

Prague, February 8, 2023

**Speech by Margaret Karram, president of the Focolare Movement at the European stage of the Synod of the Catholic Church**

I would like to express my gratitude to God and to all of you for the true experience of the synodal journey that we are having these days, an experience that I will try to pass on as best I can to the members of the Focolare Movement in the world, whom I represent here.

I know that many of them will participate in the various continental assemblies because they are embedded in the local churches, to do more and more **service to the unity of the church, as all of us here are committed to doing.**

I would like to emphasize here the need to be **open to encounter and dialogue with everyone.** Dialogue at the ecumenical level, interreligious level, with people committed to human values. For me, coming from the Holy Land, it has been a joy to see how, especially the ecumenical path in many churches in Europe, has become vital and is an asset for the synodal path.

In my experience, placing ourselves in a dialogue perspective can even decide between peace or war. It all depends on how we look at the other, whether as a brother, a sister or as an adversary.

**I truly believe that the answer that the Church in Europe can offer humanity today is the gift of that evangelical love that comes to us from Christ.**

A prophecy, this, already hoped for by the Second Vatican Council, which is becoming more and more concrete in the everydayness of our lives. As the Focolare Movement we commit ourselves to this "pilgrimage" to which the Pope calls us.

Regarding **woman in the Church**, rather than the "role" of woman I would talk about the "gift" that woman can be in the Church and for the Church.

In his 1995 "Letter to Women," St. John Paul II says that "The Church sees in Mary the highest expression of the 'feminine genius' and, addressing consecrated women, thanks them because they help "the Church and all of humanity to live towards God a 'spousal' response, which wonderfully expresses the communion He wants to establish with His creature."

These words seem to me to be a guide and light not only for consecrated women in the Church, but for all women working in the Church at various levels.