

Year 2025

Course: Recognising oneself
The Statutes: a path and a mirror

Saturday, 8th marc, 2025
Summary of the Lesson 3A
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Approaching The Statutes: a historical understanding

This contribution traces the path in the history of the Focolare Movement that led to the first General Statutes which were approved in 1990. A process whose stages are marked by the drafting of no less than seven Rules or Statutes presented to the Church in different years. These reflected both the progressive growth of this new ecclesial reality according to God's plan and “the gradual and ever more decisive approval of the Church”.

Already in the short “Statute of the Focolares of Charity. Apostles of Unity” approved by the Archbishop of Trent in 1947 and confirmed in 1948, the aim of this new organisation began to appear clearly: the Gospel-based ideal of charity and Unity.

In the 1950s, a period in which the Movement was carefully studied by the Holy Office, various proposals for Rules were presented to the Church. Among these, the one drafted by Chiara in 1958 is noteworthy. In it, the name “Work of Mary” appeared for the first time. This draft of the Rule was valued by Pope Pius XII. The way to approval seemed open, but the Pope died.

It was during the pontificate of Pope John XXIII that a first approval was given: in 1962 of the men's part, in 1963 of the women's part. Two separate sections, therefore, not yet corresponding to God's plan for the “Movement as one”.

With Pope Paul VI, in December 1964, the full approval of the Movement was obtained which also implied the end of the apostolic visitation. In agreement with the Pope, work was done on the Statute of a Coordinating Council, a *trait d'union* to guarantee unity and coordination between the two Sections of the Movement.

The Movement, that was still in foundation, was enriched with new branches. The work on the format of the Statutes continued, intensifying in the 1980s, leading to the drafting of the “General Statutes of the Work of Mary”, which were approved on the 29th of June 1990 and welcomed “as one of the greatest gifts of the Lord”.