



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT***

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 26 September 2014*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you, who make up the General Assembly of the Work of Mary and who wish to live it fully integrated in the “today” of the Church. In a special way, I greet Maria Voce, who has been reconfirmed as President for another term. In thanking her for the words she addressed to me also on your behalf, I reciprocate by addressing to her and to her closest colleagues my cordial wishes for the success of your work in service to the Movement which, in recent years, has grown and been enriched with new works and activities within the Roman Curia as well.

Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, the Church is called to undertake a new stage of evangelization, witnessing to God’s love for each human being, beginning with the poorest and the excluded, and developing humanity’s journey toward unity with hope, fraternity and joy.

The Work of Mary — well known to everyone as the Focolare Movement — was born in the bosom of the Catholic Church from a small seed, which over the course of years has become a tree which now extends its branches in all the expressions of the Christian family and also among the members of various religions and among the many who cultivate justice and solidarity together with the search for truth. This Work sprang from a gift of the Holy Spirit — without a doubt! — the charism of unity which the Father wishes to give to the Church and to the world to help bring about Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).

Our thoughts turn with great affection and gratitude to Chiara Lubich, an extraordinary witness to this gift, whose fruitful life brought the fragrance of Jesus to so many human realities and to so

many parts of the world. Faithful to the charism from which it was born and which nourishes it, the Focolare Movement today faces the same task expected of the entire Church: to offer, with creativity and responsibility, its unique contribution to this new season of evangelization. Creativity is important, it is impossible to go forward without it. It is important! And in this context I would like to consign three words to you who belong to the Focolare Movement and to those who, in various ways, share its spirit and ideals: contemplate, go forth, teach.

First and foremost, contemplate. Today more than ever we need to contemplate God and the wonders of his love, to abide in Him, who in Jesus, came to place his tent in our midst (cf. Jn 1:14). To contemplate also means to live in the company of brothers and sisters and to break the Bread of communion and of fraternity with them, to cross the threshold together (cf. Jn 10:9) which leads us to the bosom of the Father (cf. Jn 1:18), because contemplation which has no place for others is a deception (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 281). Otherwise, it is narcissism.

Inspired by God in response to the signs of the times, Chiara Lubich wrote, “The great attraction of modern times: to penetrate to the highest contemplation while mingling with everyone, one person alongside others” (*Spiritual Writings* 1, 27). In order to fulfil this it is necessary to broaden one’s interiority regarding the measure of Jesus and the gift of his Spirit, to make contemplation the indispensable basis for a supportive presence and for effective, truly free and pure action.

I encourage you to be faithful to this ideal of contemplation, to persevere in the search for union with God and in mutual love with brothers and sisters. Draw on the treasures of the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church, on this yearning for communion and the unity which the Holy Spirit has evoked for our time. And give the gift of this treasure to everyone!

The second phrase — very important as it expresses the movement of evangelization — is to go out. To go out as Jesus went out from the bosom of the Father to proclaim the word of love to all, even to the gift of his whole self on the wood of the cross. We must learn from Him, from Jesus, this “drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing of the good seed” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 21), to generously communicate God’s love to all, with respect and as the Gospel teaches us: “You received without pay, give without pay” (Mt 10:8): this sense of giving freely. Because Redemption was given to us freely, forgiveness of sins cannot be “paid for”. It was Christ who “paid for” it once and for all! We must carry out the gratuitousness of the Redemption with our brothers and sisters. Give freely, without payment, what we have received. And gratuitousness goes along with creativity: the two go together.

In order to do this, we must become experts in that art which is called “dialogue” and which is not learned cheaply. We cannot be content with half measures, we cannot hesitate but, with God’s help we can aim high and broaden our gaze! And to do this we must go out with courage “to Him

outside the camp, bearing abuse for him” (Heb 13:13). He is there in the trials and in the moans of our brothers, in the hurts of society and in the questions of the culture of our time. It hurts the heart when, before a church, before a humanity with so many wounds, moral wounds, existential wounds, wounds of war, which we all hear of every day, to see that Christians begin to do philosophical, theological, spiritual “byzantinism”, rather what is needed is a spirituality of going-out. Go out with this spirituality: do not remain securely locked inside. This is not good. This is “byzantinism”! Today we have no right to byzantinistic reflection. We must go out! Because — I have said this many times — the Church seems like a field hospital. And when one goes to a field hospital, the first task is to heal the wounded, not to measure cholesterol... this will come later.... Is this clear?

And lastly, the third phrase: to teach. St John Paul II, in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, invited all the Church to become “the home and the school of communion” (n. 43), and you have taken this instruction seriously. It is important to form, as the Gospel requires, new men and women and to that end a human school according to the measure of Jesus’ humanity, is necessary. Indeed, He is the New Man to whom, at any time, young people can look, with whom they can fall in love, whose way they can follow in order to face the challenges which lie before them. Without an appropriate formation of the new generations, it is illusory to think that a serious and lasting plan in service of a new humanity can be brought about.

Chiara Lubich coined an expression which is especially relevant: today, she said, we must form “world men”, men and women with the soul, the heart, the mind of Jesus and therefore capable of recognizing and interpreting the needs, the concerns and the hopes which are harboured in the heart of every man.

Dear sisters and dear brothers, I wish that your Assembly may bear abundant fruit, and I thank you for your generous commitment. May Mary, our Mother, always help you to walk with faith, with courage and with perseverance, with creativity, spontaneity and in communion with all the Church, on the paths of light and of life laid out by the Holy Spirit. I bless you and I ask you, please, to pray for me, because I need it. Thank you!