

## Editorial



Dear Readers,

A warm welcome to our third edition of Mariapolis Newsletter, which comes to you with a new look and new graphic design. Last April, as you may know, I took on the direction of the Focolare Movement's Communication Office from Joachim Schwind. From this perspective, I've understood the desire of many for an ever-greater sharing and exchange of the life animating the Focolare family in the world and at the centre.

So, starting with this current digital edition (which can be downloaded as a pdf) you'll find additional exclusive content dedicated specifically to the internal members of the Focolare Movement, such as updates from the General Council, interventions from the President and other material.

The first six months of 2021 have been challenging and intense, starting with the first-ever "online" General Assembly last February and the election of new Focolare President Margaret Karram. There have been numerous other changes in the leadership team at the centre and in the zones. So in this edition we're

publishing the full list of members of the General Council and the delegates of the Movement around the world.

Let me conclude by presenting what I deem essential to my work: the Communications Office team. At the moment there are 12 of us, working at the centre or from other locations, as well as other collaborators around the world. So you'll see their names alongside mine below, each one with their own specific role and professional expertise, but all animated by the same desire to communicate this extraordinary charism which is being lived out in our time.

We are here for you! We look forward to receiving all the stories, testimonies and news you'd like to communicate. You can contact us by email: [ufficio.comunicazione@focolare.org](mailto:ufficio.comunicazione@focolare.org) Now I'll let you get on with reading this edition, which includes an exclusive: extracts from Margaret Karram's conversation with a group of Bishops Friends of the Focolare Movement on 23 July this year. **We look forward to meeting up again at the next LinkUp (Collegamento CH) on Saturday 2 October 2021 at 20:00 Italian time.**

Stefania Tanesini with Anna Lisa Innocenti, Lorenzo Russo, Carlos Mana, Maria Grazia Berretta, Maria Laura Hernandez, Laura Torelli, Francesco Baita, Laura Salerno, Malu Peña, Johanna Bos, Carmelita Ventrella.

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# Face to face with the President of the Focolare

Margaret Karram to a group of Bishops who are friends of the Focolare - 23 July 2021.

On July 1st, I was invited by His Eminence Card. Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, to a study day attended by representatives of 20 charisms, including Religious Orders and Ecclesial Movements. It was a very beautiful and enriching experience for me.

I was asked to highlight the contribution that the charism of unity can make to a synodal spirituality.

**Synodality** is a subject that is very dear to us and which calls us back to a programme for life, because it has marked the life of the Focolare Movement since its birth. The life of the Mystical Body, life with Jesus among us! A programme that we want to fulfil more than ever in the present day of the Focolare Movement, making our own the impetus given by Pope Francis who has insistently brought this subject to the attention of the whole Church, so much so that he affirms “The path of synodality is what God expects from the Church of the third millennium<sup>1</sup>”.

Synodality: this is exactly what I felt when I was elected: the new stage that was beginning had to be, for all members and adherents of the Movement in the world, *‘walking together’* constantly!

In other words, to live that Holy Journey (cf. Ps 84:6), which began in the 1980s. It was from this wise intuition of Chiara’s, to help one another ‘become saints together’ and bear witness to love in the world, that the monthly conference calls began, linking up the focolare communities in the five continents. You know that sharing experiences of gospel life, putting in common



challenges and projects, strengthens the spirit of a family and multiplies authentic fraternity among individuals and peoples.

All of our spirituality helps us, because it leads us to discover the value of relationships. We are trained to live a dynamic of love for our brothers and sisters, which is always new, and helps us to be consistent with the Gospel.

This is the newness of the charism, which allows us to build relationships on the model of Trinitarian ones, and thus to incarnate the heart of Jesus’ message! It is a very timely commitment, which is awaited more than ever today.

The **Holy Journey**, however, is not dependent only on our own efforts or good qualities, but it is [lived] in the school of the One Teacher, the Saint [who lives] in the midst of his [people]. Pope John Paul II invited Chiara to participate as an auditor in the 1999 Synod, and this is what Chiara said to the family of the Movement worldwide so that they could live this event with her:

*“What should we commit ourselves to? How can we play our part? By renewing often in our hearts the serious intention of always wanting, night and day, the presence of Jesus among us and acting accordingly. It is an act, in fact, which calls for sacrifice. It requires, for example, overcoming human respect, overcoming laziness, practising humility so as to silence self-love. In short, paying*

<sup>1</sup> Papa Francesco, *Commemorazione nel 50° anniversario dell’istituzione del Sinodo dei Vescovi*, 17 ottobre 2015.

*the price for a communitarian spirituality. (...) Reminding each other of the duty of having Jesus among us can contribute a great deal to living on a supernatural level... This way of doing things, this keeping the temperature of our spiritual life high, is our characteristic contribution to the Synod, as well as to the Holy Journey that these link-ups help us to undertake<sup>2</sup>“.*

Now I am happy to share some extracts from the talk given during the study session of 1st July, highlighting the key points.

## **1. Aspects of the “Spirituality of Unity” born from the charism given by God to Chiara**

From the very beginning, the pathway that the Movement has developed could be described today as “synodal”, because the rediscovery of God Love - the “inspirational spark” as John Paul II called it - opened up a way of **going to God together**. The two main points of spirituality that have accompanied this development are: unity and Jesus forsaken.

“Jesus Forsaken” and “unity” are two sides of the same coin<sup>3</sup>, and those who want to live in unity and for unity “can only go ahead by leaning on a suffering-love as strong as that of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken<sup>4</sup>! By living in this way, we enter an Easter journey, from forsakenness to the light of unity, which is essential in any synodal journey.

## **2. The experience today at the heart of the Focolare Movement**

How is this process taking place in the Movement today? A direction is given to us in our Statutes, the premise of which states:

“Mutual and constant love, which makes unity possible and brings the presence of Jesus among all, is, for those who are part of the Work of Mary, the basis for their life under every aspect: it is the norm of norms, the premise to every other rule.”

Mutual and continuous charity to reach consensus must therefore be the style of our synodality. Pope Francis urged us to do this when, welcoming the participants in the General Assembly of the Work of Mary at the Vatican on 6th February, among other things, he said:

“With regard to your effort within the Movement, I urge you increasingly to promote synodality, so that all members, as depositaries of the same charism, may be co-responsible for and participate in the life of the Work of Mary and its specific goals.” This is what we are trying to do with particular attention right now in the period following the death of the founder.

A characteristic that is ingrained in the very nature of the “Movement”, which is open to all, to men and women of all ages, is the man-woman relationship. The governance of the Movement at all levels, founded on the presence of Jesus in the midst, is entrusted to a man and a woman, as co-responsible. In the case of the President, who according to the Statutes will always be a woman, she will be assisted in her responsibility as the guarantor of the unity of the Movement by a co-president. This too is a permanent school of synodality that bears fruit.

I will now briefly describe the important reference points for implementing a synodal process, knowing full well that they remain a challenge, a “should-be” to aim for, and when they do not turn out well, because we make mistakes, they lead us to sincerely apologise in order to start again.

The pact of mutual love, which is renewed and placed at the basis of every discernment process, involves a commitment to be ready to love one another as Jesus loved us. It opens us up to benevolence, to appreciating what is positive in the other, to a culture of trust and a family spirit.

Mutual and continuous charity requires that we learn the gospel art of loving: to be in an attitude

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<sup>2</sup> C. Lubich, *Costruendo il “castello esteriore”*, Roma 2002, pp. 83-86.

<sup>3</sup> Chiara scrive nel 1948 ad un religioso: “Il libro di Luce che il Signore va scrivendo nella mia anima ha due aspetti: una pagina lucente di misterioso amore: *Unità*. Una pagina lucente di misterioso dolore: Gesù abbandonato. Sono due aspetti di una unica medaglia. A tutte le anime mostro la pagina Unità. Per me e per le anime in prima linea dell’Unità: *unico tutto è Gesù abbandonato*. Scalare una vetta verso l’estremo abbandono è ciò che ci siamo scelte”, in C. Lubich, *Lettere dei primi tempi, alle origini di una nuova spiritualità*, a cura di F. Gillet e G. D’Alessandro, Roma 2010, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, *Lettere dei primi tempi*, cit. p. 158.

of listening, “setting out to learn”, because we truly can learn, as Chiara said, if we believe that the other has been created as a gift for me, as I am for him or her.

**Love everyone. Be the first to love. Love as oneself.** Making ourselves one with the other, which, referring to St Paul (cf. 1 Cor 9:22) is an attitude filled with meaning and practicality because it implies making room for the other, understanding his or her point of view and cultural reality. This creates a closeness in relationships that enables community discernment.

To speak with respect, but also with sincerity and clarity. Everything can be shared with *parresia*, [frankness] putting oneself before God and keeping alive the reality of the new commandment.

### 3. Some examples

During the meeting, I wanted to cite two or three experiences as examples.

