefully distinguishing between "government" and "governance," clarifying that while government refers to the specific activities and roles involved in directing the Movement, governance encompasses the broader philosophy and style of leadership.

Elisabetta emphasized that in the Focolare context, governance is not merely an administrative function but a service rooted in the Movement's charism – its unique spirit and set of values. She detailed the key governing bodies, such as the General Assembly, the President, the Co-President, the Centre of the Work of Mary and the General Council, explaining their roles in ensuring unity, facilitating communication, and making decisions.

Furthermore, Elisabetta addressed the importance of the General Statutes as the foundational rules that guide these governing bodies and ensure the involvement of all members in the Movement's life. She also discussed the influence of a decree by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, which provides external guidelines for governance within the Movement.

Both speakers emphasized that in a religious context, rules are founded on love. Scmazzone highlighted how governance in the Focolare Movement is rooted in the charism of love, while Bertolasi discussed how the Statutes are based on mutual love, acknowledging its inherent fragility and the necessity of reciprocal action.