

## **The Holy Spirit, soul of the ecumenical journey**

*The Bishops conference held in Sigtuna (Sweden) came to its end yesterday. The Bishops present come from various Churches and are friends of the Focolare Movement. How does the Holy Spirit work in today's Church? Does it still make sense to talk about an ecumenical journey at a time marked by fragmentation, complexity, scandals and humanitarian challenges even for Christians?*

Two years after the Lund event, that gave a new impetus to the ecumenical dialogue, 40 Bishops of various Churches, from 18 different countries, met in Sigtuna, Sweden. This conference, promoted by the Focolare Movement, was held from 6 to 9 November and its theme was "The Breath of the Spirit, the Church in today's world".

**Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement, Jesús Morán co-president** and representatives of the Focolare Community in Sweden also attended this conference. Maria Voce spoke about "The Breath of the Spirit, soul of the Church, in the experience and thought of Chiara Lubich", while Jesús Morán presented present-day challenges from the perspective of the spirituality of unity.

This conference, which has come to its 37th edition, owes its origin to an experience of synodality and communion, which John Paul II had proposed to Klaus Hemmerle, Bishop of Aachen.

"In addition to our different recounts, we wanted to give **ample space to dialogue and sharing about the ecumenical challenges** we live in our countries and continents", said Cardinal Francis Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok and moderator of the conference.

**Mons. Brendan Leahy, the Catholic Bishop of the diocese of Limerick, Ireland dealt with the important theme of reconciliation.** While speaking about the power of forgiveness in the context of the scandals that hit the Irish Church, he said: "The Spirit urges us not to be robbed of hope (see Rom 8). Discouragement is a great temptations, but the Spirit keeps our hope alive and helps us restart to live a new commitment in the Christian adventure of unity and reconciliation".

**The Anglican Bishop Trevor Williams**, an Irish man, spoke about his experience as a pastor. For several years he has been having under his care the ecumenical community of Corrymeela, in Northern Ireland, who has contributed much towards the path of reconciliation between the different factions in conflict. "Reconciliation is not an option; it is a necessity if we want peace to last. We live in a world of "they" and "we". But in truth there is only "we". Revealing this truth is work of reconciliation, work of the Holy Spirit".

**The German Evangelical-Lutheran pastor Jens-Martin Kruse** shared his pastoral experience in Rome, an ecumenical laboratory that functions also thanks to Pope Francis.

**The Archbishop Antje Jackelén, Primate of the Church of Sweden, Cardinal Anders Arborelius, the Catholic Bishop of Stockholm, and Bishop Munib Younan, former president of the Lutheran**

**World Federation**, who presided over the historical ecumenical liturgy in Lund together with Pope Francis in 2016, **spoke about the journey of common reflection that continues after the 500 years commemoration of the Reformation. Bishop Younan** expressed his joy for the Joint Declaration on the Justification signed by Methodists and Reformed in 1999, welcomed also by the Anglican Church. “I assure you the Holy Spirit guided us and continues to guide us towards an ecumenical springtime. It is up to us now to reap the fruits of unity. Today we say: let us journey together as living witnesses in our fragmented world so that the world will believe.”

**One of the highlights of this conference was the ecumenical prayer in the ancient Church of Sigtuna and the signing of the “Pact of Unity”.** With the signing of this Pact, the Bishops committed themselves to journey along the path of effective and affective communion, “to love the Church of the other as one’s own”. This commitment was sealed with one’s own signature and a fraternal embrace.

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