One is undoubtedly is that of the “Holy Journey” (cf. Ps 84:6), which I have already mentioned and which I want to highlight because of the fruits it continues to bear. It was in fact a decisive call on the part of Chiara to “journey together”, which involved first the young people and then the whole Movement in reinvigorating the choice of God and undertaking what she called the “Holy Journey”. A call to holiness lived as one for the other.

This gave rise to an incredible spiritual journey, of young and old, with a commitment to live life out of love, which Chiara herself nurtured by accompanying us on a monthly basis. This gave rise to the famous telephone calls - which predate today’s zooms - which connected all of us around the world, in which shared experiences and joint resolutions led to meaningful experiences and guided the ‘Holy Journey’ of many to the end of life.

It has been, and still is, a “journeying together”, aiming at fraternity and “that they may all be one”, enlightened by the presence of Jesus, as

promised to those gathered “in His name” (Mt 18:20), of Jesus who becomes a traveller in our midst..<sup>5,6</sup>

### The 2021 General Assembly

Another strong experience of synodality that I can testify to is what happened during the 2021 General Assembly. The Assembly was prepared for more than a year with a local consultation involving young people and adults from the five continents, not only members, but also adherents, including people from various Churches and religious traditions, who expressed themselves both individually and more often as a community. The work started on the basis of the culture of trust - which had been implemented so much in the previous six years.

And this broad sharing produced a great wealth of reflections and proposals, which were then gathered into the vision and guidelines that matured in the discussion and were summarised in the final document.

Thinking back to this period, I feel that the grace of the *sensus fidei* of the people was at work, the grace of the Assembly as it is considered in our Statutes as the supreme organ of governance. All this, of course, based on the pact of mutual love and being open to continuous conversion.

The condition for success was tenacity in not giving up in our listening to one another with love until we experienced the fruit, the inspiration on which we could come together with joy, as a sign of the presence of the Risen Lord.

I now see that this process is continuing in the light of the words of the Pope and the final document of the Assembly. The search for ways of applying them is bearing fruit in the different geographical areas, listening to the cry of suffering humanity and fostering a strong family spirit.

A family spirit everywhere and in governance. The core of our spirituality is to offer the world a model of life in the style of a family, that is, of brothers and sisters on a universal level. To ensure that this family spirit is lived in the Centres, in the little towns and everywhere!

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. AA. VV., *Il Patto del '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich. Percorsi interdisciplinari*, Città Nuova, Roma 2012, pp. 23-25, 45. Cf. L'unità. *Uno sguardo dal Paradiso '49*, a cura di S. Tobler e J. Povilus, Città Nuova, Roma 2021.

Particularly close to my heart is living “synodality” in the governance of the Movement, which means doing everything in a spirit of listening and to give priority in interpersonal relationships to that brotherly and sisterly love, truth and charity, which enlightens the role that each person has.

As a General Council, for example, we have just had the wonderful experience of hearing from those responsible for territories throughout the world. They are the ones who have their “hands in the dough”, who know the potential, the needs and the cultural and anthropological characteristics of our communities. Listening to them, all the zeal and creativity of “Chiara’s people” emerged, who want to remedy the different forms of disunity and heal the wounds of humanity around them. Perhaps it is not even necessary for the International Centre always to give directives or guide the path of the Movement. The important thing is that the Centre always guarantees the unity of the entire Movement and that it can bring to light what the Holy Spirit gradually indicates to us for everyone.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion I want to share with you these words of Chiara from November ‘99 after her participation in the Synod. They have remained deeply in my heart:

*“What was my experience during those 23 days...? My impression was of a prolonged “moment of God”, especially when we were all together with the Holy Father who was present, silent and listening to all that was said. But also in the smaller work-groups when each one listened to the other with profound respect in a spirit of true harmony.*

*Of course, not everyone was familiar with “Jesus in the midst,” as we understand and live this reality; and yet, a certain degree of unity was gradually created.*

*And so this is what I grasped: people in the Church do things seriously; there are no improvisations; each thing is carried out thoroughly and completely*

*even at the cost of effort and tiredness. I came to the conclusion that if the institutional Church does things seriously, we too must do likewise - we as one of the expressions of the charismatic aspect of the Church. But how?*

*While doing meditation during these days, a question came to my mind more than once: how should I live the time I have left to derive benefit from that example? And how would I like to be remembered by those who knew me? ...*

*The answer which I feel came from the depths of my soul, was: “I would like to be remembered solely as the spouse of Jesus forsaken, as (and we can all express ourselves in this way), a soul who is the spouse of Jesus forsaken.*

*The possibility (and may the Lord help me!) of such a definition of my life, seemed something wonderful, even though it is very high, even though it is still “what I must become”. And yet, I sensed that it is my vocation.*

*We know, ... that to become saints, we need to focus on one single idea that sums up all others, which for us can be nothing other than unity; but unity is attained only if our soul is the spouse of Jesus forsaken. Foco<sup>6</sup> would say: “Clasped to a forsaken God.” An infinite number of ways to love him came to me: in personal sufferings, big or small; in the effort required by the virtues; in the small or big disunities to recompose; in the imperfect unity of the Church; in the lack of harmony among religions; in non-belief; in those who are suffering in any way at all; in sinners; in difficult circumstances; in the unexpected... everywhere.*

*We have much to do; we have to love.*

*Thank you, Lord, for the time we still have to show you our love, to say sincerely: “I have only one Spouse on earth.”<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Foco is the name with which Chiara Lubich called the honorable Iginio Giordani, considered by her to be one of the co-founders of the Movement.

<sup>7</sup> C. Lubich, *Costruendo il “castello esteriore”*, Roma 2002, pp. 87-90.

# About the recent Decree



Aurora Nicosia talks with the President of the Focolare on the Decree issued by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life on the replacement of the leaders of the lay aggregations.

Encourage leadership turnover. On June 3 a Decree approved by Pope Francis was promulgated by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life that regulates the length of mandates of leadership roles within international associations. A single mandate can last at most five years up to a maximum of ten consecutive years. This is the indicated norm (with relative specific insights, including possible dispensations for founders), while a detailed explanatory note helps to understand the spirit of the measures: to foster greater ecclesial communion, broader synodality, an authentic spirit of service, to avoid personalism, abuses of power, and to increase missionary enthusiasm and a genuine gospel lifestyle. We discussed the decree with the President of the Focolare, Margaret Karram.

**Did the decree of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life concerning the turnover of leadership roles in lay associations come as a surprise to you?**

We weren't expecting a decree of this nature at this time, *but the content didn't surprise us. A process has been under way for a number of years in the Focolare Movement that takes into account the turnover in roles of government.* This applies at the international centre and in the countries where we are present, putting limits to the length of mandates. The Decree showed us once again that the Church is a mother. In taking care of associations like ours, the Church accompanies and helps every reality to find organizational forms that allow it to remain faithful to its own charism and mission, in keeping with the journey of the Church in today's world. For this reason, we fully welcome the spirit of the Decree and all it has determined,

which also chimes with the open reflection in the Movement on representativeness in the governing bodies that we have already shared with the Dicastery.

**The opening paragraph of the Decree states that: "The international associations of the faithful and their internal government have been the object of particular reflection and a consequent discernment by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life". Do you perceive therefore some concern about movements in general? And towards the Focolare Movement?**

I would say that the Dicastery is certainly paying particular attention to the Movements, and we can witness to this, bearing in mind that it is its particular task. Then, as they are such a varied reality, the Dicastery is sure to have some concerns. The Decree itself emphasises the "flourishing" of these associations and recognizes the fact that they have brought "an abundance of graces and apostolic fruits for the Church and the world of today". It is not *the Church's intention to curb the charismatic drive of the movements, their innovative strength and their missionary impact.* It wants to help them achieve their specific aims which are always directed towards the good of people, of the Church and of society. The Decree offers structural elements that can help reduce some of the dangers by limiting the time a person can hold positions of government. *However, I do not see in these interventions a particular focus on the Focolare Movement,* also because a turnover in leadership roles is already included in our Statutes .

**In his address to the participants in the III World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in November 2014, Pope Francis pointed out a method for reaching the**

ecclesial maturity also hoped for by his two predecessors: “Do not forget, ... that to reach this goal, conversion must be missionary: the strength to overcome temptations and insufficiencies comes from the profound joy of proclaiming the Gospel, which is the foundation of your charisms”. What do you think about this?

I agree fully! What the Pope has called for requires a twofold commitment: **it is necessary always to return to the Gospel**, to the Word of God and to be aware that the charism of one’s founder is nothing more than a new and modern reading of the words of Jesus, illuminated by a gift of the Spirit, which enables them to be lived from a particular standpoint. We must therefore take into account that a spirituality, which is born of a charism, is a way of proclaiming the Gospel and therefore of working for the good of the Church and of humanity.

Is healthy generational change and a turnover of people in leadership roles enough to ensure there is synodal government, carried out in a spirit of service and hence avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, from personalism to abuses of power?

