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Focolare as An Instrument for Unity Toward A Cohesive Society in Indonesia

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Abstracts:

The research focuses on social cohesive elements in the Focolare movement in Indonesia which attribute unity to their surroundings. Inclusion, a sense of belonging, recognition, and active participation create bonds among its members and sympathisers. The Focolare movement attracts those who strive to minimise every division to achieve its goal "may all be one" by collectively living the spirituality of unity despite their varied identities and experiences. This research seeks to understand the definition of unity which puts Focolare as one family. It aims to recognise how members' engagement and participation enhance mutual understanding, empathy, and respect, to create unity. This unity is seen as a social cohesion in the society, within and outside the movement. The case study is conducted on a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, with people of three religions who practise Focolare spirituality in their daily lives in Indonesia. The research finds several relational paths which help the creation of unity in Focolare, resulting as instruments for unity. The paths take form in three cohesive elements; social relations, identification, and participation toward common goods. The acknowledgement of other religious traditions and the reflection on seeing the world as one family enable the acceptance of shared values. Those who are willing to work toward unity underline the importance of inclusion, the sense of one family, recognition of

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differences at open forums, and concrete programs of formation in and among religious communities. It later encourages the intercultural and interreligious relation toward cohesion in the society of diverse Indonesia.

Keywords:

Cohesion, one family, shared values, unity

Introduction

The Focolare Movement is a religious lay movement that started during World War II in 1943 in Italy. It was founded by Chiara Lubich who consecrated her life to God and lived the Gospel concretely as a response to her personal calling. Lubich was born on January 22, 1920 in Trento (died on March 14, 2008 in Rocca di Papa).[1] She was an Italian teacher and author who founded the Focolare Movement, which aims to bring unity among people and promote universal family.By the grace from the Holy Spirit, she understood from the scripture of the last prayer by Jesus before He died "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21 NIV) to be the aim to bring unity among people and to promote one human family. Many people followed her way of life in helping those in need during the 2nd World War in Trento, Italy, the area she lived, and formed the first community that was called 'Focolare', an Italian word for "hearth", or 'family fireside'.[2] It which was given by people who felt the warmth of Focolare people who give concrete help during the war, eg. food, clothes, shelter, from their communion of goods. Later the word 'Focolare' and 'the movement' will be used alternately in the paper, referring to the Focolare. It is now made up of both celibate and married people, adults,

1 Jim Gallagher, A Woman's Work (New York: New City Press, 1997), p.5

2 Center of Focolare, Dossier of the Focolare Movement (www.focolare.org , 2021).

youth, and children, who come from many cultures, vocations and roles in society, of different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Worldwide members who are part of a section, branch, or movement in Focolare according to the statistics of 2019,[3] are 126,440. These are people who have more commitment in the movement and work to fulfill Focolare's goals, live its spirit and take on responsibility according to their vocation.[4] About 2 million call its spirituality their own, with around 15,000 Christians from different churches and ecclesial communities. There are more than 12,000 people of other religions and 1,000 people who do not have any religious affiliation share Focolare spirituality and objectives in a variety of ways.[5] These sympathisers; Christians, followers of other religions, and persons with no religious affiliations, value and love the movement, even in a small way.[6] The members and sympathisers are referred to in the research as Focolare people which mean those who live the spirituality of Focolare.

Lubich realised that the unity she and the first community of Focolare experienced was for the whole world. In 1946 she proposed to those who tried to live the Gospel concretely like her to aim at universal brotherhood, indicating the way that unity is possible. She stated that everyone must look at each other as children of the one God. Therefore, people should allow the hearts and minds to transcend the limitations imposed by human perspective on life, and cultivate the practice of continuously embracing the fact that we are all members of the same one human family with a single father: God.[7] The development of the movement was not planned but it gradually established bridges among people of different religions. Along with other communities that work hard in the interreligious dialogues, Focolare sow results from interfaith

3 Focolare internal docs, 2022.
4 Centre of Focolare, *Work of Mary: General Statues* (New York: Focolare Movement, 2008), 30.
5 Focolare, Dossier, 2021.
6 Focolare, *Work of Mary,* 31.
7 Chiara Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken* (Manila: New City Press, 1985), 26-27.

encounters, collaborations, and personal experiences among peoples of different communities.[8] They are the Mahayana Buddhist Movement; the Risshō Kōsei-kai (RKK), founded by Nikkyō Niwano; and the Islamic Gülen Movement, inspired by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen. There are also the Swadhyay Movement and the Gandhian Movement in India, the Fo Guang Shan Movement and the Dharma Drum Movement in Taiwan, and the Muslim followers of the Imam W. D. Mohammed in the United States. Some of the many points shared together are the closer connection with God, a deeper understanding of their own religion, and the possible idea of one human family so the wounds of the society can be healed.[9]

To bring more unity to the human family, Focolare has opened up dialogues within the Catholic Church, with Christians of different Churches, among the world's religions through commitment in practising the Golden Rule which can found in many sacred texts: "Do to others as you would have them do to you". Other than those points, Focolare also does collaborations with people who do not have a specific religious affiliation.[10] Yet these people want to promote basic human values, and provide space for meetings and dialogue for people from all professions. As mentioned in their official website about interreligious dialogue, Focolare since 2002 has hosted some meetings for Jewish-Christian, Islamic-Christian, Buddhist-Christian and Hindu-Christian. All of these take part in building harmony among the people of different backgrounds which later invite a bigger number of followers who also desire a renewed model of humanity. World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit noted during the ecumenical week promoted by the Focolare in 2017 that the unity of the church is meaningless if it is not a

8 Roberto Catalano,"Gülen, Focolare, and Rissho Kosei-kai Movements: Commonalities for Religious and Social Renewal". *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, 4(1) pp. 42–61* (Purdue University Press, 2015b), 44.

9 Catalano,"Gülen, Focolare, and Rissho Kosei-kai", 60.

10 Focolare, *Work of Mary*, 111

sign and a foretaste of the unity of all humankind and creation.[11] He added to the 700 Christian representatives of 70 Churches and Ecclesial Communities from 40 countries, that Focolare theme resonates well with the framework for WCC which is the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

An interview with Phramaha Thongrattana Thavorn, a senior Buddhist monk from Thailand, shows a close relation with the movement.[12] He specifically invited people to share and respect other religions, stating that there is no need for different religions to resist or compete with each other. Focolare continues to promote unity and universal brotherhood through various projects which involve participation of members from different religions.[13] Some of them are School for Dialogue with Oriental Religions (SOR) in Tagaytay, Philippines for the centre of interreligious dialogue for the whole movement; and The "Wings of Unity" project that involves educators and scholars who are both Muslim and Christian.

