

# Editorial



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## Many readers will be familiar

with Dr Mohammad Shomali.

He has become a familiar figure at Focolare events, especially the Mariapolis, the summer

gatherings of the Focolare. Dr Shomali is Director of the Islamic Centre of England, which is based in London. The article 'Wings of Unity' on page 4 reports on his recent trips to the Sophia Institute in the Focolare town of Loppiano and the extraordinary friendship developing between the Islamic seminary of England and Sophia.

In April this year Mohammad brought a group of 27 seminarians to stay overnight at the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City. He wanted his students to meet the Focolare which he first encountered in Manchester twenty years ago. It was a moment of God for us all. A celebration of two families coming together and becoming one family. I was particularly struck by the questions of three students I was having a meal with on the Saturday evening: 'What is the main essence of Christianity? How does it affect your life? What does it feel like when you are in God's will?' It was a wonderful dialogue.

I have been very impressed with Mohammad's stance on interfaith dialogue. He has shown that real dialogue involves more than just being in meetings together. It means 'walking together with God'. He has lived for a few days at Ampleforth Abbey to get to know the Benedictine community first hand. He also takes every opportunity to stay with Focolare communities whenever he can for a few days. Now the link with Sophia Institute is an opportunity for an in-depth study of Islam and Christianity, which has the courage to look at theological differences as well as what unites the two faiths.

**Paul Gateshill**

*New City is an expression of the Focolare Movement, which takes as its inspiration Jesus' prayer to the Father "May they all be one" (Jn 17: 21). Over the last seven decades Focolare has grown from a small community of around five hundred in Trent, northern Italy, to a world-wide community of several hundred thousand people of all ages and backgrounds. It has also spread beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic Church, to many other Christian traditions, to other faiths and people of good will.*

*New City works to promote mutual understanding and respect through dialogue. Together with our readers we want to discover how to 'build bridges' in the different sectors of society and in personal life. We are convinced that dialogue, based on mutual love, is the only way to build a more united world which is based on universal values such as justice, equality, truth and peace.*