*I would say that this cannot be enough if real, lasting and fruitful cultural change is to be achieved.* I think we should first ask ourselves what is the purpose of leadership in an association like ours. Although generational change and avoiding past mistakes are important, these are not the aims. The main purpose of our leadership – as I think is true of every ecclesial movement – is to ensure that the movement goes forward and develops in the genuine spirit of its own charism, following the design that flows from it and fulfilling the purposes for which the Holy Spirit gave it life. The decree itself emphasizes that “government within the associations of the faithful be exercised in coherence with their ecclesial mission, as a service ordered to realising their own purposes and to the good of their members”. It is a work of continuous updating, improvement and renewal which requires above all a conversion of hearts to the Gospel and to one’s own charismatic roots. Generational change in governing bodies, through a frequent turnover in leadership roles, can enable the updating of an association, and

can help to avoid – as the explanatory note from the Dicastery says – forms of appropriation of the charism, personalisation, centralisation and expressions of self-referentiality, which can easily cause serious violations of personal dignity and freedom, and even real abuses.” But a turnover in leadership roles alone does not guarantee a correct exercise of power. We need other elements that we have been implementing and continuously improving for several years, such as a path of spiritual and human formation to a coherent leadership, to a gospel lifestyle and to one’s own charism. Therefore it is a style of government that highlights community discernment, with new forms of accompaniment and synodal methodologies for the choice of candidates for positions of leadership.

**Specifically, in three years’ time, several of the people elected at the General Assembly last February will have to be replaced. Do you already have an idea of how to proceed, also in order to modify the current Statutes which provide for six years as the duration of office and the possibility of a second term?**

We are already in line with some of the points made in the new Decree, especially as regards the maximum limit of two consecutive mandates for leadership roles. What needs to be changed now is the duration, from 6 to 5 years. We had already started the process of setting up a commission for the necessary revision of various points in our Statutes, to which is now added as a priority the work of adaptation according to the Decree. It is a task that we want to do calmly and carefully, because we would like not only to accept these new norms simply as stated, but also and above all to accept their spirit and to study well how to apply them not only regarding central and international bodies, but on a large scale, also in the local governing of territorial centres. In any case, *we would like to do everything in dialogue with the Dicastery, studying some specific aspects and some areas of doubt.* They have specifically said that they are ready to listen to us on any issues.

**When Pope Francis met the participants in the General Assembly, he highlighted some issues to which particular attention should be paid: self-referentiality, the importance of**

crises and knowing how to manage them well, coherence and realism in living spirituality and synodality. What has been done or will be done to follow up on these points?

*We consider Pope Francis' speech to the participants at the General Assembly as a programmatic document, together with the final document of the Assembly itself.* With great joy we see how much the study and research of ways of applying these two documents are bearing fruit in the various geographical areas in which our Movement is present. Two central points are emerging: attentive listening to the cry of suffering humanity that surrounds us, in which we rediscover the face of Jesus crucified and forsaken, and a new family spirit in our Movement, beyond all subdivisions. This expresses the core of our spirituality: to offer the world a model of life in the style of that of a family; that is, brothers and sisters on a universal level, linked together by fraternal love for every man and woman and preferential love for those who suffer most, for those most in need.

What is the style and the methods of this new leadership of the Focolare Movement? What is new in Margaret Karram's heart?

I feel it is particularly important, within the leadership of the Movement, to have an experience of *“synodality”*. *This means conducting everything in a spirit of listening and to restore to interpersonal relationships that gospel based fraternal love, of truth and charity*, that also illuminates the place that belongs to each person, that is, the central one. For example, as *the General Council, we have just had the wonderful experience of listening to those responsible for the territorial areas of the Movement all over the world*. They are the ones who are at the grassroots; they know the potential, the needs and the cultural and anthropological characteristics of our communities. Listening to them, what emerged was all the liveliness and creativity of “Chiara's people”, who want to take on board the different forms of disunity and heal the wounds of humanity around them. Perhaps it is not even necessary that the International Centre should always give directives or guide the path of the Movement. What matters is that the Centre always guarantees the unity of the entire Movement and that it highlights what the Holy Spirit is gradually showing us all.

Source: Citta' Nuova

## Living the Gospel: **everything is a gift**

### **The truth that does not pass**

After 4 years in India and 25 years of life lived totally at the service of others, my 'batteries' were completely flat, I returned to Italy to try and regain the health that I feared had been irreparably damaged. During those long months of inactivity and solitude (albeit surrounded by the love of my companions in community), 'outside' of the life that had been so dynamic and rich in relationships on which my outgoing temperament has always thrived, something very important happened – on an inner, existential level – which is difficult to put into words: a return to my original choice,

and understanding a fundamental truth that everything is a gift, and we need to thank God for everything whilst being ready to lose because it is not the truth. The truth that does not pass is something else. It is our personal relationship with Him, the only ideal of all time: God and nothing else. Contrary to what I had feared, I did regain my health. And so begins a new period in the newfound joy of working at His service, whilst treasuring the new union with God that was born from that trial in the depth of my heart.

(Silvio – Italy)

*Edited by Lorenzo Russo (taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, year VII, no.3, May-June 2021)*



# Update of the General Council

28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Pubblichiamo il testo degli aggiornamenti audio, realizzati fino ad ora, degli incontri del Consiglio Generale del Movimento dei Focolari.

Greetings to all of you all over the world who are listening to this audio file! I'm Stefania Tanesini, Director of the Focolare Movement's Communications Office, and I'm here because very many people, from many parts of the world, have expressed a desire for greater participation in the life of the Centre of the Movement. They have asked for ways and means **to shorten the distance between the centre and the communities around the world.**

This audio is a first experiment, trying to respond to this request.

I am speaking to you on the day after the third General Council of the Focolare following the General Assembly last February. I believe there is no better starting point to enter more into the heart of the Movement than to know something about the work of the council, which is "the place" where the work of the centre and the life of the Movement in the world converge. In short, it is here that each member, section, branch or movement is represented, finds its place, expresses itself, participates and builds the journey of the Focolare in daily life and in history.

## **The General Council expresses the unity of the Movement**

Since I took on this task, I have participated as an auditor in the meetings of the General Council. With this audio I will tell you briefly what happened yesterday, respecting of course the privacy and confidentiality that this type of meeting requires. Then I will add a few words that Margaret and Jesús said during the previous council, on 13th April.

### **Margaret Karram:**

## **The General Council is a mosaic**

"The Council is still to be completed but it already looks like a beautiful mosaic, with members of 23 different nationalities and of different vocations. Many are new, others were here during the last six-year term, but for all of us this is a new experience." With these words Margaret also expressed the desire for an experience of synodality so as to build true, sincere relationships and thus live an experience in God, carrying forward the reality of the movement together, "not each one their own little part." She reiterated that "the experience of the Council is not limited to the reality for which each one is responsible, but represents the whole world and is connected with all the zones."

She went on to explain that a number of young people would attend the Council on an ongoing basis. It was proposed that they be the same ones for a whole year, in order to have a deep experience of formation and so that they can give their specific contribution to the governance of the Movement.

Jesús added that the General Council is not a body that only approves or decides, but must respond to the mandate that the General Assembly has given it for the next six years. Part of the time in these first council meetings is dedicated to the appointments of various persons responsible for branches, movements, realities and the delegates of the Movement in some zones, which we will inform you about once the President has officially signed the appointment.

## **Responding to the cry of Jesus Forsaken**

Yesterday's council began with a brief and profound sharing by Margaret. "Several times," she recounted, "I thought of reaching out towards the cry of Jesus Forsaken. In recent times I have found Him in the situations and people I meet every day. Being attentive to His cry means not letting my love for Him pass, but to welcome the other person's pain without running away."

Marc St-Hilaire and Chiara Cuneo, councillors for the aspect "Union with God and Prayer" (the Yellow) proposed as a meditation a passage

taken from a talk given by Chiara in 2003 about some changes to the General Statutes. In the part dedicated to the mission of the General Council, Chiara specified that it “expresses the unity of the whole Movement. It expresses Foco’s design.” “Foco is present in you,” Chiara went on, “that is, in the General Council, where there are all the branches... Foco represented humanity and also the religious part because there was no one but him. And so all of you who are the different branches: the goals, the inundations, all these things, are the presence of Foco today in the Movement today.”

It was with joy that two new members were welcomed to the General Council: Cecilia Gatti, an Argentinean focolarina and teacher, the new person responsible for the Gen 4 Girls’ Centre and Fiorella Tassini, a Swiss focolarina, responsible for the Gen 3 Girl’s Centre for her second term.

Marga Gomez, councillor for “Nature and Physical Life” (the Green) presented the results of a questionnaire on how the members of the council envisage the procedures and activities of this body. The desire to live the council in a family spirit emerged. At the heart of the questionnaire was the need to address first and foremost the issues set out in the final document of the General Assembly and the most burning and topical questions of humanity today. Almost unanimously, the need was expressed for the council to be more at the service of the zones, being connected with them on a more consistent and frequent basis.