The Wings of Unity is a collaboration between Focolare's Sophia University Institute, the Islamic Centre of England, and the Risalat International Institute in Qum, Iran; and Religions for Peace, which began as the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). It works to promote peace through interreligious collaboration. The latest encounter was an interreligious conference in May and June 2024 in Rome and Assisi where 480 participants from at least 9 religious beliefs gathered to share their experience on dialogue of life with others, using 12 languages. Differences become less significant when there are shared values 'one human family' which are pursued collectively. The Focolare movement attracts those who strive to minimise every division to achieve the spirituality's goal "may all be one" by living the spirituality of unity

11 WCC, *The Closer We Move towards the Cross, the Closer We Move towards Unity.* (World Council of Churches, 2017)

12 Licas News, "Leading Thai Buddhist monk calls for global understanding, respect of religions". (www.licas.news, 2021)

13 Focolare, Dossier, (www.focolare.org , 2021).

despite their varied identities and experiences. Margaret Karram, the president of the movement, confirms “We also feel the responsibility to do much more for peace. This is why we want to work to strengthen and spread the culture of dialogue and of “care” for people and for creation”. [14]

In Indonesia, where six religions are officially recognised by the government along with other indigenous religions, unity is something that is very much needed. Indonesia’s national slogan Unity in Diversity means that despite there are many differences in tribe, language, location, socioeconomic status and cultural traditions, Indonesians are united as one. In *Bahasa Indonesia* it is called “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” meaning different but one. The people in Indonesia even take a pact famously called the *Youth Pledge* where the young people share one native land, one nation, and one language. However, religious and political tensions are situations that cannot be avoided. Conflict over ideology has been a feature of political life in Indonesia since the early days of the nationalist movement.[15] Violence on religious freedom, in combination with state policy that takes sides on particular religious groups has led to a growing intolerance toward other groups. Fredericks suggested the creation of friendships that dare to cross the boundaries separating religious traditions require the ability to live well with considerable amounts of ambiguity.[16] The capacity to listen patiently and to revise one's misconceptions are essential to maintain good rapport with other people. There are several points that can contribute to the establishment of exceptional relations among people to result in a cohesion in the society.

[14] Stefani Tanesini, “One Human Family: the revolutionary path towards peace.” (www.focolare.org, 2024)

[15] David Bourchier and Vedi Hadiz, *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader* 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

[16] James Fredericks, “Interreligious Friendship: A New Theological Virtue." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies 35, No.2* (1998), 159-174

Focolare community, with its members living in Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi, presents what group cohesion appears in the society where it can be modelled upon by those who strive for a more united bond. The feeling of social inclusion, as expressed by the members, enables them to improve their participation in society, preceded by the recognition of their presence and opinion in the community. Being welcomed and appreciated as if they were part of a family is among the reasons which attracts the members to have a sense of belonging to the spirituality and Focolare community. The concrete actions demonstrated by the people they meet inspire and encourage them to participate actively in return, regardless of religious affiliations. They may have different reasons to participate in Focolare, one may say it helps them to live better as a religious person, the other mentions it answers their questions about spirituality and relation with other people. While doing so, each one of them works together to gradually reach the goal of unity with the people in their surroundings.

The research aims to apprehend how unity is defined by the people who live Focolare spirituality. In other words, how the goal of Focolare is understood and lived, and if Focolare can be an instrument of unity in a diverse society. Studies have been conducted to explain that Focolare spirituality is practised in several parts of the world but none has been discussing the experiences in Indonesia. Bowie who did research on the Focolare community in Fontem, Cameroon, suggesting the fluid participation of people in the movement that the lines separating members and non-members are not always clear.[17] The time lap of 20 years with this research done in Indonesia shows that the fluid commitment of the members enables the dynamic relation with people of different faiths. There are experiences both conducted in Cameroon and Indonesia which share the same attitudes of Focolare spirituality.

[17] Fiona Bowie, "An Anthropology of Religious Experience: Spirituality, Gender and Cultural Transmission in the Focolare Movement" *Ethnos* 68 (2003): 65.

Catalano discovers the relationship Focolare has with other religious groups, such as Mahāyāna Buddhist, Theravada Buddhists, Baha'i, Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, various currents of Hinduism, and with other Christian denominations.[18] Gabijan presents her research findings on Focolare's commitment in interreligious dialogue that expand the movements into dialogue of life with many community groups regardless of their backgrounds.[19]

The research focuses on unity defined in the movement by the members and how the characteristics that build unity in Focolare participates in the cohesion in the members' respective areas. The interview takes respondents from Focolare members in many cities which have Focolare communities. There are internal documents written by Focolare members showing the dialogue of life to reach unity in one family.[20] The activities are initiated by the members in Yogyakarta and Aceh through social projects. There has been no academic writings that report the definition of unity which leads to dialogue between Focolare members and with people from outside the movement. Even though there have been articles about the dialogue for unity, there is still a need to address the very definition of unity itself in Focolare, especially as understood by the members in Indonesia, related to their efforts in contributing to the unity of Indonesian societies. In paying more attention to the essential elements about social cohesion, the research tries to list down particular points in Focolare that may provide the realisation to a more cohesive environment in Indonesia.

18 Roberto Catalano, "Together towards Unity of Human Family." *Journal of Catholic Studies.* (Lumen : Fu-Jen Catholic University, 2015a).; Catalano, "Gülen, Focolare, and Rissho Kosei-kai", 44.

19 Crecencia Gabijan, *Dialogue, Light and Fire : Chiara Lubich and the Spirituality of Unity.* (Manila : UST Publishing House, 2017)

20 Focolare, *Work of Mary* ; SOR Pan-Asian, *Harmony among Peoples and Religions Today* (Tagaytay City : School for Oriental Religions, 2019)

Methodology

To better understand the life of Focolare members in Indonesia that generate cohesive society in their environment, one must determine what builds up cohesion. According to Durkheim,[21] social cohesion occurs when there is conformity of all individual consciences. Individually, each member of the group is drawn to the others in these circumstances not only because they are similar to one another but also because they are a part of the collective's condition of life. They create the society together, love one another, and seek each other out. It is a characteristic of society that shows the interdependence between individuals of that society. Focolare members always meet in their monthly meetings, and through projects carried out in their local community, and/or within their respective groups, based on their commitment in the movement. One of the community monthly encounters, called 'Word of Life' meetings, gathers members and sympathisers, as well as people who are new to the movement. The Word of Life meetings refer to gatherings where the Word of God is introduced to people who are not familiar with the spirit of the Focolare or to those who have not yet known God or accepted the Church.[22] Every month during this gathering, a gospel phrase is selected and disseminated globally. People from Focolare are encouraged to practice it and then share their experience with the community.

