



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO BISHOPS WHO ARE FRIENDS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 27 February 2014*

Dear Brothers, welcome!

This year your theme is “*Mutual love amongst the disciples of Christ*”, a theme that echoes the new commandment Jesus gave to his disciples. The opportunity of fraternal coexistence is a good thing so as to share your spiritual and pastoral experience in the perspective of the charism of unity. As bishops, you are called to bring to these meetings the far-reaching breath of the Church, and to ensure that what you receive here extends to benefit the entire Church.

Society today is in great need of the witness of a lifestyle resplendent with the news given to us by Our Lord Jesus: brothers who love each other despite their differences in character, origin or age.... This testimony gives birth to the desire to be part of the great parabola of communion that is the Church. When a person feels that “mutual love amongst the disciples of Christ” is possible and is capable of transforming the quality of interpersonal relations, he/she feels called to discover or rediscover Christ, and opens to an encounter with the Living and Working One. That person is spurred to come out of himself and approach others and spread what he received as a gift.

In the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Bl. John Paul II wrote: “To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings”. And he added: “Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up” (n. 43).

“To make the Church the home and the school of communion” is truly fundamental for the efficacy of our every commitment to evangelization, insofar as it reveals the deep desire of the Father: that

all his children live as brothers; it reveals the will of Christ's heart: that "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21); it reveals the dynamism of the Holy Spirit, his power of free and liberating attraction. To cultivate the spirituality of communion also helps make us more able to live the ecumenical journey and interreligious dialogue.

Dear Brothers, thank you for your visit! My wish for you is that your conference be a propitious occasion to grow in the spirit of collegiality, and to obtain from your mutual love cause for encouragement and renewed hope. May the Virgin Mary accompany you always and sustain you on your mission. I trust in your prayers and I assure you of mine. I bless all of you and the communities entrusted you.