Marta Andro, Marcello Catalucci and Fr. Nazzareno Gaspari, who are responsible for the Parish and Diocesan Movement, talked about the recent congress of animators attended by more than 3,000 people from all over the world. The days were spent in formation and working on the prospects that emerged, also for this reality, from the document of the General Assembly of the Focolare, as well as sharing experiences from around the world. Margaret’s contribution was much appreciated. You will find it on Indy soon.

Paola Pepe and Jerome Cuquel, who are responsible for the Gen 2 Centres, presented the forthcoming United World Week, entitled

“Dare to Care”. It will take place from 1st to 9th May. Here is the link to the video launching United World Week.

Fiorella Tassini and Federico Viara, responsible for the World Gen 3 Centres presented the current version of the “Run4Unity” event which will also be part of United World Week.

At the end, Margaret greeted everyone, saying that the council is now almost complete.

And I must tell you that, as I looked at those who were present in person, as well as those connected from various parts of the world, one word stood out for me: COURAGE. Yes, because the fifty participants representing all of us around the world were saying once again that it takes faith to believe that unity is possible, but it also takes a lot of courage to change reality and transform a ‘sick’ world into a ‘united’ world.

So happy United World Week to you all, in the commitment to live and spread the culture of care in all possible directions!

Stefania Tanesini

22nd May 2021

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*Mary, woman of listening, ... grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live, to every person we encounter, especially those who are poor, in need, in hardship.*

*Mary, woman of decision, ... give us the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting others direct our life.*

*Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move “with haste” toward others, to bring ... the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did.*

These are some extracts of the “Prayer to Mary, woman of listening” prayed by Pope Francis on the 31st May 2013, which were read at the start of yesterday’s General Council, (21st May) at the Centre of the Movement.

First of all hello to each and every one of you!

This new audio file reaches you at home and in the communities with the hope of experiencing in an ever more participatory way the life and I would say the vigour of the General Council and the Centre of the Movement.

Margaret quoted this prayer to the Gen at the Gen Schools in Loppiano, with whom she spoke just before the Council. She invited them to be 'instruments of unity' in this world that is experiencing an escalation of violence not only in the Holy Land, but also in Colombia, Myanmar and various other parts of the globe. She asked the Gen and all the members of the Movement to be like Mary, who wasted no time because "in the meantime the world is changing, it is at war, people are dying. These three characteristics of Mary - she said - listening, being able to make decisions and a woman of action - are precisely for us. They make us capable of carrying ahead the Movement wherever we are."

## Two new councillors

Margaret opened the meeting by announcing the addition to the Council of Elena Del Nero and Elisabetta Crisanti, Italian married focolarine, who, according to Article 84 of the General Statutes of the Focolare Movement, will act as councillors to the President "so that" - according to paragraph "m" of the article - "the number of women councillors corresponds to the number of men councillors".

## A synodal process

Among the tasks of the General Council is the very delicate task of approving the President's appointment of new delegates of the Movement in the zones. We are at the start of the six-year term of this presidency and in these first councils this work takes on special importance. Yesterday, in particular, the appointment of the focolarine to be the delegates for East Asia and for Eastern Europe and the appointments of the two delegates for the Middle East zone were approved.

Of course, this is one of the Council's activities that require confidentiality, so I will not mention the names of the new delegates, which we will hear as soon as they have been

informed of their appointment.

However, I would like to share with you my impression of the methodology that I observed 'as it happened' for the evaluation and appointment of the delegates. I was struck by the seriousness and discretion, the attention to the person and the attentive listening to the views of those who live in the Focolare communities around the world. A participatory process, with the zones and in the zones, is underway with consultative processes with the members that are now standard practice. Klaus Brüscke - the councillor, together with Friederike Koller, for the aspect of Outreach (the Orange) and for the large zones of Africa and the Middle East - confirmed this. He said that in his contact with the communities, he had experienced their joy and gratitude at being able to participate in the dialogue and decisions concerning the life of the movement and their need to better understand the role of the zone centres in relation to the zones.

Personally, I had no idea how the various people responsible were chosen. I was struck by this exercise because in the way the work was being done I saw a process that I would describe as synodal, or rather, "symphonic", which is producing an increasingly widespread, open and broader listening capacity.

## Chiara: generate Jesus in the midst

This process is not automatic and requires - both in the Council and in every other context in which we live - a strong mutual love and union with God, so as to make us capable of 'Generating Jesus in the midst,' as Chiara wrote in a 1983 diary entry which was read to the Council. I will quote a few lines from it:

*"The more we love, the more we are willing to love, the louder the Holy Spirit speaks, because where there is love, the louder is his voice. The smallest disagreement, the smallest lack of love, especially in the future, when the charism will work in a different way in the Movement, could be the cause of divisions, which is what we must fear more than anything else. After this inner forewarning, all that remains for me (and I feel the joy and the need to do so) is to recall the list of people I will meet today, whether well-known*

*or not, those of whom I will speak or who will be spoken about, to whom I will speak directly or by telephone, etc. All of them, all of them, because the Holy Spirit is very jealous of them all.*

### **Margaret: listening, decision, action**

Margaret concluded yesterday's intense meeting by sharing her soul with everyone: "Several times over the past few days I asked myself what I was doing here, at the Centre, when I could be doing so much outside, among the people. Today some light came me: I realised that this is my contribution to building up the Movement in the world, to help heal suffering, to be open to everyone. I also realised that I am not alone; there is this council and everything we say or do is the fruit of Jesus in the midst that is growing, and this is the life that must reach the zones."

She then continued her dialogue with the Gen Schools at Loppiano on the subject of Pope Francis' prayer: "I asked myself what Mary would have done in days like the ones we are living through, in which peace is so much threatened in my country. I am receiving many messages of solidarity from Jews, Arabs... Many people have written to say: 'we are with you! We Jews, Christians and Muslims together can build peace'. I felt and feel everyone's pain and the desire to do something not only for the Holy Land, but to build fraternity in the world. We are trying to understand what to do on a global level, I feel this as a calling.

Listening, decision and action; these are Mary's three words: listening to God, deciding to do the things she felt came from God and then translating them into concrete action. This is what I would like to do with all of you.

Stefania Tanesini

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6 June 2021

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Greetings to everyone all over the world from Stefania Tanesini at the Focolare's Communications Office.

I must confess that I was not sure if I should report on the General Council of 4 - 5 June, which was a special meeting for the formation of the Council members. Since the title was: "**The General Council and the International Centre, together for the Movement throughout the world**", I imagined the meeting would be very businesslike, for "insiders" only, and therefore not of interest to those who live on the other side of the world. I could not have imagined how wrong I was!

### **Margaret Karram: new unity and co-interest**

I began to understand this the moment Margaret began to share her thoughts with everyone:

"We are here, together, for the whole world" - she began. "Two phrases that Chiara used came to mind: a new unity and co-interest." Thinking back to her own experience in the General Council over the last six years, she asked herself this question:

*"How well do you really know the people who have shared this experience and journeyed alongside you?"*

*"I have shared much with many people - meetings and commissions - but sometimes I have missed out on vital and personal relationships, as brothers and sisters, which help us to know each other more deeply, to know what is happening in each one's soul."*

She then read an answer in which Chiara explained to the Gen what she meant by a new unity and co-interest:

*"You should begin by opening your eyes and seeing everyone as brothers and sisters. Enough of these divisions! This is the brand new unity: we must all be one family, and, just as in a family there all ages are in harmony, we must have - as we say - co-interest. (...) The Lord started the Movement with Chiara, Foco, Don Foresi, the focolarine and the focolarini. We were the little group that was*

*the Movement, - and that is how it must be now. There were no divisions, there was unity. "*

Margaret concluded by saying: "I invite you to live now and during the next six years not only thinking about structures, organisation and colours, but thinking that, first and foremost, we are this family for the world."

This is an invitation that challenges me and that challenges us all to ask ourselves 'how' to live out our working relationships and collaboration within the Movement and beyond.

### **Jesús Morán: a dynamism of love**

Our Copresident, Jesús Morán continued: "I think what you are saying, Margaret, is essential and that is the only thing that counts." He called God's presence in and around us - in nature, in creation - a "dynamism of love" that expresses the reality of the Trinity.

"Here in the Council, we should be the model of Trinitarian life for everyone in the Movement: people immersed in God, who do what they are able to do, but [know that] through this, God in them will do much more."

### **The International Focolare Centre: a beating heart for the world**

The first day was dedicated to learning more about the life and work of the International Focolare Centre whose mission is to manifest and express the unity of the Movement and be at its service.

Silvia Escandell and Ray Asprer, the central delegates, explained: "The challenge is to understand who we are, where we are and how the different realities that make up the Centre interact."