As mentioned in their General Statutes,[23] the commitment takes form in the several branches varying from Focolarini (consecrated members), the Gen (young people), the Gen Seminarians, the Volunteers and Bishops, Friends of Focolare, and to the mass movement such as New Families and New Parish Movement. New Families and New Parish Movement refer to the way families and parishes get renewed or

21 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society.* (New York: The Free Press, 1893), 105.
22 Focolare, *Work of Mary,* 28.
23 Focolare, *Work of Mary,* 18.

transformed in the spirit of Focolare aiming for the unity of one family in a united world. Other established mass movements within the Work of Mary with the same values are New Humanity Movement; Youth for a United World Movement; Young for Unity Movement; Movement for Men Religious; Movement for Women Religious; Priests Movement; and the Diocesan Movement.[24]

Each branch works accordingly and collectively to achieve the goal in the movement for the united world involving all mankinds. They do not take into account racial, age, gender, social status, or work professions as they see all people equal and as candidates for unity. The members, as well as the sympathisers, resemble what Kawachi and Berkman write about social cohesion.[25] It covers the absence of latent social conflict (any conflict based on e.g. wealth, ethnicity, race, and gender) and the presence of strong social bonds (e.g. civic society, responsive democracy, and impartial law enforcement). Since all people are candidates for unity, either the person is male or female, teen or adult, a shopkeeper or a senior lecturer, Bataknese or Javanese, they all meet together in a Focolare environment. There is minimum conflict since everyone tries their best living the spirituality through the practice of mutual love. Chiara Lubich invited the members to always put into practice what is called 'the art of loving' which creates strong social bonds within the movement. Inspired by the Gospel, the art of loving reminds the members to be the first to love, to love everyone, to love one another, to love the enemy, and to love the neighbour as love Jesus, and to share other's joy and hurt.[26] The experiences found through the life shared by the respondents taking part in the research show how Focolare spirituality enables them to be a part of building unity with people around them. Not

24 Focolare, *Work of Mary,* 19.

25 Ichiro Kawachi and Lisa Berkman, "Social Cohesion, Social Capital, and Health" . In *Social Epidemiology*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 2000), 175.

26 Chiara Lubich, *The Art of Loving*. (New York: New City Press, 2010), 17.

necessarily in the society, but by taking a simple step of making good rapport with someone they encounter on a daily basis.

Studies suggest cohesion is the desire of a group of people to stay in the group where they share several values together that indicate collective togetherness.[27] A good interpersonal relation creates a multidimensional model that supports the establishment, support, and achievement of a high level of cohesion. Several elements to generate social cohesion are 1). the quality of social relations (including social networks, trust, acceptance of diversity, and inclusion), 2). identification with the geographical unit (sense of belonging, connectedness, recognition), and 3). the orientation or participation towards the common good (sense of responsibility, solidarity, shared value).[28]

Moody and White learn that structural cohesion occurs when there are social ties that bind its members together.[29] Additionally, a group is structurally cohesive if it is held together by several independent relational paths among all members. The more individuals reach out to another with more relational paths, the stronger the cohesion is. In a traditional society according to Durkheim, social interactions are generally built on a kind of "mechanical solidarity" among its members which arises from the relative homogeneity of their activities. As the society develops, however, interaction shifts towards "organic solidarity" as people engage in different, specialised labour (OECD 2011, 52).[30] This condition allows

27 Leon Festinger, et al, *Social Pressures in Informal Groups: A study of human factors in housing*. (CA: Stanford University, 1950) ; Leif Johan Braaten, "Group Cohesion: A New Multidimensional Model". *International Developments in Group Psychotherapy* (1991) ; Judith Maxwell, *Social Dimensions of Economic Growth* (Edmonton : University of Alberta, 1996) ; Chan, et al, "Reconsidering Social Cohesion: Developing a Definition and Analytical Framework for Empirical Research". *Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement 75(2)* (2006), 273-302.

28 David Schiefer and Jolanda van der Noll, "The Essentials of Social Cohesion: A Literature Review." *Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement.* 132 (Dordrecht : Springer, 2016), 579-603; Paul Hedges, "Conceptualising Social Cohesion in Relation to Religious Diversity: Sketching a Pathway in a Globalised World". Interreligious Relations 16 (IRR, 2020), 3.

29 James Moody and Douglas White, "Structural Cohesion and Embeddedness: A hierarchical concept of social groups". *American Sociological Review*, 68(1), (2003), 103–127.

30 OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development 2012: Social Cohesion in A Shifting Word*. (OECD Publishing, 2011), 52.

the members of Focolare to respond to their calling differently as their commitment yet they go toward the goal of unity in the movement. It is to say that each person presents their own consciences which represent only their individual personality. Later on the second types of consciences will produce collective ends that form the community in Focolare.

To understand the concept of unity in Focolare, the paper explains the relational paths taking place in Focolare which first enable its people to remain collectively. It focuses on how their interpretation of unity puts them as one family. It investigates how the members and sympathisers of different religious backgrounds interpret unity. The oneness in Focolare as a religious movement is seen in the research as the social cohesion occurs in society. As mentioned in several studies,[31] relational paths, strong bonds and solidarity in the community, as well as the shared values are building up cohesion. The interviews with the respondents identify these points and ultimately categorize the relation and common values that they experience. Later it explores how members' engagement and participation enhance mutual understanding, empathy, and respect, within and outside the movement. The notions which bring the members and sympathisers together signify the birth of unity in Focolare. Respondents' testimonies about Focolare's spirituality has become evidence to the unity within. The elements mentioned in the social cohesion are found in the daily life of Focolare members, embedded in their thoughts and actions. The respondents share their experience in living spiritually toward unity in their daily life that affects their habits and surroundings, especially in how they make relations with other people. The purpose of the research is to understand whether the spirituality of unity lived by Focolare people may take part in a larger unity among society members, in the form of cohesion in Indonesia.

31 Durkheim, *Division,* 105; Schiefer, van der Noll. "The Essentials", 581; Moody, White, "Structural Cohesion", 103–127; OECD, *Perspectives, 52;* Kawachi and Berkman, "Social Cohesion", 175; Hedges, "Conceptualising", 3.

The research uses qualitative methods with an interpretive approach to understand how the people who live Focolare spirituality have a particular interpretation about unity, the goal in the movement. The respondents are representatives of different age, area of living, and vocations either in families, workplace, youth groups, or parish. The selected thirteen respondents were invited to share their view by semi-structured interviews from December 2023 until May 2024. Observation in the community was conducted as well. The respondents belong to three religious backgrounds and come from different parts of Indonesia; Jakarta, Medan, Batam, Toraja, Surabaya, and YogyakartaEach socio-cultural religious context plays an important role in balancing the diverse respondents' subjective interpretations. A theoretical sampling performs as strategy in this interpretive research, where locations and respondents are selected based on theoretical considerations whether they fit the topic being studied, and/or whether they possess certain characteristics suitable for the study.[32] The experiences of thirteen respondents who are named in alias, also show how Focolare spirituality influences its members to participate in the possibility of a cohesive society in their environment. Apart from the interview which is personally stored and able to be accessed upon request, data is also cross checked with observation and internal documents. They are contrasted to confirm the reliability and coherence of results, backed by literature studies.

Result and Discussion

The various projects and activities of Focolare Indonesia especially for the past 20 years become evidence to the actualization toward the goal for unity. The members started the dialogue firstly to give themselves totally in the practice of the art of loving which results in response to the

[32] Anol Bhattacherjee, *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices.* (Florida : University of South Florida, 2012), 104.

needs of others. It coincides with what the General Statutes says about the participation of each member along with their branches or mass movements within Focolare. In order to renew or transform them in the spirit of unity, the various movements seek to pursue the goal of the Focolare through their activities among teenagers, young adults, in families, and in the diverse fields of civil society, as well as in those of an ecclesial nature such as in parishes, religious families, within their structure and collectively as a mass movement throughout the society.[33]

Humanitarian projects promote a new way of looking at humankind where members of Focolare initiate the social work for the needy, in their workplace, local community, and society. Meanwhile, the teens and the youths work side by side to build unity in every event they participate in and invite others to join them to be more aware of the importance of living together and doing good for others. This includes the project of Run4Unity,[34] Dare to Care,[35] musical and cultural performances. Run 4 (for) Unity is an activity done during the day, in different time zones by thousands of young people of different cultures and religions with actions for peace and solidarity through sport. Every year they make an event called Run4Unity World Peace Relay that has one goal which is to build a united world. Another campaign created by United World Project, which is run by the non-governmental organization (NGO) New Humanity, in collaboration with Teens for Unity, Youth for a United World, and New Humanity International Movement of Focolare, is Dare to Care 2021–2023. It is an activity which involves people from all ages to learn about what humanity needs, do action about it, then share it to others to raise awareness.

