

## Christmas at the mariapolis Victoria

From December 20th, 2015, 60 focolarini from various countries of Africa and Europe gathered at mariapolis Victoria Man some for the first time, to celebrate Christmas together and explore the theme of the year: Unity, a gift, a dedication, a goal '.



They were coming from various focolares in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Nigeria and Italy, and in these days of retreat, they have left aside the concerns for their own countries, to immerse themselves in God, and experience new strength and light to achieve the dream of Jesus: ' that all may be one '. They all went back in fact determined to make of each obstacle a springboard.

**Nova** says: "for me it was like taking a breath of fresh air. My focolare is far away from the Citadel and I couldn't wait to get here. In Benin as well, I was trying to live with God,



but it seems in this citadel there is something special, that put me immediately in God and daily I felt that my relationship with Him has been a crescendo. " And **Mario**, who came from Rome for the occasion, claims to have found a family that, everywhere throughout the whole world, has the same characteristics.

**Agnes**, she also came from Rome to express the love of the whole movement, enriched the retreat with a highly valued reflection on "the pact of mercy": "At times in our heads there is a bit of ' harmatan ', she was saying, "and our thoughts are covered with dust, that is, the

judgements we show towards each other, of negative experiences. Each day, to be able to see every neighbour with new eyes, we have to “dust our minds, and take away the cobwebs”. "

In this year dedicated to “mercy”, this pact has acquired an even greater importance, making it possible to discover in every neighbour, Jesus.



Summing up the fruits of these days, **Micheline** tells us: "for me it was nice to get to know ourselves through a very sincere communion, communicating the experiences of the different focolare. I realized once again that in our lives our love for each other must be simple, sincere, even in the little things that seem to us of little importance and then on this basis, unity is born, a gift of Jesus.