

CHRISTLICHE BEWEGUNGEN UND GEMEINSCHAFTEN **MITEINANDER FÜR EUROPA**
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER FOR EUROPE**
COMMUNAUTÉS ET MOUVEMENTS CHRÉTIENS **ENSEMBLE POUR L'EUROPE**
MOVIMENTI E COMUNITÀ CRISTIANI **INSIEME PER L'EUROPA**
WSPÓLNOTY I RUCHY CHRZESCJANSKIE **RAZEM DLA EUROPY**
ХРИСТИАНСКИЕ ОБЩИНЫ И ДВИЖЕНИЯ **ВМЕСТЕ ДЛЯ ЕВРОПЫ**
MOVIMENTOS Y COMUNIDADES CRISTIANOS **JUNTOS POR EUROPA**
MOVIMENTOS E COMUNIDADES CRISTÁS **JUNTOS PELA EUROPA**
ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΕΣ ΚΙΝΗΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΕΣ **ΜΑΖΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΥΡΩΠΗ**



Day Meeting “Together for Europe 2012”

Brussels, 12 May 2012

Presentation of “*Together for Europe*”

by Maria Voce

(General greetings)

I would like to focus my brief address on three points:

- Who we are
- Our history
- What contribution we want to give and can offer to Europe

1. What is *Together for Europe*?

The Movements and Communities committed in *Together for Europe* represent a richness because of their great diversity. There are no two alike. They are different in the specific contribution they bring to society, in their expansion, structure and way of living the same Gospel message.

The common inspiring spark generally derives from an attraction towards the Gospel which is deepened and, especially, lived-out from a calling – as we Christians would say – that is, by putting ourselves in direct contact with Jesus, following Him, being inspired by Him in our actions and thinking, putting His proclamation of the Good News into practice with each person, emphasizing it by especially going in-depth in particular phrases He said or his way of acting.

The multi-coloured wealth of these movements is manifested in their diverse commitments in society: in the thousands of concrete solutions they offer, which are valid because tested and contagious, fruit of the gifts freely received from Heaven, their Charisms.

2. Our history

What is the unifying bond behind such diversities and what comprises this original collaboration?

This being “*Together*” is certainly not fruit of planning or an organized group; it is not even a new superstructure. Everything we do in common begins from our relationship, from an agreement and the desire to work for common goals.

I’ll mention a few experiences we have lived together which still today are the basis of our deep collaboration. They were not programmed, but they happened, so to say, in an unexpected way under Someone else’s direction, Someone who is invisible to human eyes but actively present and operative in history.

In October 1999, on occasion of the signing of the “Joint Declaration on the doctrine of Justification” in Augsburg, some leaders of Movements and communities – Germans and Italians, Evangelical-Lutherans and Catholics – met together for the first time; among whom Chiara Lubich, foundress and first president of the Focolare Movement, whom I am representing now. They remained strongly impressed by a fact: following Jesus himself made them discover that they had the same origins and the same goals.

If Chiara Lubich was spurred by the charism of unity, specific gift given to her by God, to build communion between different charisms, she found a similar desire of full adhesion in other leaders of Communities or Movements. How can we forget – besides all those who are present here today – our big brother Helmut Nicklas, who is now in Heaven with Chiara and certainly both of them are still here to inspire us?

The conviction emerged that they had to go ahead together, not with a pre-established programme, but each time trying to understand, through circumstances, what God was inspiring them to do as a group.

Very soon a demand arose: the different origins, cultures and traditions, our membership in various Churches and traditions, our mutual stories, made us feel the need for reconciliation.

In this way, during a very profound moment, we asked each other for forgiveness for the existing prejudices which have been fostered throughout history, and for all negative reciprocal attitudes or deeds. It was an act of purification of our memory and one of complete mutual forgiveness.

These strong experiences led us to seal a pact of Christian love in order to give a solid base to our communion and to spread, through our *Togetherness* and our activities, a constructive spirit of solidarity, justice, peace and brotherhood.

This alliance is a strong, real and always effective bond, because it is always renewed and communicated without excluding anyone.

Other important experiences were the two meetings held in Stuttgart in 2004 and 2007, with thousands of participants from all over Europe, and with a hundred parallel meetings in many countries.

For the vast majority of the participants, the most important fruit was a new way of seeing Europe. Before, nearly everyone – as the majority of European citizens – were at least sceptical about a unified Europe and the possibility of a real and productive cohesion coming out of it. That experience lived out among us, which was profound, joyful and rich in unity in diversity, bore in many a passion for the continent's unity: Europe seen as the common home of peoples and of the European minorities. The commitment to foster a positive history of our Europe became a deeply-rooted and profound conviction in us.

3. Our contribution to Europe today

From here emerge the contributions which *Together for Europe* can offer to the life of the continent, placing itself as a seed of hope wherever life in common may be in danger and as a source of a greater unifying force.

While we notice, here and there, the rightful need to give value to one's own local or regional identity and to save one's own culture, in some fields it seems that fragmentation is being accentuated, that the world today experiences interdependence more than ever and the various types of shocks felt in one place, far or near as they may be, affect the whole planet, just like in a *tsunami*. We talk, already on a global level, about the crisis of values in all sectors: the family, politics, society... but especially of the worldwide economic crisis. And this situation has certainly not left our Europe unscathed!

Yet it's my conviction that the real root cause of all of this lies fundamentally in a crisis of relationships.

On a personal level, beyond groups and nations, we must come out from our individualism to meet the other person; to intensify our relationship with every person that we encounter, basing it on the Gospel, and contributing, personally and all together, to the good or the healing of that piece of humanity we belong to. Try to construct, as Pope Benedict XVI says: "a Europe concerned not only with people's material needs but also with their moral and social, spiritual and religious needs, since all these are genuine requirements of our common humanity and only in this way can work be done effectively, integrally and fruitfully for man's good."¹

We feel that *Together* is precisely the subject able to inspire individuals or associations in their commitment to build a free, reconciled, democratic, united and

fraternal Europe: not an “old” continent, but a vibrant and lively continent that discovers it has a mission to fulfil and that it can be a gift for the rest of humanity.

In an undeveloped measure, this is what ‘Together for Europe’ already does:

- It “produces” common good. Its members, in trying to live Christian love, discover the gift of the other person and are ready to make sacrifices for the good of the community: the only sure base for a society where each and every person is fulfilled and happy.

- It involves a number of citizens in the commitment to give rise to concrete reciprocity. It sets in motion its specific professional, family and cultural competencies in thousands of everyday occasions and in the various environments of society. It also offers proposals for solutions to various challenges of today: the protection of life and the family and protection of the environment; a moderate and fair economy; brotherhood and peace; the construction of a harmonious and consistent society in cities.

- Having experienced these fruits, it promotes a “culture of communion,” which is always more necessary. It paves the way so that individuals and different peoples may welcome one another, to get to know one another, reconcile with each other, learn to respect and to support one another.

- I would say – and I conclude – that *Together for Europe* is a fascinating undertaking: we have the possibility, also through today’s event, to bear witness to men and women of our time that living on earth in a spirit of communion opens up a future of brotherhood and peace to individuals, peoples, our continent and to the whole of humanity.

I wish that today everyone, myself included, can experience these effects personally because of the mutual love among all those present, and that this evening, in greeting one another, we can leave here as a European people – even though small in dimension – but united in its great diversity and therefore bearers of this experience, on the frontline in the construction of a “new” Europe.

¹ Benedict XVI, *Speech at the Compostela airport*, 6 November 2010, during the Pope’s welcoming ceremony.

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