All of the activity is carried on following the programs prepared for the whole year in all areas where Focolare is present, collectively. It

33 Focolare, Work of Mary, 29, 101.
34 From official website www.teens4unity.org
35 From the official website Dare to Care 2021-2023 | United World Project

means that if the number of Focolare people is limited, an activity can be held in one area and supported both physically (in-person and online attendance, as well as in preparation) and spiritually (by prayers, donations or other means of support) by all members and sympathisers in the surrounding areas. The description below explains some points that attract people to participate in the activity in Focolare, what builds up each individual personally to be able to stay within the movement and reach out to people outside the movement. It later points out how Focolare people continue living in unity for the community and enable themselves to take part for a social cohesion in every possible circumstances.

Unity in Focolare

The way unity is understood in Focolare makes the people remind themselves that they need to work together in maintaining it. Not only it attracts them to join in practising spirituality but it is also what lies as the base of their interior structure (personal foundation), therefore each person helps one another to keep unity among them. All the respondents share mostly these points which encourage them at the beginning to live the spirituality of Focolare. These may be the very reasons they practise spirituality which generate a strong social bond with people that they encounter, as suggested by Kawachi & Berkman.[36] One respondent states two out of three values that other respondents describe. They have the first impressions on one or more points they experience during the first years of knowing the movement. While other respondents share that the same attitude that inspire them at the beginning, become the actions that they now conduct toward the others.

[36] Kawachi, Berkman, "Social Cohesion", 175.

The common values they share collectively set up what Durkheim claims as conformity,[37] and as relational paths by Moody and White.[38] These relational paths form what activity that conforms to norms or criteria that are collectively accepted in Focolare. As each member begins to get to know the movement, they find several things typical in Focolare which appeal to their interest and eventually adapt to the actions and thoughts. In Focolare Indonesia, they appear in three notions as follows: 1). The warmth as a family, 2). A deeper spiritual experience, and 3). A better relation with other people. From thirteen respondents, they experience the same connection which attracts them when they get to know the movement. These very notions are what keep them living the spirituality afterwards.

Conformity notions	Testimonies from respondents
Warmth of a family	feeling like a family, get the warmth as a family, kindness from strangers *(5 out of 13 respondents)*
Deeper spiritual experience	deeper relation with God, always invite God in every circumstance, do more practice of the Gospel, share experience of living the Gospel, seeing everyone equal in God's eyes (*8 out of 13 respondents)*
Better relation with others	do more action of care toward others, start a friendship, stronger relation with other people, ready to lose own's ideas / interests, accept the difference, mutual respect *(11 out of 13 respondents)*

Table 3.1.
Relational paths for living the spirituality of unity in Focolare (from interviews).[39]

37 Durkheim, *Division,* 105.
38 Moody, White, "Structural Cohesion", 103–127.
39 Interviews are done with 13 members and sympathisers using aliases (Amir, Bakti, Baskoro, Debora, Edo, Elsa, Heru, Juni, Ken, Malik, Noel, Ranto, Utha) of Focolare Indonesia from 3 religious backgrounds.

The feeling of being in a family is shared by some respondents even to the point where they receive friendliness from a stranger during the first encounters. However the strong impressions related to the warmth of a family does not apply to all respondents. There are only five respondents who experience this while the rest explain that their common values vary from the previous and the desire to know God more. There are eight respondents who mention they have deep experience related with their union with God and how they wish to practice the Gospel more. It leads to a deeper spiritual experience, including seeing everyone as equal before God. Most respondents, eleven out of thirteen, highlight how they become interested in living the spirituality when they witness how Focolare members live their daily life to build good relationships with other people. These values, or relational paths, take a significant role in mapping the notions of which Focolare members and sympathisers do and contribute to the unity in the society. Some of the experiences are shared by the respondents, using aliases for their identity.

Debora,[40] a young woman who used to be part of the youth group but now has been married for three years, recalls, "I feel like being a family. And in the family, we can freely do what we want without feeling embarrassed. They accept us." She mentioned that during the first months of getting to know the movement, she felt very accepted in expressing who she was. Debora continued that she found a place for self actualization to be herself since she was at the time very much involved in many activities in the university, local parish, and community service groups. She recounted she has never experienced this kind of support from other groups that she was ever in.

The kindness that other respondents received from Focolare people was one of the things they wanted to reciprocate that made them want to

[40] Debora is a 33 year old lecturer, female Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on December 13, 2023.

know more about Focolare and to live the same way. Even when it was the first time meeting them, most Focolare people showed a way of life which was fascinating to them. Bowie explains that Chiara Lubich has described 'joy' as the habit of people in Focolare, which in practice means that people are expected to maintain a warm smile all the time.[41] It is observed in the ways in which members make eye contact with and listen to one another. When someone speaks, particularly at a public gathering, however informal, everyone else is expected to 'make unity' to them by listening intently, maintaining eye contact, responding with nods, smiles and audible encouragement, and ignoring other distractions. Baskoro,[42] a professional who has known the movement since he was studying in the university, remembers his first encounter with Focolare through his female junior, explaining "Her attitude was different. When she was listening to me, her attention was fully directed to me." This shows the characteristic of the Focolare people's body movements.

Other similar responses are mentioned by Malik,[43] "In Focolare, I was very happy at that time. I just met them but (it was) as if we had known each other for a long time." and by Heru,[44] "There were a lot of young people at that time. I saw how nice they were, how friendly their smiles were. Their friendliness was different from what I usually encounter in other friends. They seem to have a very strong relationship with each other… When I arrived (at their meeting for the first time) it was drizzling, and there was one person who brought me a towel, then another person brought me a glass of water. At that time I felt a bit strange. Why does this person do this, do that, right? Do they think I'm an important person?" Another confirmation is shared by Ken,[45] a Protestant

41 Bowie, "An Anthropology", 60.
42 Baskoro is a 47 year old lawyer, male Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on December 13, 2023.
43 Malik is a 29 year old lecturer, male Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on December 17, 2023.
44 Heru is a 43 year old self-employed, male Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on January 3, 2024.
45 Ken is a 54 year old Christian Protestant pastor, interviewed via Zoom on January 2, 2024.

reverend who spent one year with his family in the Focolare permanent city in Loppiano Italy to have the experience as a Focolare family, saying, "They pay attention to us like we are very important. The gospel becomes more real, the love that they show is concrete, not only small talk (...) That's an interesting act of love, (it) makes me interested in understanding more about Focolare."

