



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT**

Thursday, 13 November 1997

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. I welcome you with joy at the end of the ecumenical conference that you have held over the last few days at the "Mariapolis Centre" in Castel Gandolfo. To everyone I extend my affectionate greeting and my cordial gratitude for this visit.

I especially thank Cardinal Miloslav Vlk for the courteous words he addressed to me on behalf of you all and for the interesting description he gave me of your work and of the evangelical and ecumenical spirit that animates it. I am pleased to greet the Bishops and those responsible for the Churches and other Christian Communion who have come from various parts of the world, as I address a cordial thought to Chiara Lubich and the other representatives of the Focolare Movement.

2. This year, as the Cardinal Archbishop of Prague wished to emphasize, you focused your meeting on an in-depth study of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement as an ecumenical spirituality for fully living the ecclesiology of communion which is an essential condition for an increasingly convinced and harmonious journey towards complete unity. In this regard, you certainly received particular help from the remarkable testimonies about recent developments in your Movement in the area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

These annual meetings, which give the Bishops and those responsible for the various Churches and Christian Communion, all friends of the Focolare Movement, the chance to spend some

days together in useful common work, even with their informal and private character, certainly help to deepen your knowledge of the ideals and Gospel spirituality that are the basis of Christians' journey to the full unity desired by Christ.

Common prayer and celebrations of the Word, exchanging testimonies about living the Gospel and fraternal sharing are not only an undeniable mutual enrichment, but they help increase and spread an intense spiritual union in love and truth, which nourishes the hope of completely overcoming, with the help of God's grace, the barriers that unfortunately still divide Christians.

3. As Cardinal Miloslav Vlk fittingly recalled a few moments ago, your meeting intends to make a significant contribution to the great ecumenical cause in the historical and ecclesial period in which we are living on the threshold of the third Christian millennium. During the Extraordinary Consistory that I convoked in 1994 to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I wished to emphasize the desire for unity that is being felt with increasing intensity by all Christ's disciples. I subsequently confirmed this point in the Apostolic Letter *Orientale lumen*: "We cannot come before Christ, the Lord of history, as divided as we have unfortunately been in the course of the second millennium. These divisions must give way to *rapprochement* and harmony; the wounds on the path of Christian unity must be healed" (n. 4).

In the past few days, your concern was to help infuse new courage and hope in the ecumenical journey, so that Christ's desire at the Last Supper will be fulfilled: that they may all be one so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21).

With this hope, made even more intense as the historic date of the Jubilee approaches, I again extend my cordial greeting to each of you, dear brothers and sisters, as I invoke on you all an abundance of divine blessings and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.