

## Focolare Movement – Unity and communion of goods

During the pandemic, the family of the Focolare Movement sought its strength in **unity**, to be united so as to be able to donate love and hope to humanity.

Looking around, we noticed that, on one hand, Covid-19 showed us that we are all in the same 'boat', that we are all in the same situation (the virus infects anyone); on the other hand, it highlighted the many social inequalities and political, local and international divisions. What can we do? This is what Maria Voce, President of the Movement, suggested: *"Above all, God wants this from us: that we **become one** with the person close to us, with the person journeying in life with us, with those whom we come to know about, even through the mass means of communication. We are called, therefore, to **live unity** each and every moment of our life, as used to happen at the beginning"*.

Thus we felt duty-bound to bring God's love to the persons we meet, to give importance to the others, to spread the **VIRUS** of fraternity.

**A parish priest** decided to combine his bike rides to visiting his parishioners, and in this way he found himself being a 'missionary' in his own city. This change of approach – where it is the parish priest who 'goes' toward his people – infected the whole community with a great joy.

Many have discovered that **being online** is a positive thing; it meant allowing those who could not afford to travel, to participate in international meetings which otherwise they could not have attended. Various groups of **young people**, who adhere to initiatives of the Movement, committed themselves to help the people in their cities, and the motto they chose was: **"dare to care"**.

We proposed to follow the voice of **Christ** in the mystery of his forsakenness by God and to look for him in the poor, the needy, in those who are lonely, in those who are frightened, and in those who are different from us. In many Countries an **extraordinary communion of goods** was organized; this was the fruit of small sacrifices, of what was saved through home-working or some unexpected income. In this way we could help families, widows, orphans, old persons, and refugees throughout the Movement as well as improve our hospitality centres.

In an **Italian city**, we joined 16 other Associations to address the social needs of the city. Various music bands of the Movement have organized online concerts. In a **Swiss town**, the children and their friends invited others to sew pennants at home, and then, in the central square, they tied them up together in a garland – a sign of community. At **Loppiano** and **Montet**, our formation Centres, we started producing masks against Covid-19 for the general public. In a **Brazilian hospital**, Covid patients often found it hard to speak; so a device with symbols was invented by which the patients could communicate. This device is now available in various languages on internet, and European hospitals, too, are making use of it. In **Germany**, to help her students, a teacher prepared videos to explain maths and physics experiments. In **Hungary** an electronic platform was started to see that needs are met with offers of material goods, as well as a bank account to help persons who had greater difficulties in nearby Countries. A young man in **Taiwan** came to know about a poor family in Mexico. Therefore he started raising funds by involving other young people on Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.

Summing up, during this period, we experienced joy whenever we moved out of our comfort zones to be near the others with a creative love. We have seen the blossoming of many small living cells of Church, a people of God all over Europe and beyond.

Ilona Toth