

Press Release – May 27, 2016

## **An economy for all, rich and poor**

*An international congress held in the Philippines from 25 - 29 May, 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the launching of the Economy of Communion.*

It was on May 29, 1991 that Chiara Lubich launched the Economy of Communion (EoC) at Sao Paolo, Brazil. Noting the great social differences in this metropolis, where favelas are like a crown of thorns that surround its skyscrapers, Lubich gave birth to a reality that soon involved businessmen, workers, students, academics, researchers, rich and poor.

Luigino Bruni, the current coordinator of the EoC claims that the poor are still its focal point. He says: *“How can I ever forget Chiara’s words, ‘Always remember that I have launched the EoC for the poor’, which she repeated several times when I worked with her! Today, we are ethically and spiritually bound to place the poor and the marginalized at the centre of our economic, political and social systems. The primary aim of the Economy of Communion is to respond to the cry for justice of the poor”*.

The poor were among the first ones to witness the Focolare Movement’s experience in Trent during the second world war, when Chiara Lubich and her first companions - themselves living on humble means - invited the poor for meals and shared with them the goods received.

The same spiritual and material communion is still typical of those involved in the EoC today. They share the same vision of a global economy that strives to fight poverty and inequality. The primary commitment of the *entrepreneur of communion* is to establish the right relationship between the persons involved in the business and the business itself.

“Economy of Communion, an economy for all” is the international event organized to mark the 25 years of the EoC. It takes place at Tagatay in the Philippines from 25-29 May 2016. During this event the 250 participants will evaluate the progress made and discuss future global plans which include:

- establishing **an international network of “business incubators”** to create opportunities and resources within the EoC industrial parks and make them available in order to support projects, especially those planned by young entrepreneurs;
- setting up an **Observatory on Poverty**, to ensure that poverty is dealt with according to the EoC spirit, and that the various areas of poverty are identified;
- increasing the number of **Lab-Schools**: technical, professional and business training workshops geared especially to train youth.

It is not by chance that Asia has been chosen as the site for this particular event. *“Here we find similar situations to those encountered by Chiara when she went to Brazil in 1991. But we also find wealth, youth, entrepreneurship. The link between the creation of wealth and poverty is very evident. The EoC continues to exist as long as it keeps them both together”* says Luigino Bruni. *“In fifteen years’ time Asia’s GDP will be double that of the United States and Western Europe. So the world’s future depends on the type of economy developed in Asia. Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the EoC here means recognizing that its future presence in the Asian continent is crucial”*.

While this event takes place in the Philippines, other conferences are held in various parts of the world. [On Saturday, May 28, at 21.00hrs Manila time](#), internet live streaming connects various countries: Bolivia (Inter-American School of Business), Italy (Lionello Bonfanti Industrial Park in Loppiano), Mexico (Entrepreneurs Conference in Puebla), Slovakia (a meeting of entrepreneurs from Slovakia and the Czech Republic). Other EoC groups are expected to participate in this direct link-up; among them there are groups from Brazil, Guatemala, the Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Panama, Portugal, Russia, Spain and Uganda. Luigino Bruni speaks of this event as *“a silver wedding anniversary feast”*. He says, *“In a world that lacks the ability to celebrate, the Economy of Communion seems as the miracle of the multiplication of bread for the poor, and also as the wine miracle at the wedding feast where wine is poured for the poor and for everyone; it is the miracle that celebrates the feast of universal brotherhood”*.

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