

Opening Address by Laurence Crowley, Governor of the Bank of Ireland

I would like to welcome you to the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business. The title of this conference is 'Humanising the Global Economy: towards an Economy of Communion.' In the world of geo-politics we are well used to the expression 'post 9/11.' Well, the world of business too speaks of its own 'post' scenarios when we now talk of the climate of change in the post-Enron, or post-Parmalat contexts. You could say ethics has come back into fashion. But of course ethics is not or should not be just a case of keeping up with the current fashion.

So when I was initially asked to open this conference I was intrigued by the title. The veteran management writer, Henry Mintzberg, in a recent interview in the *Financial Times* observed that when the Berlin Wall collapsed it was not capitalism that triumphed but 'balance.' He remarks that "in the late 1980's, the west still understood the importance of balance between governments, companies" and what he calls "the social sector" – mutual societies, co-operatives and the like." The rest is history and we can see this in the great corporate scandals. Prof Mintzberg points out that "Enron is not the problem. It's the tip of the iceberg that sits above the water. Enron is the illegal corruption. The real problem is the legal corruption."

There's a need to regain the balance. Reading about the Economy of Communion project that involves over 800 businesses worldwide helped me realise that the originator of the concept, Chiara Lubich, has a very important insight into how we can recover that equilibrium in personal, social, political and economic life. The Global Economy is at the service of the human person. The human person and profit do not necessarily conflict and it's up to Business Schools like the Smurfit Graduate to be pioneers in this field of research. The innovative insight of the Economy of Communion venture is to work within the market economy and as the title suggests, humanise it and develop it to the full measure and greatness of the human person so that it's the market that serves us and not we who serve the market.

The President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi recently said about this whole project

rather than an analysis of things which already exist, the Economy of Communion is a truly prophetic message. And what makes this aspect so fascinating is the fact that it is a spiritual movement which is carrying out great things, all founded on absolutely essential principles.

I think this is an important point to understand in terms of the proposal of a new paradigm as in the Economy of Communion (and the other speakers here this morning will elaborate on the characteristics of this model) and that is, that it's not a reactionary proposal in terms of the way things are. Too many times in history revolutions have occurred for seemingly worthwhile ideals but were fundamentally mistaken in their presuppositions about economic action and without an adequate understanding of what it means to be a fulfilled human person.

Every concept of economic life presupposes a particular culture, a certain vision of the world and a perspective on the human person. There is a climate of change in terms of corporate

culture and we now hear of terms like 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR). This is the challenge and opportunity that we have in our grasp: to build a style of economic action based on sound business and personalistic principles. Our speakers and participants at today's conference come from different parts of the world, from Brazil, Europe, UK and Ireland, for example. So this is in a sense already a global event. It is to my knowledge the first time, in the English speaking world at least, for a symposium of this nature on the Economy of Communion, to take place in a Business School.

Joining us also this morning will be Chiara Lubich, the originator of the whole insight into an Economy of Communion. She is a recipient of the UNESCO prize for Education to Peace and was awarded the Council of Europe Human Rights prize. She has been conferred with Honorary Doctorates in the Human Sciences, Philosophy and Economics.

It is indeed a great privilege for me as Governor of the Bank of Ireland to launch this conference on 'Humanising the Global Economy: towards an Economy of Communion.'