



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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## **Audience with participants in the Interreligious Conference organized by the Focolare Movement**

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Interreligious Conference organized by the Focolare Movement, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

### **Greeting of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet the President of the Focolare Movement, to whom I say that I am praying very much for your country which is suffering at this time. I also warmly welcome all the participants in this Interreligious Conference. I express my gratitude for the perseverance with which the Work of Mary continues the journey begun by Chiara Lubich, fostering unity with people of non-Christian religions who share the spirituality of unity. This was a revolutionary journey that did much good for the Church. It is an experience animated by the Holy Spirit, rooted, we can say, in the heart of Christ, in his thirst for love, communion and fraternity.

Indeed, it is the Spirit who opens paths of dialogue and encounter, at times surprising ones. This happened more than fifty years ago in Algeria, when an all-Muslim community adhering to the Movement was born. It also happened with Chiara Lubich's meetings with leaders of various religions: Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, and others. This dialogue has flourished over time, as evidenced by your presence today.

The foundation of this experience is the love of God expressed through mutual love, listening, trust, hospitality and getting to know one another, all the while fully respecting each other's identities. Over time, friendship and cooperation have grown in seeking to respond together to the cry of the poor, in caring for creation and in working for peace. Through this journey, some non-Christian brothers and sisters have shared in the spirituality of the Work of Mary, or in some of its characteristic traits, and live according to them amongst their own people. With these men and women, we transcend dialogue, we feel like brothers and sisters, sharing the dream of a more united world, in the harmony of diversity.

Dear friends, your witness is a source of joy and a source of consolation, especially in this time of conflict, when religion is often misused in order to fuel division. Indeed, interreligious dialogue “is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 250). I encourage you, then, to move forward and always be open.

May the Lord bless all of you. May he grant his blessing to each one of you, for the Lord is close to us all. May the Lord bless you. Amen.

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