

**The Focolare Movement
in response to the proclamation on the coming
YEAR OF FAITH
and to the Pope's letter**

Statement from the president, Maria Voce

«It's with surprise and great joy and gratitude that we welcomed the proclamation on the upcoming 'Year of Faith' announced by Pope Benedict XVI. And even more so, his apostolic letter '*Porta Fidei*' that announces this thematic year, which will begin on October 11, 2012, on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

Once more we grasp the strong thrust of the Holy Spirit in this initiative which arrives punctually in this moment of history. The young people of the World Youth Day, the families, workers and youth who are demonstrating, inaugurate a new springtime and invoke profound social reformations. They are signs which tell us how much today's humanity is seeking change. I found confirmation of this also in my recent trips which I took to the United States, Santo Domingo, Russia, Slovenia and Great Britain.

"*We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden,*"¹ writes the Pope. We also deeply feel this urgency and it calls us to convert: to live the Word of God with particular intensity. In welcoming the Pope's 'mandate,' we have launched out once more with even greater vigour. We have committed ourselves to go back to the totalitarian way of living of the first years of the Movement: first of all to re-evangelize ourselves, in order to then spread the Gospel with all its transforming power to that humanity which surrounds us. Even today – as Chiara Lubich wrote already in 1948 – "*the world needs a cure of the Gospel.*"²

Moreover, we have profoundly echoed the Pope's pressing invitation to give public witness to faith, to the Word lived-out "*as an experience of love received,*" "*communicated as an experience of grace and joy.*"³ In the initial years of the Focolare Movement's life, the sharing of experiences of life based on the Word of God was a novelty. These experiences were irrefutable, because they were 'life' and fruitful, able to generate a living encounter with Jesus and to form a community out of dispersed people.

Benedict XVI reminded us that we don't face this task alone, but together. We want to intensify that *experience of communion and brotherhood* in our environments: in parliaments, factories, neighbourhoods, universities and families, because it is in communion that the Risen One makes Himself spiritually present, touches people's hearts and transforms them.

The Pope strengthened our conviction that this is a moment of special grace for the Church, in which the Council's spirit of renewal is in action more than ever.»

¹ *Apostolic Letter "Porta Fidei,"* n. 3.

² *Lettere dei primi tempi. Alle origini di una nuova spiritualità,* edited by F. Gillet and G. D'Alessandro – Città Nuova Publishing House, 2010.

³ *Apostolic Letter "Porta Fidei,"* n. 7.