A closer union with God therefore has been another point that encourages the respondents to participate actively in Focolare. Regardless of their religion, they confirm that the spirituality of Focolare inspires them to have a more profound connection with God and enable them later to gain a deeper spiritual experience. They tend to practise more religious teachings, to see examples of practice from other people in Focolare, and to share experience of living their religion. Elsa,[46] one of the youth girls, recalls, "At the beginning it was just fun, there were many young people and I felt accepted. Then it is (to me more) like a relationship with God. In the past, my relationship with God was merely the church's teaching. (but now) With my own understanding, God is like this, (so) it should be like this."

Other Christian respondents also shared the same experiences. Bakti states that "Because I am Catholic, I live the Gospel, but we are not as active or proactive as the Protestants. However in Focolare it happened. Even though it's just during the *Word of Life* meeting, well that makes me very interested in practising one phrase of the Bible in life, and to share the experience."[47] He refers to a monthly meeting where the members and newcomers of the movement share how they live their spirituality. This method of living the verse of the Scripture and sharing the experience of living it, has helped Juni as well,[48] as she recounts "We quote one (sentence of the) Gospel then we invite everyone to live it. Only

46 Elsa is a 25 year old postgraduate student, female Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on December 20, 2023.
47 Bakti is a 44 year old private sector employee, male Catholic, interviewed on December 19, 2023.
48 Juni is a 35 year old teacher, female Catholic, interviewed via Zoom on January 16, 2024.

after that we will share what we have lived." Both B and Juni understand that living Focolare spirituality pushes them to live a concrete life as Christians as they are encouraged to put the Gospel into practice and 'race' with one another to be a true Christian.

Two respondents who are not Catholics explain that even though the teachings in Focolare is not new to them as it is already lived in their religion, it helps them in practising their religion more. Ken, a Christian Protestant mentions that what the Focolare members do to others show him a more concrete way in practising the Gospel. He understands through their relationship that realising the presence of Jesus also means recognising the existence of brothers and sisters, even though they are different (from other churches). "When we practise it in everyday life, that makes the difference", Ken says. Edo also says that knowing Focolare spirituality helps him to find a source of contemplation.[49] "In regard to my relationship with God, I must pay attention (not only) to my personal prayers, my way of life, but also the participation of my brothers and sisters which are very influential and really helped me to feel close to God. He admitted that it is almost like a circle linked to one another. Through his participation in Focolare, he understands his religion and relation with God more from the relation with other people and vice versa.

Amir,[50] a faithful Muslim who has known the movement for almost 20 years now, adds, "The spiritual teaching, which was told by Chiara Lubich, is no different from what I have been doing. (We are asked to) Live in love and have compassion for others." Having a great exposure to other religious teachings and participating in many interreligious encounters, both formal and casually, have encouraged him to embrace Focolare spirituality. Amir mentions that knowing the movement is like having a confirmation that falling in love with God may be as if falling into

49 Edo is a 43 year old teacher, male Christian Protestant, interviewed via Zoom on December 20, 2023.
50 Amir is a 50 year old lecturer, male Muslim, interviewed via Zoom on December 20, 2023.

a dark well but we need to surrender to him to overcome the fear. They share how Focolare spirituality helps them in a way that they are able to have a deeper spiritual experience. He comes to an understanding that between him who is Muslim and the others who are non Muslims, they are equal in the eyes of God.

Following a deeper spiritual growth that leads to a better union with God, some respondents admit that they develop a better relation with other people. They do more action of care toward others, able to have a stronger relationship with them and even are ready to lose their own ideas or interests. Noel,[51] an Italian who used to live in Indonesia explains, "Focolare spirituality invites me to continue to love others and that is the main means for establishing relationships with friends who have other religions or have different cultures" Being in the state of not knowing something allows people to ask and have an exchange when the other would answer. In that case, he feels that the relationship does not form in dialogue any longer but more like 'mutual love's since it is not only sharing each other's knowledge, but also a friendship, a brotherhood. Another statement is made by Edo who thinks that after knowing the teaching of Focolare, he feels the urge to put it into practice. He understands that in terms of giving to other people, it needs to be done concretely, not just by words. Ranto also considers any kindness he receives he must reciprocate so that people can interact freely and build relations with each other.[52]

The three values which actually attract people to join Focolare is in fact how unity is interpreted and carried out in the movement, firstly among the members and then with people outside the movement inevitably. All respondents mention how they naturally learn from the examples of action they encounter in every situation with Focolare

51 Noel is a 59 year old Catholic priest, interviewed via Zoom on December 30, 2023.
52 Ranto is a 60 year old entrepreneur, male Muslim, interviewed in person on January 4, 2024.

members. The first impression upon meeting Focolare is the immediate feeling of being in a family, as shared by some of the respondents while the rest implied the warmth and friendliness they received. They state that they gradually understood how the spirituality lived in the movement which aims to the realisation of one family. From the spiritual formation that they receive, also from the examples and sharing of experience of living the Gospel from other Focolare members, they go through a deeper spiritual connection with God. It may vary from one person to the other but most people realise their bond with God grows stronger as they learn more about Focolare's spirituality as it encourages them to always bring God in their daily life.

Toward the Goal of "May all be one"

Respondents who are part of the Focolare people in Indonesia also share particular points of Focolare's spirituality which help them in building unity among themselves and with people non-Focolare. These points always root in the goal of the movement which is unity and toward the realisation of Jesus' last prayer 'May all be one'.[53] This very Jesus' prayer for unity for all humanity makes up the goal for Focolare to build unity as one human family. It is considered as the best introduction to the origins and life of the Focolare Movement, with an adventure story on living for God.

Regarding the participation of Focolare members toward a more united community, there are practical things based on the Gospel that are lived in Focolare. Supported by Lubich's understanding through her charisma by the grace from the Holy Spirit, the series of actions can lead to the establishment of a cohesive society. The warmth as a family, a

[53] Chiara Lubich, *May They All Be One : Origins and Life of the Focolare Movement.* (New York : New City Press, 1977), 3.

deeper spiritual experience, and a better relation with other people are pivotal points that attract people in joining Focolare and at the same time they are also the trail they continue to walk on. In practice of doing action following the teaching from Lubich, Bowie,[54] through her close observation to the community, states the pillar of Focolare members is based on 'love'. She mentions that according to Focolare teaching, behaviour towards others should not depend on our own feelings or moods so much as a desire to 'be love' for the other.

It is the caring and thoughts for other people which is considered as 'love' in the Christian teachings. Somehow, Focolare started by Chiara Lubich, goes beyond this teaching and encourages others to live beyond the words by doing it in a more radical way. People of different religions can only live side by side in unity if they are willing to put themselves in the service of others, care and think of their needs. It means by accepting the free expression of beliefs and conduct of practices by citizens endorsing a faith different from one's own, and that views the constitutional rights of such citizens as equal to those held by the followers of one's own faith, as Mitzner and Muhtadi define it as religious tolerance.[55] It is an invitation for people to welcome other beliefs and religious practices in order to acknowledge that everyone is equal and has the same rights in the world in many aspects.