Two of these realities were presented from among the various offices for the aspects (the colours) and the numerous services: these were the Secretariat for Legal Administration and the Personnel and Human Resources Office (SAL and UCP respectively in Italian).

Maria Giovanna Rigatelli is the lead for the Secretariat for Legal Administration and she, together with Angelo Spinosa and Elisabetta Scomazzon, outlined their work which follows

the juridical, administrative and financial aspects of the life of the Movement at the International Centre.

Mariangela Vignali, Guglielmina De Pisi and Roberto Mosca work in the Personnel and Human Resources Office. They spoke about the different types of collaborators, contracts, rights and duties of those who serve and work at the Centre.

I was impressed by their competence, the attention given to the dignity and rights of the individual and the efforts being made to become always more professional. Perhaps not enough is known about this.

### **Team building and leadership of service**

The focus on 5 June was on the dynamics of teamwork and leadership style. The spiritual thought at the start of the day was very much in tune with this; it was Chiara's commentary on the Word of Life of October 1982: "Whoever wishes to be great among you must make themselves your servant" (Mk 10:35-45): "Let us do whatever we have to do," says Chiara, "in a spirit of service."

Eva Gullo, an Italian Economy of Communion entrepreneur and business consultant for human resources, offered a reflection on the leadership styles that can arise from a charism and - specifically - from the charism of unity. She spoke of "leadership in service" that requires the ability to communicate, listen deeply and create collaboration. "Ultimately," Eva concluded, "it is a way of taking care of an 'us' - which is the most precious good."

It was a wide-ranging topic that everyone felt very strongly about, and it triggered a deep examination of conscience in me about how I live my relationships and the consequences of my actions for others. It reaffirmed the importance of investing in the formation of 'leaders in service' for the Movement.

This was followed by the presentation of some of those services and offices that make it possible for others to do their work. These included the General Archives of the Focolare, presented by Chiaretta Zanzucchi and Lucia Zurlo; the Information Technology Office with Fiore Bigati and Rosilene Pagani and the

many realities involved in the management of events, with Paola Cipollone from Centro Santa Chiara. The management of properties owned by the Movement all over the world was also discussed and the Projects Office and fundraising were also presented.

The last thing that struck me was the ‘open ending’ of this General Council, which I did not expect. There was no concluding speech:

Margaret and Jesús simply shared their commitments for the next few days. It was as if they were saying to everyone: “Let’s go ahead together in this brand new unity which makes even the most practical aspects of our lives divine.”

**Stefani Tanesini**

*14 June 2021*

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First of all, a very warm greeting to everyone! I’m Stefania Tanesini from the Focolare’s Communications Office.

Yes, I know: it’s not even two weeks since we last sent you an audio file, but I really think it’s worth telling you about the General council’s meeting with the delegates of the Movement in the zones held on Saturday, 12th June.

The meeting opened reflecting on some passages from Chiara’s message during the CH Conference call of 25th April 1991:

“What we want to practise doing - Chiara said – is to seek His face; to seek Him forsaken. ... We will seek him in the toughest and most tiring aspects of all that God’s will suggests to us; in all disunities whether near or far, great or small, and therefore also in our work for the Movement. ... With the strength that we have as children of God, who expect everything from their all-powerful Father, we can cast all our worries ... onto Him. ... Let’s do all we can so that in our hearts resounds as often as possible the words of from Psalm 27: “Your face, Lord, do I seek”.

You know, right from the start I sensed there was something different from usual, as if in this

meeting the situation was reversed: the General Council had become a listening space. The zone delegates, in a tour around the world, told of the ways in which the General Assembly’s final document had been studied in their zones, identifying in each place, situation and culture their own particular face of Jesus Forsaken.

“We are tired of seeing each other only virtually; what people want today are real, sincere, unselfish relationships. There is a thirst for truth”, said Catherine Burke, delegate for Western Europe. “People want to do concrete things, and with United World Week and the Dare to Care project, many initiatives have taken place. There is a great opportunity now for collaboration between different parts of the world, through projects or initiatives”.

The delegates from India shared some acts of everyday heroism, both at a personal and communitarian level: “The second wave of Covid in India and Nepal came like a tsunami. The national health system collapsed. Thanks to providence from many parts of the world, we were able to supply three hospitals with the necessary life-saving equipment. The pandemic encouraged us to network more. Collaboration and support for the most vulnerable people served by the Shanti Ashram intensified and, through an international ‘Solidarity Marathon’ promoted by doctors from the University of the Sacred Heart in Rome, they also received funds from Pope Francis”.

Roberta Munegato and André Barros, delegates of the newly created Inter-American zone, began by saying that there is a wealth of options when it comes to the faces of Jesus Forsaken in their countries. In Santo Domingo, for example, a major problem is the large number of illegal Haitian migrants in the country. Much has been done to give them legal assistance, to teach them the language, and provide basic needs. Instead, in Ecuador, the assembly document made the Focolare community realise that hearing the cry of the indigenous peoples was their priority.

We felt challenged to live with and for the new generations,” explained Maria Regina Piazza and Markus Näf, who are responsible for the little town of Montet in Switzerland. The recent

online event “VOCeinAZIONE” [Voice in Action], to make the vocation to the focolare better known, turned into a worldwide event in which young people from 50 countries took part”.

Believe me: more than ever I wished that you could have listened to everyone. There was intergenerational exchange, collaboration between zones, and crosscutting approaches of various kinds. All this spoke of the creativity and intelligence of the Focolare communities around the world that know how to see God’s presence at work in the crisis.

Jesús then spoke, giving an update on the intense work done in recent months on the protection of minors and vulnerable people. We are moving towards the establishment of a single central international commission that will deal with the protection of minors and vulnerable people, whether concerning cases of spiritual abuse or the abuse of power. It will be made up of high-profile professionals: lawyers, psychologists and psychiatrists, paediatricians, experts in ethics, and teachers. This was followed by an open dialogue with the zone delegates, also attended by Orazio Moscatello and Alessia Sangiorgio, two lawyers responsible respectively for CO.BE.TU and the Commission for the Protection of the Person. It was an important moment to share challenges and critical issues, recognising that there have been mistakes and shortcomings along the way. There is the need for training and preventative measures, and for greater cooperation with local commissions.

Maria Magerl and Roberto Rossi, delegates from Central Europe, presented a pilot project: the establishment of an online listening post on spiritual or power abuse, with eight experts, most of them external to the Movement. I was struck by what Roberto Rossi, Delegate for the zone, said in presenting the project: “It emerges that the model of relationships proposed by the charism - that is, in the manner of the Trinity - can be an antidote to forms of abuse, if we live it as it should be lived. To this end it helps us to understand where - in relationships - there are limits and we can make mistakes”.

A protocol for internal communication on this sensitive issue is also being developed.

The guidance we received from the Jesuit Fr Hans Zollner, head of the Centre for Child Protection (CCP) and a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, was invaluable in this process.

Before concluding, Margaret announced that the General Council is now complete with the addition of the last two councillors, Lucia Compostella and Maria Augusta De La Torre.

She then announced to everyone the release of the General Decree by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life which regulates the number and length of terms of government (two terms for a maximum of 10 years) in international associations of the faithful, both private and public, and which therefore concerns us and requires our response.

As you can see, there is a lot happening, which is why Margaret invited everyone to “live with serenity, beyond everything”. She added: “It’s true: everything has changed: the government of the Movement, there are new delegates. We need to give ourselves time to live for our people and feel that we are together in this new wave in order to understand clearly what Jesus is asking of us in the coming years”.

She concluded by giving everyone a message from Palmira Frizzera who had written to her saying that up to now she had prayed and offered everything for the Movement, especially for the Centre. However, now she felt a strong inner push to live and offer everything for the unity of the whole Movement at the centre and throughout the world. “If we are not united among ourselves - said Palmira - the Movement breaks up and dies. Whereas if it is one soul, Chiara is alive among us and we are her, her mystical body”.

Stefania Tanesini

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28 June 2021

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“Today we have covered so many topics that it should really have taken a whole day... but it is the growing unity among us that helps us understand how to proceed. Recently, when so many things have piled up - meetings, interviews, e-mails - I wondered how I would manage to do everything. I was reminded of what Chiara said about the 6Ss<sup>1</sup>: “I will be a saint if I am a saint now”. What counts is every present moment and so I started to live this: holiness in everyday things, starting again every moment, and this gave me peace. What we can do is live every moment for the holiness of others and of the Movement, the rest is in God’s hands. We can commit ourselves in every moment to building this collective holiness... together!”

Did you recognise whose words they were? Greetings to all of you!... and forgive me if this time we are starting from the end. The words I have just read to you are in fact those with which Margaret concluded the General council meeting of 25th June, but I could not resist putting them first: they start this updating because they were in fact the key to capturing the essence of the topics discussed, even the more mundane and organisational ones.

