

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENCY: SOME POINTS

Castel Gandolfo 5th-8th September 2014

At the end of the first week of the 2014 Assembly, the president Maria Voce and Giancarlo Faletti, co-president gave a report of the last six years of the life of the Focolare Movement. The topics raised have been the subject of reflection by the 32 working groups and also in the following plenary session.

CHIARA LUBICH. Following her death there was a strong drive to keep her memory alive as an inspirational figure and there were many official tributes made by civil and religious institutions. Subsequently, also through the testimony of the people of the Movement, we have been called to spread her thoughts and her doctrine in many different fields, a message that shows itself to be universal and non-transient. On December 7, 2013 the request for the opening of the beatification process was forwarded to the Catholic Church, motivated by the desire to make the example of her life and the spirituality of communion born of her charism more and more accessible to everyone.

FOCOLARE MOVEMENT. Statistics. The numerical strength of the Focolare was looked at, as well as the geographical distribution and the age of the people who belong to it. As of 2013 there were approximately 120,000 members of the various branches and movements who animate a diffusion estimated at about two and a half million people. 45% live in Europe, 27% in Latin America, 12% in Africa and 10% in Asia. 2% live in the Middle East. New generations make up 38%.

Centre and zones. The numerous trips made in the six years by the president and co-president to meet with communities across five continents, as well as those of the general councillors, have led to a greater understanding and closeness between the centre and the different geographical areas. Not infrequently the experience in a particular region has become the common heritage of the Movement in other parts of the world. Also of significance were the approximately 60,000 letters addressed in recent years by the people of the Focolare to Maria Voce.

The Centre. The first commitment that the Centre of the Opera and the General Council has focused on is implementing the "premise to any other rule" as stated in the Preamble of the General Statutes, the "continuous charity that makes unity possible and brings the presence of Jesus in the community" (Mt 18:20). In this spirit, the commitment of the Centre in the service of the whole Movement was characterized by "teamwork" in committees formed as was necessary to address issues of particular importance.

SUFFERINGS LIVED. Illnesses and deaths of members of the Centre of the Opera, such as Carlos Clariá just a few months after being elected as a general councillor; also of some of the first focolarini (Natalia Dallapiccola, Vale Ronchetti, Oreste Basso, Aldo "Fons" Stedile); in total 1074 persons belonging to the Movement have departed in these six years. Some sensitive cases, due to the "*mal de vivre*", and other sufferings that afflict society have not spared the Focolare in some of its members, calling everyone to a greater awareness to take better care of each other. The *Guidelines for the protection of minors in the Focolare Movement* is an expression of this.

DIALOGUES. There has been a growing maturity in implementing the dialogues that characterize the life of the Focolare. The people of the different Churches, of various religions and those with non-religious convictions who compose it are discovering themselves more and more not the "object" of dialogue, but a single "subject" that communicates with the

reality around them. What emerges is the widespread interweaving of personal relationships, life testimonies that often have an impact also at an institutional level. In the ecumenical field the need has not been ignored that the Catholic members of the Movement should grow in awareness and in feeling their own the wounds that the division between the churches causes the one Church of Christ.

YOUNG PEOPLE. Two headlines tell the vitality of the charism of unity expressed by the realities of the youth movement and that have involved them entirely: the success of the world Genfest in Budapest, in the summer of 2012; and the testimony of the young Chiara Luce Badano, the first person of the Focolare to be declared blessed.

Looking to the future: Continue the implementation of the *new structure* which is already underway in the movement, at its centre and in the different geographical areas, always with an eye to the purpose for which the Focolare exists: the "that all may be one" of Jesus and universal brotherhood. Set priorities: *go out* and take on board the questions, concerns, challenges and the cry of humanity, from the local level up to the global; enhance and strengthen the communion of the one Focolare family, plural in its components and complex in its diversity. Hence the commitment to encourage and increase the composition of diversified communities, made up of people of different ages, genders, vocations - *local communities* protagonists of the life and action of the Movement in their respective territories.

On the morning of 8 September, a plenary session of the Assembly was able to hear the reports from the different groups and put forward some ideas on the future of the Movement. This phase will now get down to the heart of the matter with reflection and debate, in groups and in plenary sessions on issues arising from the thousands of proposals that came from all over the world during the preparatory phase of the Assembly.

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