

**World Youth Day
“Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39)**

“Rise Up” Meeting – Integral Ecology

Speech of Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement

Rita: Margaret, may I ask you a question, Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, whom Pope Francis invites us to look at these days, is a woman who comes from your land. In your opinion, what does Mary have to say today?

Response of Margaret Karram:

Yes, Mary lived in Nazareth, right next to the city where I was born, a city called Haifa, which is in northern Galilee, in Israel. I wanted to tell you that ever since I was young, I often went to the grotto of the Annunciation, the place where the angel appeared to Mary, to ask her to help me. I used to ask myself so many questions about my future: what contribution could I make to society and even, what contribution could I make to the world, and for this I used to pray with great insistence.

I would also go to the Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, near my home, and there too I would ask Mary to make me understand what she wanted me to do in life. Normally when we are young, we want to have many different experiences and then choose something, but in a way I knew from the start what I wanted to do in life. I wanted to bring peace to my country, to help people and society solve the problems regarding justice, poverty, human rights.

I was inspired by Mary. and I saw her as a model. She had accompanied Jesus throughout his life; this son who was so special for his time, for society. She believed in him, even going against the mentality of that era, as a woman!

And even though it seems from what we read in the Gospels that Mary spoke very little, today, together with you, I would like to imagine what she might say to each one of us.

Mary would tell us that every person is important. She would tell us that we are unique, precious, and that each person is to be loved and respected for who they are. I really think that what the world needs most today is to put human relationships back at the center.

Mary would tell us: 'Be silent', listen, try to establish relationships with whoever is next to you. One of Mary's main characteristics was precisely that she knew how to be silent, how to listen. She would tell us to seek an inner space in which we can meet with Jesus and find the courage and the enthusiasm to go out to meet others, to get to know them, to understand them deeply. Then truly we will no longer be alone, because we will build relationships that are real and true.

Mary would say to us: "Go, get up, don't wait!" Just as she did with her cousin Elizabeth. Even though she was not really well herself, because Mary was already expecting Jesus, she set out and went to help her. The desire to support and to love Elizabeth, was very strong in her.

Mary would say to us: "Go towards those who are suffering the most, those who need your help, and not only towards those you like. She would tell us to care for our 'common home', for creation, not just for ourselves, but for future generations.

Mary would say to us: 'Share what you are, and what you are living, with your friends. Don't keep everything inside, but speak about what makes you suffer, about what makes you happy, about your desires, your plans... because sometimes by ourselves we don't realize the beautiful things that are happening to us. We need others to make us discover the beautiful things that we have and that happen to us!

To sum up, Mary would tell us: "NEVER doubt God's love, because He has thought of what is best for you, for your life!".

And I want to conclude with something a Jewish friend told me: "Nothing happens by chance". In Hebrew the word 'chance' is 'mikré' but if I pronounce it backwards it means 'God embroiders!'; that is: God is taking care of each one of us, as the prophet Isaiah says: "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands." (*Is* 49:16).