Religious tolerance goes hand in hand with religious engagement and the familiarisation of particular religious studies. Conflicts stirred in the religious matters show an urgency to lay the foundation for a model of concrete action, a common interest, the same shared value which can be carried out on a daily basis, that is suitable for different religious traditions and beliefs in the society. Bagir explains that structure in religious issues

54 Bowie, "An Anthropology", 61.

55 Marcus Mitzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi. "The Myth of Pluralism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics of Tolerance in Indonesia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia 42* (2020), 27.

refers to the capacity of institutions to produce (and enforce) patterns of meaning and action; agency refers to the capacity of individuals or collectives to improvise and generate alternatives.[56] The participation of the agency is very important. In the movement, it is evident that its development and fall partly relies on the participants. Chiara Lubich proposed that this work of the movement must be done by three generations.[57] As the generation in Focolare changes, she reminded the whole movement that the first generation should build the community today; the second generation will form new people; and the third generation will see the beginning of a new world. These three generations united will take whole humanity to the fulfilment of the 'ut omnes',[58] of 'that all may be one.' Furthermore, the urgency to establish a social system in favour of the one human family in the future must be set up in today's world. Focolare people are a tiny dot to bring the puzzle of unity while the rest of the world must join hand in hand to complete the whole pattern. The formation of the spirituality of unity might be an alternative to construct a more united bond for our diverse society.

As explained in the previous section, there are some points to generate social cohesion: the quality of social relations, identification, and participation towards the common good.[59] The qualities are depicted in the experiences of concrete actions of unity, in and outside the movement. They are based on the practice by thirteen Focolare Indonesia members and sympathisers who are interviewed for the research.

56 Zainal Bagir, "Mengkaji 'Agama' di Indonesia". *Studi Agama di Indonesia: Refleksi Pengalaman* (Yogyakarta : CRCS UGM, 2016), 15.

57 Maria Voce, "Dialogue with Maria Voce (Emmaus) and Jesús Morán on the Unity among Generations and Each One's Contribution". (www.indi.focolare.org , 2017)

58 A phrase in Latin, derived from a verse in the Farewell Discourse in the Gospel of John (17:21)

59 Schiefer, van der Noll. "The Essentials", 581.

Cohesion elements	Pivotal points	Concrete action and thought
Social Relations (shared by all 13 respondents)	social network, acceptance of diversity, inclusion, recognition	ready to lose own's ideas, be truthful in all situation, no discrimination, respectful toward differences and originality, maintain personal relationship, always listen
Identification (shared by 10 out of 13 respondents)	sense of belonging	doing one's part, do 'the art of loving', family relationship, see others in new eyes, invite God to be present, being aware of equality
Participation toward common good (shared by 11 out of 13 respondents)	sense of responsibility, solidarity, shared value	learn and share together, Golden rule, being one with other people

Table 3.2.
Focolare's way of living to support a cohesive society (from interviews)

The list of the actions and thoughts, according to the members, are meant to be an instrument for unity so that people can learn from one member to another, and from individuals outside the movement and also the non Catholics. It may function as a strategy to familiarise the way of living of Focolare, to normalise the sharing session as part of societal way of communication, and as a tool to contribute to cohesive society. These cohesive elements are the backbone of Focolare everyday life to support the possibility of universal brotherhood amidst the growing conflict due to religious political social differences in Indonesia.

Focolare members demonstrate the social cohesion element in the form of **social relations** which cover the acceptance of diversity, inclusion, and recognition by making no discrimination, respectful toward

differences and originality, then to maintain personal relationships. Utomo,[60] a member from Yogyakarta said, “There is no need to ask what religion we belong to. What we need to do first is build commitment (toward dialogue for unity) by showing up (to dialogue). Then I have to be the first to start to love, or serve”. The efforts to maintain the social relations also lie in the attitude of being ready to lose one's own ideas, be truthful in all situations, and to always listen to the needs of others. Heru explains, “Knowing Focolare makes me able to forgive those who did wrong to me. It means to build better personal relationships by meeting people, respecting them and listening to their opinion.” Bakti too, shares what he experienced in switching off the ego to create unity, “By putting off the ego, I am ready to accept your idea, you are also ready to accept my idea, then we can make a decision.” This readiness to lose one’s self is also endured by Juni who faces conflict with her co-workers and concludes, “So I changed, I made myself more like them, thinking what if I was in their position. It bore fruit, sweet.” She recalls that when she bent her thoughts and saw others' needs better, the result came out well.

The second point is the **identification** of one group so there is a sense of belonging in Focolare. Noel mentioned that doing one’s part means the same feeling of having God among them does depend on the quality of our relationship with God, and with other people. He makes it clear that, “If people do not love one another, God will not be present among them. So, the contribution I can make is doing my part so that there is love from my side.” He suggests that practising the art of loving will create a family relationship, as also shared by other respondents. This identification of always putting the Focolare spirituality into practice, allows them to grow spiritually as well. Debora shares, “I am always reminded to see people with new glasses, take the initiative to start”. She

[60] Utomo is a 56 year old retired, male Catholic, interviewed in person on January 4, 2024.

mentioned the specific teachings that Focolare members have been trying to live by, which is forgetting the wrongs others may do to them, as if they meet them for the first time and new, to always see people only with kindness not through their flaws. Ken who serves in the church congregation adds, talking about how Focolare invites them to always see Jesus in other people.[61] "We always see the presence of Jesus in people even though they are of different religions. From that understanding, me and my wife maintain the unity of husband and wife, then it is transmitted to the children, so it grew, from two people, then with children, and it expanded to become a family. Then it also affects when we serve in the congregation". Living this way, Focolare members define themselves to be ready to love always in every circumstance.

The next element of cohesion shown in Focolare is **the participation toward common good** which covers the sense of responsibility, solidarity of being one with other people, and the shared value of the Golden rule. Some of the ways mentioned by Utomo are doing social humanitarian work by collecting second hand goods and selling them to the poor at a low price, or maintaining relations with people of different faiths by visiting them to build inter-religious dialogue. Bakti affirms the importance of conducting the Golden Rule as in treating others the way you want to be treated. Even during difficult times, Elsa expresses solidarity when one needs to step aside to give space to others so they can come back and be ready to understand each other better. She and Juni claim that " If God is present here, the dialogue will be easier, so give time to the work of God since the result of this unity must be beautiful". This collectiveness is also pointed out by Noel who adds that "When people tend to live together, they start to share and learn from one another and only by having a real dialogue, God is present in the midst.".

61 From the Christian perspective as written in Matthew 25:37-40, Jesus commands that whatever Christians do to the least, it is done to Him. Seeing Jesus in others means doing an act as if doing it for Jesus.

By starting a mature dialogue, people may begin the dialogue for peace and to build harmony.

