

# Entering a new era as one human family

## Interview with Focolare president Maria Voce

What has the pandemic brought out in society and ecclesial life? How do we face this time filled with unknowns? Below are excerpts from a May 8, 2020 interview, part of the Ecclesia column of Radio InBlu (Italy). We thank Alessandra Giacomucci for his permission to reproduce this interview.

*Much has happened during this time of the pandemic and we need to examine our actions, our purchases . . . What do you think has emerged in both society and in church life as well?*

It is bringing out beautiful things but it has also allowed terrible things to come to the surface too. The first thing worth mentioning is that of equality among all. In the face of this tiny virus that can infect all of us, the pandemic has shown us that we are all the same. Everyone is at risk: the powerful as well as the weak, the rich and those who have nothing, children and adults, those in prison and those who live free. So, in this sense, we are all truly the same.

At the same time, the pandemic has revealed many inequalities that are not merely a part of being human but, rather, were created by different cultures, prejudices, and lifestyles. Thus, some people can afford treatment and others cannot. Some have homes in which they can isolate, while others are forced to live with several people in small, cramped spaces. Others, who have lost their jobs, can draw on savings they set aside while, instead, some have nothing extra to draw from when they have become unemployed and their families are in danger of going hungry.

So, unfortunately, the inequalities have become even more obvious. This should make us reflect because God does not want these inequalities, nor are they willed by human nature. They are due to the ill will of those who are unable to properly manage the gifts that God has given to all. We need to make up for these inequalities so as not to find ourselves, at the end of the pandemic, in a worse state than before. Instead, we want to come out of this having better understood the need for equality and craft programs that respect the equal dignity of all.

*What about in the Church?*

For the church I feel this period has highlighted what is essential because many things have fallen by the wayside. We have seen that church walls are not essential, but we have seen instead that it is essential to live the life of the Church as communion. We have understood that going daily to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is not essential. However, it is essential to love our neighbor. It is essential to respond with love to people around us and to seek out inspiration for our lives in Jesus' words in the Gospel. Many things have been cast aside, even on an ecclesial level.

This has, however, done us nothing but good. It has spurred us towards that rebirth which Pope Francis continually speaks of, to the resurrection and total rebirth and reform of the Church in vibrant ways, not in an institutional manner or in matters of formality.

*Which of these “essentials” is most essential?*

What is most essential is to keep in mind that we are one human family. Being part of this one family must push us all to care for one another and to care for creation which is our only home for the human family. We must carefully, attentively and diligently care for it precisely because Christianity leads us to look at this reality in a responsible manner. We are all members of a family, but we are all responsible for this family. Therefore, every person is important. Each has rights but also duties. There is a collective responsibility.

I think this must compel to develop initiatives, put forward programs and see what can be done to truly include everyone. We must develop forward-thinking paths in economics and in politics, paths truly focused on the common good, not just for one group or another, not the interests of one ‘side’ or another, but for the good of all. They should be proposals that aim at a communion of goods on a more universal level.

Then the Church itself – and we too, in fact, as the Focolare Movement – is universal, it has no boundaries. In a certain sense, the Church competes on equal terms with the virus. The virus is not afraid of borders, but neither is the Church; the Church is universal because it is God’s family on earth.

We must look to this, God’s family, to see how to make it truly be one family. We must see how to create structures that enable the integral development of all, while respecting the history, culture, and way of life of each people, without coercing them into a mode of development according to our models or our plans. At the same time, all the talents which God has endowed every people, every culture and every person should be put at the disposition of all. We can make them available to one another so that all together we can make of this world an ever more beautiful, common home, one ever more worthy of being inhabited by the children of God.

**Interview by Alessandra Giacomucci**