After all, Chiara was the first to help us perceive the presence of the Divine in everything, and moreover to live even the organisational aspects of the movement as structures of communion-fellowship, set up as a witness to the charism. In one of her talks in 2003, offered as a meditation on the changes to the General Statutes of the Work of Mary, Chiara highlighted the spirit with which the members of the Movement must work. With regard to the Centre of the Movement she said: “In the precise and generous fulfilment of the tasks entrusted to each one (...) they ensure that the concrete aspects of the life of the Movement are universally and faithfully lived and that all the zones live in the fullness of unity”. She then explained that the bond - that is, the unity - that unites the different realities that collaborate within the Movement can never be broken,

on pain of interrupting the “lifeblood of the charism” - those are Chiara’s words.

“The lifeblood of the charism”: I admit that those words of Chiara’s touched me deeply and I told myself that in carrying out every task, from the smallest to the most demanding, I must be careful never to lose sight of the ultimate goal, which is unity, nothing less.

Klara Maria Piedade and Iolanda Martins, members of the core team of the Pathways project, together with Paola Pepe and Federico Viara, co-responsible respectively for the Gen 2-Youth for a United World and Gen 3-Youth for Unity Centres, were first on the agenda with a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the 2021 United World Week at a global level.

“Dare to care”, daring to take care of the social body, especially through political action and active citizenship, was the Pathway that guided this year’s many activities, events and projects that culminated in the UWW and aimed to respond to the fragility, needs and pain of every nation and people. Let me give you some figures: 786 events took place, most of them online because of the pandemic, while 400 cities were involved in the Run4Unity. It is interesting to note that this year the participants’ average age was slightly higher. Does this mean that the Focolare communities around the world felt the UWW was theirs too and not just a youth event?

Many ways forward emerged for future United World Weeks, such as always aiming at activities that respond to local and global challenges, in tune with what humanity is experiencing. One such activity was “A vaccine for all”, the current campaign in support of making the Covid vaccination accessible to all, giving priority to the most vulnerable and needy in the world.

Then to prioritise local events and activities where people can actually get together, rather than being online. After a year and a half of pandemic we are all tired of being in front of a computer screen! Since the United World Week belongs to the entire Movement, we should aim to collaborate more and better with the

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<sup>1</sup> C6 Ss in Italian “*Saro’ santa se sono santa subito*” - C. Lubich, Collegamento, 27 agosto 1998, pubblicato in *Costruendo il “castello esteriore”*, Città Nuova, Roma 2002, pp. 55-58.



local communities, setting up paths that over time activate networks and collaboration of all kinds that continues even after the activity or event has ended. It is worth noting that already this year 44% of activities were carried out in this way. Internal and external communication remains a weak point: improvements are also needed so as to influence public opinion.

2022 will be dedicated to the “Green” Pathway, which will focus on caring for people, the planet and ecological conversion. It’s main event will be held in the Middle East. Information and updates can be found on the United World Project website.

Among the specific tasks of the General council is the approval of the Focolare Movement’s annual budget and accounts. Geneviève Sanze and Ruperto Battiston, central councillors for the “Communion of Goods, Economy and Work” aspect, presented the final accounts for the year 2020.

I can’t go into the details of the presentation of a complex balance sheet - as you can understand. However, I would say these were accounts in which the entry of ‘communion-sharing’ is in first place, considering the economy of the Movement whose income has always been based on two pillars: the communion of goods of the members of the Movement and what we call providence, that is, extraordinary and unexpected income made up of donations, inheritances, property sales and so on.

Here I have to convey great gratitude to all the members of the Movement. Despite the difficulties, a renewed faithfulness to living the communion of goods made it possible to help many people in need and the Movement itself in its many activities throughout the world.

The councillors made a very interesting economic assessment of this last year, one in which Covid has dramatically affected the world economy and therefore also that of the

Focolare. They defined it as a “watershed” year, indicating a “before” and “after” at the economic level. A study of the economic sustainability of the Movement’s activities started a few years ago and is continuing, in order to review the practices adopted so far, which need to be changed in the light of new challenges.

These are challenges that - to be honest - call for reflection in many areas of the Focolare’s life, first and foremost that of the so-called “calendar” of meetings at the centre and in the zones. Kumiko Kobayashi and Klaus Brüsckhe, (Kumiko is a councillor for the Violet with Joachim Schwind and Klaus a councillor for the Orange with Friederike Koller), announced the composition of a permanent working group that will give an overall evaluation of proposed events. The frequency and quantity of events, as well as the change in methods dictated by the extensive use of technology that these times have imposed on us, have led us to reflect on what I would call a different “organisational philosophy” of events, based on criteria of actual need and, considering the guidelines of the general Assembly, feasibility and the involvement of the zones - the latter being considered a priority.

As you can see, it was a council that dealt with very concrete topics arising from the visible or hidden work of so many people at the Centre and around the world. I finish this update quoting Margaret’s wishes for the coming weeks when many will be on holiday and many others still at work. She said, ‘Let’s live for one another’, seeking also ‘times in which to go deeply into union with God, in whatever situation we find ourselves’. And she gave everyone the “10 points” that Chiara herself drew up in the summer of 1985. You will find them attached.

Greetings to all and see you next time!

Stefania Tanesini

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# Who are the members of the General Council (GC) and the zone delegates of the Focolare

Rocca di Papa, 12 June 2021

## THE GENERAL COUNCIL

President **Margaret Karram**

co-president **Jesús Morán**

## Elected councillors and their remits

• <i>Central Delegates</i>	Silvia Escandell	Ray Asprer
• <i>Communion of goods, economy and work</i>	Geneviève Sanze	Ruperto Battiston
• <i>Outreach and apostolic activities</i>	Friederike Koller	Klaus Brüsckhe
• <i>Union with God and prayer</i>	Chiara Cuneo	Marc St-Hilaire
• <i>The natural world and physical life</i>	Marga (Margarita) Gómez	Étienne Kenfack
• <i>Harmony and surroundings</i>	Vita (Clara) Zanolini	Enno Dijkema
• <i>Wisdom and study</i>	Renata (Margarete) Simon	Francisco Canzani
• <i>Unity and means of communication</i>	Renata (Kumiko) Kobayashi	Joachim Schwind
• <i>Africa and the Middle East</i>	Friederike Koller	Klaus Brüsckhe
• <i>The Americas</i>	Bernadette Ngabo	Ángel Bartol
• <i>Asia and Oceania</i>	Rita Moussallem	Antonio Salimbeni
• <i>Europe</i>	Donna Kempt	Vitek (Vit) Valtr

## Those responsible for the centres and specific goals

• <i>Centre for dialogue among the faithful of one's own Church</i>	Chiara Cuneo	Marc St-Hilaire
• <i>Centro "Uno" for unity among Christians</i>	Sandra Ferreira Ribeiro	Enno Dijkema
• <i>Centre for interreligious dialogue</i>	Rita Moussallem	Antonio Salimbeni
• <i>Centre for dialogue among people with non-religious beliefs</i>	Maria Àngels Capellas	Ferdinando Garetto
• <i>Centre for dialogue with culture</i>	Silvia Cataldi	Oswaldo Barreneche

# Who are the members of the General Council (GC) and the zone delegates of the Focolare

Rocca di Papa, 12 June 2021

## Those responsible for the ramifications

• <i>Focolarine - Focolarini</i>	Noreen Lockhart	Flávio Luis Roveré de Oliveira
• <i>Volunteers – Women and Men</i>	Fanny Bava Furnò	Juan Ignacio Larrañaga
• <i>Gen 2 girls and boys</i>	Paola Pepe	Jérôme Cuquel
• <i>Gen 3 girls and boys</i>	Fiorella Tassini	Federico Viara
• <i>Gen 4 girls and boys</i>	Cecilia Gatti	Pep (Josep Maria) Cànoves
• <i>Bishops friends of the Movement - Secretariat for meetings</i>		Stefano Fontolan
• <i>Diocesan priest and deacon focolarini Diocesan</i>		d. Antonio Bacelar
• <i>priest and deacon Volunteers</i>		d. Vladislav Brokeš
• <i>Gens</i>		d. Innocent Thibaut Ndoreraho
• <i>Consecrated women</i>	sr Tiziana Longhitano	
• <i>Men religious</i>		p. Salvo D'Orto
• <i>New Families Movement</i>	Maria Caporale Salerno	Gianni Salerno
• <i>New Humanity Movement</i>	Maria Celeste Mancuso	Luca Moser
• <i>Youth for a United World Movement</i>	Paola Pepe	Jérôme Cuquel
• <i>Teens for Unity Movement</i>	Fiorella Tassini	Federico Viara
• <i>Parish Movement and Diocesan Movement</i>	Marta Andro	d. Nazzareno Gaspari Marcello Catalucci
• <i>Priests' Movement</i>		
• <i>Movement for Consecrated Women</i>	suor Tiziana Longhitano	
• <i>Movement for Religious</i>		p. Salvo D'Orto