Unity in a Cohesive Society

Bowen coins the family systems theory which is a theory of human behaviour that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the unit's complex interactions.[62] The connection and reaction of an emotionally driven system points out that a family member's functional abilities are inherently linked to other members. It happens as well for the case of anxiety, and other emotional features. The patterns are repeated over generations since it is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally. The three points derived from Focolare people's habitual way of life may direct the society to have an open heart toward the differences arising nowadays. Every difference needs to be addressed and the nature of Focolare spirituality is an alternate option to enhance unity in society. There is a need to familiarise the concept of social cohesion through spiritual practice for a wider audience in the midst of various conflicts. People begin to create a set of teaching materials not only in school but also formation throughout different platforms of life. Focolare's experience underlines the practice of building unity by the members and sympathisers in Indonesia who belong to different religions.

The level of cohesion can affect how members of the group interact or relate to one another. A cohesive working group fosters interpersonal love, encourages group engagement, and produces positive emotional effects.[63] In order to foster social cohesion, religious beliefs, practices, and religious movements are essential. Focolare movement encourages the

62 Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice.* (New Jersey : Jason Aronson, 1978), 376.

63 Budiyono, Wawan Kokotiasa, Yuni Harmawati and Yoga Feriandi, "Social Cohesion in Society: A Study on Inter-Religious Harmony." *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sociology Education 2017* 1 (2018), 161.

existence of the three primary components of cohesion: the common good, identification, and social bonds. Active participation in religious rituals and communities is found to be a key contributor to greater levels of social cohesion in a recent study conducted in modern Indonesian society.[64] Within religious communities, moral direction, common values, and a collective identity are shaped by religious beliefs and activities. It promotes cooperation, solidarity, and trust among the members of the specific communities, which ultimately influences the attitudes and behaviors of the society. Another study related to religious pluralism's effect on cohesion in Israel suggests that the state support of religious education and the incorporation of religious organizations into public life demonstrate how important religion is in establishing social norms. Religious pluralism has been a key element in determining social cohesion, which comprises acknowledging and embracing a range of religious practices and beliefs within a community.[65]

Both Christian and Muslim respondents recognise their spirituality and religious life become more active since they obtain good deeds from other people that they desire to reciprocate. Amir shares, "After I shared (my experience) there, I felt good about my religiosity. They did not become Muslims, I didn't become a Catholic either. It is so extraordinary to really experience the spirituality of their respective religious traditions (…) Between me and you who are non-Muslims, we are equal in the eyes of God. We come from the same God, why are we busy differentiating?". Another response is given by Ranto, recalling his experience when being stranded abroad due to visa issues. Luckily, he contacted the Focolare friend he knew who got in touch with the Focolare people in the country

64 Loso Judijanto, Siminto, and Rahman, "The Influence of Religious Beliefs and Religious Practices on Social Cohesion in Modern Society in Indonesia" *The Eastasouth Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 1 (03) (Estasouth Institute, 2024),146-148

65 Yaron Katz, "Can Religious Pluralism Influence Governance and Societal Cohesion?". *Journalism and Mass Communication* (Wilmington DE : David Publishing, 2024) 14 (3), 155-164

Ranto visited that eventually helped him. He mentions about the communication and document arrangement he received that enabled him to go back to Indonesia despite the fact they have not met before. It moved him and encouraged him to do kindness to other people as well, as he shares, “Even though you are non-Muslim, if you are good to me, I have to be kind to you. Eventually, I also have to reciprocate. They were doing something good, so I have to do good too. So even though there are differences, they are embraced and respected.” Both are Muslims who know the Focolare movement under different circumstances. Amir, who is eager to learn about other religious spirituality, got to know about Focolare from his close relation with one of Focolare members who belong to the same interfaith network. On the other hand, Ranto was involved in Focolare when his area was hit by a natural disaster in which Focolare collaborated with a humanitarian donation project.

Two Christians from the Protestant churches shared some points they encountered while participating in the Focolare movement. Ken remarks his early years knowing the movement, “We are taught to see people as if we see Jesus in them, so we always see the presence of Jesus even though they are of different religions. It makes us new (people), right? It actually makes it easier for us to relate (and have connection) to (other) people. Before (knowing the movement) we wanted to hate people who hurt us, but because we wanted to see Jesus Christ, we embraced His cross (the suffering of being hurt)”. Another Protestant adherent named Edo notes ”We have to practise. In terms of giving, it has to be real, not just words”. Ken later states that his understanding about seeing Jesus in other people enables him to build relationships with other people, while Edo, a teacher, claims that the culture of giving with concrete action inspires him to give free lessons to the poor in the slum areas of his city.

Another experience is shared by Baskoro, whose relationship with the in-laws got better as he continued to practise love and compassion

deeply, as taught in the movement. “If people do something for other people, there is a reward that we want, this is very common. In Focolare we are taught to be the first to love, without expecting anything in return. Married to a woman whose religion is not the same as me, I wasn't accepted (by her family) for five years. Many times my wife has given up, but the main thing (Focolare) taught me is to always love, (so) I continue to love. After six years of marriage, my in-laws started to acknowledge me.” The last experiences mentioned show how in living the spirituality points of Focolare, either the art of loving or the Golden Rule, members and sympathisers have a better relation with other people.

In relation with people of different faiths, the respondents highlight that the aim of Focolare is none other than the creation of harmony. Utomo argues, “This is closely related to what we live in our country, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. What Focolare is doing is actually not something new, but it's challenging. We need to dare ourselves to get out of our comfort zone and to meet others with a loving spirit.” Amir adds, “Focolare’s spiritual teaching is no different from what I have been doing. (Talking about) religious dialogue, (if they) still think their God and our God are different, (then they) don't understand the essence of dialogue.” Both Utomo and Amir see that the spirituality of Focolare can be a tool to create unity in the society, not so much of uniformity but the acceptance of every difference. Juni also confirms the unity as one family in Focolare, saying “We are always family, even though we are not family by blood, but we are very closely related.” She refers to the shared values they abide by, and that this type of union may contribute concretely for unity to the divided world.

Inspired by Christian values, Focolare people shared values commonly known as mutual love where Christians are encouraged to love other people to the point of getting the love back as the other’s response. From another religious perspective, this way of living is recognised as the Golden Rule where in the Gospel stated the word of Jesus “Do unto others

as you would have them do unto you" from Matt 7:12. As stated by Gabijan,[66] at least 10 different faiths practise the word of the Scripture which is present in all religions. The texts corresponding to the Golden Rule can be found in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. This very command is also lived by many people who belong to different religions that the General Statutes of Focolare acknowledge the use of this teaching for non Christian members.

In the General Statutes article 146 is stated that the opinion of non-Christian religions followers will be sought in the best ways since they also love the spiritual aspect of Focolare and feel a bond with it in the practice of the Golden Rule.[67] From their experience during the first years of knowing Focolare, people are reminded to practise the teachings in the Scripture according to their beliefs. Each one shows their compassionate action toward the others which may not be understood at the beginning but naturally recognised as time gets by. Focolare spirituality, since it aims for unity, highlights the equality of people in front of God therefore the treatment toward everyone must be the same, regardless the maturity of the spirituality and the length of knowing the movement. By practice, the members and sympathisers tend to care for others, putting others' needs before themselves, as in being ready to lose their own ideas, and to build closer relations with other people. All these actions were demonstrated when they first encountered Focolare, and the same gestures are the ones they keep cultivating throughout their time in the movement, let alone upon meeting with new people or people from outside the movement, in their respective environment in different areas in Indonesia.

