

Press release – November 15, 2017

## **“Together we confess, together we go to humanity”**

*Thirty-five bishops of different Churches, friends of the Focolare Movement, meet in Katowice, Poland, from 15 to 18 November, 2017*

After Jerusalem, Istanbul, London, Augsburg and other cities that mark the ecumenical issue, this year it is Katowice that hosts the Ecumenical Conference of Bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement. A city in Southern Poland and the centre of the Silesian metropolis, Katowice is characterized by the coexistence of Christians of various denominations.

Cardinal Francis Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok is the moderator of this Ecumenical Conference and among the bishops that join him there is the Evangelical Christian Krause, the former president of the Lutheran World Federation.

*“Together we confess, together we go to humanity”* is the title given to the 36th edition of this meeting that brings together 35 bishops: Orthodox, Evangelical-Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Catholic, along with some thirty lay people, also from different Churches. They come from Austria, Brazil, Cyprus, Germany, India, England, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sweden, Thailand, Hungary and USA. Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, Poland’s Apostolic Nuncio and Katowice’s Catholic Archbishop Wiktor Skworc sent messages of greetings to them.

In the introduction to this meeting, which focuses on “Mary, the Mother of Jesus”, Lesley Ellison, an Anglican, will share her reflection on “The spirituality of unity: an ecumenical spirituality”. The presentation of Mary ensues through various theological themes: “Mary, Mother of Jesus and model for redeemed humanity” from the Catholic perspective; “Mary in Luther’s commentary on the Magnificat” from the Evangelical perspective; “Mary, Church, Creation” from the Orthodox perspective. The participants are looking forward to the contribution of Renata Simon, from the International Focolare Centre, who will speak about “Mary in the experience and thought of Chiara Lubich”.

It is expected that the conference will be an opportunity for “windows” to be opened on the world and on the Churches’ situation, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Middle East.

The programme includes participation in celebrations and meetings, such as the National Ecumenical Conference, *“From conflict to communion”*, that deals with interconfessional relationships in Poland and commemorates the 500 years of the Reformation, promoted by the Faculty of Theology of the Silesia University and the Polish Evangelical-Lutheran Church; the Lutheran Celebration in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession, presided by the Lutheran Bishop Marian Niemec; the Catholic Mass in the Cathedral of Christ, the King presided by Archbishop Skworc and with a homily delivered by Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij; the Prayer of Praise in the Orthodox Church of

Sosnowiec.

A significant part of the programme is the moment when the bishops declare personally and collectively “the pact of mutual love” to seal their fraternal communion and their commitment “to love the Church of the other as they love their own”.

The Archdiocese of Katowice, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession in Katowice, the Orthodox Church in Sosnowiec, the Faculty of Theology of the Silesia University and the City of Katowice with its Mayor Marcin Krupa, all collaborated with the Focolare Movement to organize this conference and make it possible.

*Victoria Gómez (+39) 335 7003675 – Benjamim Ferreira (+39) 348 4754063*