## Additional councillors

- *Elena Del Nero*
- *Elisabetta (Eli) Crisanti*
- *Lucia Compostella*
- *Maria Augusta De La Torre*

## Secretaries

- *Gloria Campagnaro*
- *Robert Chadourne*

# Who are the members of the General Council (GC) and the zone delegates of the Focolare

Rocca di Papa, 12 June 2021

## List of the movement's delegates in the zones

### Europe

• ITALY AND ALBANIA – Rome	Cristiana Formosa	Gabriele Bardo
• WESTERN EUROPE – Brussels	Catherine Burke	Andreas Amann
• CENTRAL EUROPE – Vienna	Maria Anna Magerl	Roberto Rossi
• VIOLET ZONE – Bratislava	Dolores Poletto	Andrej (Redi) Štefančič

### Africa And Middle East

• CENTRAL WEST AFRICA – Lomé (Togo)	Aurora Oliveira	Salvatore Ignaccolo
• EASTERN AFRICA – Nairobi	Erly (Reja) Santos de Oliveira	Raphaël Takougang
• MIDDLE EAST – Amman	Michèle Chachaty	Giorgio Antoniazzi

### Asia and Oceania

• SOUTH -EAST ASIA – Bangkok	Veronika Semmler	Glauco Venuti
• EAST ASIA – Cheonan e Asan	Arlette (Tecris)Noronha	Austin Jong Tae Im
• PHILLIPINES – Manila	Nar Plaras	Andrew Camilleri
• INDIA – Mumbai	AlaMaria Attard	Plácido Gomes
• OCEANIA – Melbourne	Maria Cecilia Capuzzi	Augustine (Yob) Doronila

### The Americas

• MID-AMERICA – Bogotá	Roberta Munegato	André Barros
• SOUTHERN CONE – Buenos Aires	Griselda Imvinkelried	José Antonio (Pepe) Polimeni
• BRAZIL – Brasilia	Marvia Vieira	Aurélio Martins de Oliveira
• NORTH AMERICA – Silver Spring	Erika Croatto	Enrico Donzelli

### LITTLE TOWNS linked to the Centre

• MARIAPOLIS RENATA – Loppiano	Donatella Donato di Paola	Franco Galli
• MARIAPOLIS FOCO – Montet	Maria Regina Piazza	Markus Näf



Bangui, Central Africa:

## A school that will change the future of its students

On the outskirts of the capital of the Central African Republic there is a school that was founded by members of the Focolare Movement. Today it welcomes more than 500 children, many of whom have missed out on many years of education because of long periods of war.

We are in Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, a landlocked state in the interior and central part of the African continent. The capital is located in the south-west, in an area that borders on the Democratic Republic of Congo. Four years ago, a kindergarten and primary school called Sainte Claire was founded in a suburb of Bangui. It currently has 514 pupils. It was opened in response to an appeal that both **Pope Francis** and **Maria Voce**, president of the Focolare Movement at the time, had made: to go out to meet people's needs, particularly those living on the margins of society.

“For us the most urgent need was education,” explains Bernadine, a member of the Focolare and headmistress at the Sainte Claire school. “After long periods of war, many children had missed several years of school. We could then help them catch up and reach the level of their peers.”

The school is located in a suburban neighbourhood and so has welcomed many children from families who had fled the city when the war had destroyed their homes. “They come here to start a new life – it’s like a rebirth,” Bernadine continues.

The Sainte Claire Institute is Catholic and, founded by members of the Focolare Movement, seeks to transmit teachings based on the culture of unity. The director explains: “Each day begins with morning prayers; then we throw the dice of love: on the different sides of the cube we read short phrases which help us live the day well. The next day, before rolling the dice again, we share the experiences of the day before. Some children

helped their mother to wash the dishes, others made peace with a friend after a fight, ...”

At the moment, the war in the country has been suspended and the political situation is more stable. However, there are still many consequences that have an impact on the population, including the curfew from 8pm to 5am. Then there are numerous complications related to economic and social factors. Bernadine explains: “A few days ago, for example, there was a big rainstorm that damaged the electricity cables. Since then we only have electricity for 2-3 hours a day. This changes people’s lives a lot – starting with food, which cannot be stored. Not to mention all those who work relies upon electricity: they haven’t been able to work at all!”

The pandemic has obviously effected our lives too. In 2020, the Sainte Claire institute had to end the year in March instead of June and this has had an impact on the education of the pupils who were once again left without a school. But the economic consequences for the whole country were also harsh: borders were closed and the Central African Republic, with no access to the sea, had difficulties with the delivery of goods from abroad. Prices have risen sharply.

Despite these current difficulties, the school’s activities have resumed. During this year’s United World Week (1 – 9 May), the children helped prepare an area that will be used for activities by planting grass seeds for the lawn. In a few months time, this area will be used for a variety of sports.

Education, therefore, does not stop, not even in the midst of difficulties: it still allows new seeds of hope for a better future to be planted.

Laura Salerno



Manaus, Brazil:

## The pastoral care of the homeless

The experience of the Manaus focolare in helping the homeless. A way of being a Church that reaches out and going to the existential peripheries to seek out the most needy.

A few months ago, a focolarino from the focolare in Manaus, Brazil, felt the desire to do something to help people in difficulty. So, he got in touch with various priests and nuns to make himself available. After about a month, the possibility arose to help with the “pastoral care of the street people”, that is to help the homeless. The whole focolare was involved: Renzo, Daniel, Francisco, Valdir and Junior.

Every Sunday evening in the square in front of the church “Nossa Senhora dos Remedios”, in the historic centre of the city, one of those places that is very crowded during the day and very dangerous at night, we help with a short Celebration of the Word, then we give the homeless a meal and stay with them to listen to them. They pray with us and share what they experience during the week.

Other volunteers give them a meal and quickly leave. The homeless recognise us and thank us because for them, being together, praying, talking, sharing their lives, being listened to, fills their souls as much as meals fill their bellies. They have told us this on several occasions.

Our presence is shaped by love, by always being available to exchange a few words and build relationships with everyone, including the pastoral team.

But all this is not enough. So, every Friday afternoon, we offer to help the homeless with a shower or a change of clothes, donated by generous people.

We have also involved the Focolare Community to collect clothes, shoes, slippers... and it is great to see the understanding towards this action and to receive very positive echoes every time we communicate this experience: many encourage us to continue or come to help.

Unfortunately, with the lockdown for covid, various activities to help the poorest people have stopped.

So, we met online to work out what to do, and Archbishop Leonardo Steiner was also present. He was impressed by the situation and donated a sum of money to continue to offer one meal a day, for 20 days, for two hundred people, divided between two large squares in the city centre.

Of course, working for two or three hours with all the necessary safety equipment and the heat of Manaus is tiring, but it is also a concrete way of going to the existential peripheries, to seek out the neediest, the Father’s favourites, offering the pain of being able to do so little in the face of these Abandoned Jesuses with so many needs, and we cannot do more for them than to give them a smile, a listening ear and our love.

Providence is not lacking: the authorities of the Public Ministry (of Labour) have sought us out to give us money and resources to guarantee three hundred meals for 15 more days. This means more work for us volunteers, but you can’t say no to such providence and then we believe that God will manifest Himself to give us the energy and health or other volunteers to help us.

This experience makes us live even more our vocation and as a Church that reaches out, which puts us in direct contact with the “real world”.

I focolarini del focolare di Manaus



The future of the EoC:

## Knowledge that can strengthen action

Stefano Zamagni, economist and President of the Pontifical Athenaeum for Social Sciences, recently spoke in Loppiano, Italy at the event marking the 30th anniversary of the Economy of Communion. We present an excerpt from his address in which he underlined the contribution of the Economy of Communion to the evolution of economic thought.

‘(...) I must confess that when, exactly 30 years ago, I listened to Chiara Lubich’s speech in Brazil when she launched the Economy of Communion project, I was very impressed but also shocked. Economy as a science uses many words such as wealth, income, efficiency, productivity and equity, but it does not use the word communion. I asked myself: “How could someone like Chiara whose cultural background did not include an economic element have launched an intellectual challenge of that kind?” There had to be a special charism at work and we know today that there was. This positively disturbed me. I began to reflect and asked myself: “Why, in the long history of economic thought, has this concept never been addressed?” A few years later I came across the work of Antonio Genovesi, the founder of civil economy, and I understood a whole series of connections between the Economy of Communion and civil economy.

Obviously, at the beginning, there were many difficulties for the Economy of Communion. I remember that in 1994 in Ostuni in Puglia, Italy, the MEIC (Eccelsial Movement of Cultural Commitment) organised a series of cultural seminars during the summer. In a presentation chaired by a famous Italian economist, two newly graduated focolarine had the audacity to present the Economy of Communion

project. This professor began to say: “This is nonsense, because it does not satisfy the criterion of rationality.” I was present and asked him: “But do you think that the gesture of the Good Samaritan satisfies the criterion of rationality? You see,” I continued, “you are a slave to a paradigm, to a way of thinking that you have sucked out of your studies without addressing the problem, because the rationality you think of is instrumental rationality, but there is also expressive rationality. Who said that instrumental rationality is superior to expressive rationality? Don’t you know that the Economy of Communion is part of the model of expressive rationality? In this case, expressive means that a charism is expressed – because charisms must be expressed and translated into historical reality.”