There are many ways to build unity inspired by Focolare's spirituality which include the art of loving, readiness to lose one's ideas,

66 Gabijan, *Dialogue, Light, and Fire,* 91-92
67 Focolare, *Work of Mary,* 74

being truthful in all situations, performing no discrimination, and being respectful toward differences and originality. Other than that, Focolare people tend to see other people with new eyes, meaning forgetting people's mistakes in the past which is the key to tolerance, being aware of human equality and ready to learn and share together. The other important part is to always be in line with the base premise of the Golden rule, being one with other people and seeing the goodness in other people. This way of living has become a new culture which goes beyond divisions and generates various humanity projects, with dialogue and communion.

More exposure of the spirituality both to intra and inter religious groups, academics and scholars, and many forum group discussions can better shape the contribution of Focolare as a spiritual movement to the community. Concrete life sharing from the members are also pivotal to invite more participants in building unity in the common space in the society. The very way of sharing, as suggested by Laksana,[68] can be in the form of literature reading and review to find the theoretical perspective and detailed information on particular topics; such as religious formation or knowledge. It will later give space to a multidisciplinary approach so not only scholars can learn from it but also public opinion can be directed toward the enrichment of today's reality both in secular and religious meaning. Therefore, the session of learning and sharing together in an interreligious sphere is very urgent to be initiated in various platforms and fields.

Conclusion

Focolare has shown that the spirituality of unity is dearly embraced not only by the members but also the sympathisers. Those who live the spirituality make their best efforts being a concrete witness that

[68] Bagus Laksana, "Menguak Perkara Agama: Perkembangan Studi Agama Kontemporer dan Tantangan di Indonesia". *Studi Agama di Indonesia: Refleksi Pengalaman* (Yogyakarta : CRCS UGM, 2016), 132.

unity is possible. As members of the religious lay movement, each person is foremost a society member first. Many have joined various groups or activities which are not necessarily faith or religion oriented, before and even during participating in Focolare. There are quite similar impressions that the people of Focolare experience which enable them to stay in the movement and strive for the goal of unity. The most mentioned is the warmth circulating among the people that it feels as if they were family. The other point is that spirituality of unity helps them to be more religious not only within themselves but also in being interreligious toward others.

It is then natural for Focolare people to have a more engaged relation with other people since they make efforts in making themselves one with the others, regardless of their economic cultural background and religious affiliation. This social relation and acceptance to all kinds of differences enable them to create an inclusive society that is open for all and identify themselves as an active member that recognizes the plurality in the society. With active participation in their own reality of life, whether it is in the family, in the workplace, in the neighbourhood, in school or university, and even in the parish and their respective religious communities, each one of Focolare people practise mutual moral support or solidarity, communion of good, and shared values of one family. These confirm their participation in creating a cohesive society even in a simple group of family or small scale as in peers in their respective environment. It further contributes to the implementation of mutual understanding, empathy, and respect, among the members and with the people around them.

Unity in the eyes of Focolare does not define uniformity in religious affiliation, political views, or financial achievement, but rather acknowledging the divergence and minimising the gaps, if any, voluntarily. Focolare people apply some values taught by Chiara Lubich the founder to live the Gospel concretely while learning that the same

values are lived by other religious people as well. These points start from 'the art of loving' as in taking care of other people first, treating others like they want to be treated, up to the readiness of losing their own ideas are rooted in the Golden Rule. It may be inspired by the Christian values but the same teachings are practised by most religious and spiritual communities. However there are not many interreligious encounters that provide a session on sharing experience of the practices so every community can learn from each other and enrich one another.

When the sharing of the spiritual experiences is conducted with an open heart and mind, it will enhance harmony among religious people and accelerate the building of a united society. Referring to Fredericks' interreligious friendship,[69] the members and sympathisers of the Focolare movement, both Christians and non-Christians put so much effort in crossing the boundaries of their own traditions. Through symposiums, meetings, and the latest the One Human Family conference in 2024 in Italy,[70] the participants listened attentively, accepted the differences, and revised others' misconceptions heartfully. The five-day event was constructed through friendship and personal engagements in decades, with the preparation of years in the mind and of months physically. As Durkheim claims that a cohesive society must consist of mutual support and collectivity,[71] Focolare demonstrates the interdependence and accompaniment between individuals regardless of their backgrounds; race, social politics, economic, cultural, and religion. They have various meetings where members, sympathisers, even 'newcomers' who share the same dream of living in unity, exchange experience and learn from each other.

The elements of the social cohesion build up the way of life in the Focolare movements that the members and sympathisers participate in

69 Fredericks, "Interreligious Friendship", 160-173.
70 Tanesini, "One Human Family."
71 Durkheim, *Division,* 105.

the realization of unity in their society. Through sharing the same (1) identity of those living the spirituality, regardless of their commitments in the movement, these people work toward the goal which is unity. The feeling of recognition and belonging encourage them to diligently live out the spirituality according to their own position, task, and responsibility in the community. Their involvement in (2) the communion of goods and solidarity, enhance their (3) social interactions quality. These points, as explained by Schiefer and van Der Noll,[72] are sharpened by the constant exercise of 'the art of loving' within themselves and beyond. It is inspired by the Christian teachings yet every human being belongs to any or none religious affiliations, finding it relatable to put into practice these days, amid the conflicts of the world, through dialogue, collaborations, and actions, maternalized in projects and formations.

There is still no significant data obtained from the point of view of Buddhists, Hindus, Confucianists, or followers of indigenous religions or beliefs in Indonesia, due to the limited time of research. Perspectives from people who have not been directly involved in the movement can also be the center of further study and discussion, along with those who are undergoing the formation about the spirituality of unity, viewed from their own religious and cultural traditions. A respondent admitted the challenges in living the spirituality because of the intolerant nature of the society where he lives. A low key approach is needed to face fanaticism from the majority religion by finding the common ground of these differences and cultivating the awareness toward religious moderation and tolerance. Another point is the cultural difference in three cities where Focolare communities are located in Indonesia can be big despite belonging to the same country. Focolare is already a giant melting pot in the world and the diversity of its members in each zone is always a central

72 Schiefer, van der Noll. "The Essentials", 581.

issue. Yet practising the teaching of seeing other people with new eyes as in forgetting their flaws and shortcomings is a challenge in order to start again in living the spirituality of unity continuously.

The relationship between the members of Focolare Indonesia with those of non Christians are built on personal rapports, slowly enhancing the involvement from multidimensional groups in the respective areas where there is Focolare community, growing up to their surrounding areas. It is essential to the building of structural cohesion as stated by Moody and White that the more actors and relations involved, the stronger the cohesion will be.[73] New settings and forums involving representatives of various religious and cultural backgrounds will encourage informal formation to familiarise the concept of unity and one human family in Indonesia. Creative methods to reach out the young people to get more involved in the idea of a united world have to go hand in hand with collaborations among scholars and religious groups. Not necessarily faith oriented, but given Indonesia as a religious country may mean that approaches to unity can be carried out in religious communities and forums, each embracing the presence of other religious traditions.

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[73] Moody, White, "Structural Cohesion", 103–127.

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