

Press Release – May 4, 2017

Walking together. Christians on the road to unity

An Ecumenical Week promoted by the Focolare Movement will be held at CastelGandolfo, Rome from 9 to 13 May, 2017. Some 700 Christians from 70 Churches and Ecclesial Communities are expected to participate.

"Unity among Churches requires heroes, heroes in faith, heroes who face history, heroes who are humble in spirit". Pope Tawadros II said these words in Alexandria, Egypt in 2015, when celebrating the first Day of Friendship between the Orthodox Coptic Church and the Catholic Church. During his recent visit to Cairo, Pope Francis repeated the same thought when he said, "In the light of God who wishes us to be 'perfectly one' it is no longer possible to take refuge behind the pretext of differing interpretations, much less of those centuries of history and traditions that estranged us one from the other". The Pope also spoke about "an already effective communion that grows daily", the mysterious and ever present fruits of "a genuine ecumenism of blood", and the importance of progress in our ecumenical journey because "static ecumenism does not exist".

Christians inspired by the Focolare spirituality of unity are convinced of this because of the experience lived in these last years.

The 59th Ecumenical Week, to be held at Castelgandolfo, Rome from the 9 to 13 May 2017, blends into the current ecumenical trend, which brings to the foreground gestures, words and statements of Church leaders and also initiatives of Christians in different parts of the world. 700 Christians hailing from 40 countries and belonging to 70 Churches and ecclesial Communities are expected to attend.

During this "Ecumenical Mariapoli", as many prefer to call this event, living together, sharing, spirituality and reflection will take place, and it will be a new step forward towards "the dialogue of life" and "the ecumenism of the people". In fact, Chiara envisaged the "dialogue of life" as the typical contribution of the spirituality of unity towards full, visible communion among Churches. It is of utmost importance that people are well prepared ecumenically. Fully aware of the many steps still to be taken and with respect towards all Churches, we try to delve deeper into the common heritage that already unites us.

The title of this ecumenical meeting is: "Walking together. Christians on the road to unity". Its focal point will be a central theme in the spirituality of unity: Jesus crucified and forsaken: the God of our time, foundation for a spirituality of communion. It will be enriched by moments of reflection, dialogue and testimonies of people from different parts of the world,

While the 500 years since the Lutheran Reformation are being celebrated in the ecumenical field, among the main speakers, one will find: Bishop Christian Krause, former President of Lutheran World Federation; Rev. Dr. Martin Robra of the World Council of Churches in Geneva; Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Maria Voce, President of the Focolare Movement.

A special moment has been entrusted to His Most Rev. Eminence Zervos Gennadios, Orthodox Archbishop of Italy and Malta. He will be speaking about: "50 years after the first meeting of two protagonists of dialogue: Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Chiara Lubich".

The programme also includes participation in the General audience with Pope Francis at St. Peter's Square, a visit to St. Peter's Basilica and to St. Paul Outside the Walls Basilica and common prayers at the St. Domitilla and St. Sebastian Catacombs.

This 59th Ecumenical Week is also meant to manifest the Focolare's renewed ecumenical commitment, expressed recently in the [Ottmaring Declaration](#), which promises to do all that is possible "so that all our activities, initiatives and meetings, both internationally and locally, will be sustained by this open, brotherly behaviour among Christians, while we entrust to God the hastening of our Churches' journey towards celebrating in the one chalice".

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