The Economy of Communion has made it possible to recover that tradition of thought regarding civil economy that began in Naples in 1753. For example, think of the economy and the school of civil economy over which Luigino Bruni presides. In addition, the recent big “Economy of Francis” event which was really a mixture of civil economy – a paradigm, which is view of reality that is embodied in models, projects and different theories – and the economy of communion. This event took place recently, but I am sure its impact will soon become apparent.

To close, I would like to use a word that has, unfortunately disappeared from use for at least a century: this word is “conation”. It was coined by Aristotle 2400 years ago. It derives from the combination of knowledge and action and means that knowledge must be put at the

service of action, and action cannot be exercised and bear fruit unless it is based on knowledge. I say this because the challenge of the next 30 years, and even more, for the Economy of Communion is to strengthen the knowledge component. Up to now, priority has rightly been given to action, to achievements. But we must be aware that if action is not continually nourished by knowledge, it risks disintegrating.

Chiara Lubich had a capacity for intuition and understanding, and therefore for foresight, even

on subjects in which she was not a specialist. Indeed, the contribution of the Economy of Communion to the evolution of economic thought as a science has been remarkable. Luigino Bruni directs a research doctorate programme in the economy of communion and civil economy at the Lumsa (Libera Università Maria Assunta) in Rome, Italy; here in Loppiano there is the Sophia University Institute and in other universities too it is no longer forbidden to speak of Economy of Communion. I think this is a great, great outcome. (...)'

Lorenzo Russo

June 17, 2021 •

## Living the Gospel: **everything is a gift**

### **I used to be a nurse**

Struck by the fact that so many doctors and nurses were risking and even giving their lives, I decided to re-register as a reserve nurse in a hospital since I had been a nurse 30 years earlier (but had later changed jobs). Recently I was asked to help out once a week in the intensive care unit. It is a huge challenge for me (so much has changed in the last 30 years with regard to hospital equipment and hospital care), but an enormous joy for me to still be useful. The greatest reward I could



have received was when my children that I try not to neglect told me they were proud of me.

(Martina – Czech Republic)

*Edited by Lorenzo Russo (taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, year VII, no.3, May-June 2021)*





**Sr. Antonia Moioli**  
**Italia**  
**1949 - 2021**

Sister Antonia Moioli

## **Blessed are those who follow my ways**

Sister Antonia Moioli departed this life on 30th July, 2021. She was calm, had a beautiful smile and was surrounded by affection and prayers.

Born in Alzano Lombardo (Bergamo, Italy) on 13th June, 1949 to a deeply Christian family, at the age of 19 Antonia Moioli got to know the Focolare Movement: the discovery of God Love inspired her to love everyone: from the members of her family to those at the nursery school. “I was wondering what God wanted of me. A priest advised me not to worry, to continue living the Ideal and to trust Jesus who said: To those who love me I will manifest myself. I trust him and I count on that. In the meantime, I realize that many of my colleagues at work were lively, free nuns. They gave me a book of their Founder. When I read it, I experienced a joy as it was so much in harmony with the Ideal”.

In 1971 she entered the Institute of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. She made her first vows in 1974 and her perpetual vows in 1980. She threw herself into education with enthusiasm; everyone remembers her for her vitality, love and passion for children and young people. In 1977 she went to Rome, to the school of Santa Maria degli Angeli where she taught and became Head of the Institute. She was a reference point for many students. Her institutional duties did not distance her from the students, they allowed her to show them the beauty of following Jesus. In 1993 she was the only nun in the youth ministry consultancy for the Diocese and the Prefecture.

A former student testifies: “Sister Antonia was

a real woman, able to give an example to the Church of the wonderful vocation of women: she knew how to be a mother, constantly generating her children to the faith, to the encounter with Jesus. ... as a mother who knows potentiality of her children, she did not stop at our complaints. ... She was a strong woman, able to show her humanity. In the year 2000, welcoming the pilgrims who came to Rome for the World Youth Day, Sister Antonia said to me: “you will clean the bathrooms in the gym”. I would have preferred to engage in other activities. Before starting, Sister Antonia, told me that to truly serve people you had to get your hands dirty. And then I realized the most beautiful thing that made me recognize that she was a true educator: she started cleaning the bathrooms with me. ... I was faced with a strong woman, happy to be a nun and educator, a complete, fulfilled woman ”.

She hoped that everyone could experience that to love is to give life, moment by moment. Another trait of her, typical of her congregation’s charisma was love for the poor and she was sensitive to those who struggled, the simplest people. She also had a great love for her older sisters. In 1996 she was responsible for Italy and she inspired the communities with the same enthusiasm as ever. At the end of her mandate, for two years, she dedicated herself to the service of the International Centre for Sisters of the Focolare Movement and thereafter continued to hold other positions. Celebrating 25 years of consecration she wrote: “In these 25 years I have experienced His fidelity stronger than my infidelities. God’s immense love heals,

encourages, supports, it is Paradise”. And even more: “In starting over all the times I have struggled or failed, I have always felt enveloped by an immense love, Mary and the charism of Unity were essential to make me a true daughter of my founder, with a heart open wide to all the aspects of the Church and humanity”.

In recent years she encountered weakness and illness; she was spared nothing, she was

asked to give up everything! What her founder Nicola Barré said was realized in her;: “This night is a splendid day”. As Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement, wrote, “Sister Antonia leaves an example of a true disciple of Jesus, faithful to living the Word and constantly following Him. She worked tirelessly at many levels for the realization of “May they all be one”.

Sister Tiziana Longhitano

August 10, 2021 •

## Living the Gospel: **everything is a gift**

### **New essentiality**

In the care home for the elderly where I work as an animator I grew very fond of the guests. Understanding how best to help a patient with Alzheimer’s disease or patients with other degenerative diseases had made my service a true network of intense and living relationships. Then Covid came into the home and one by one they all became ill. It was heart-breaking for me to feel I was the link between the patient and their relative but could do nothing to fill that void. Then I too contracted the virus – maybe when I was helping a very

sick elderly woman talk to her family via her mobile phone. In my loneliness I understood even more what these elderly people were going through and rediscovered the value of prayer. Every time I received news that someone had died my grief increased along with my sense of helplessness but I began to pray more intensely, often not on my own but with those who were still there. The pandemic has brought us to a new ‘essentiality’ beyond that caused by illness and old age.

(G.K. – Slovakia)

*Edited by Lorenzo Russo (taken from Il Vangelo del Giorno, Città Nuova, year VII, no.3, May-June 2021)*



## Membri del Movimento che hanno concluso la loro vita terrena:

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12 April 2021 **Marluce Pinheiro de Oliveira**  
*focolarina from Brazil*

17 April 2021 **Maria Teresa Gued**  
*focolarina from Portugal*

22 April 2021 **Renata Brusadelli**  
*focolarina from Roman Mariapolis*

27 April 2021 **Raffaele Alterio**  
*priest focolarino from Italy*

27 April 2021 **João Nunhez**  
*married focolarino from Brazil*

29 April 2021 **Franco Callegari**  
*priest focolarino from Italy*

01 May 2021 **Angela "Gringa" Cuesta Mazzarelli**  
*married focolarina from Argentina*

08 May 2021 **Zuleide Costa Gonçalves**  
*focolarina from Brazil*

13 May 2021 **Ivanaldo Ferreira de Araújo**  
*focolarino from Brazil*

21 May 2021 **Elmar Albert**  
*priest focolarino from Germany*

21 May 2021 **Flavia Di Monda**  
*focolarina from Roman Mariapolis*

21 May 2021 **Salve Alfonso**  
*married focolarina from the Philippines*

25 May 2021 **Felizitas Heitmann**  
*married focolarina from Germany*

30 May 2021 **Nunziatina Cilento**  
*focolarina from Roman Mariapolis*

01 June 2021 **Marcelo Ferreira Lins**  
*married focolarino from Brazil*

04 June 2021 **Ana Lucia Bandeira**  
*focolarina from Brazil*

07 June 2021 **Burgl Notburga Kranebitter**  
*focolarina from Austria*

09 July 2021 **Maria de Lourdes (Prediletta) de Castro Pena** - *focolarina from Brazil*

11 July 2021 **Mirella David Sadini**  
*married focolarina from Italy*

### Contributions to the Mariapolis newsletter:

*Dear Readers,*

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*You can download it from the site or receive it by email by activating the link.*

*It is a free service from the Communications Office.*

*We are always grateful to those who wish to continue to support our work financially and in that way contribute to the spreading of the charism of unity.*

*The editorial staff*

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