

## FRATERNITY THE FOUNDING VALUE FOR EUROPE (2004)

The French Revolution sought to base our future on the three-word motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

The nineteenth century was the era of the fight for Liberty, for Freedom from the established authorities (empires, kingdoms, the Church); the twentieth century turned to Equality, at the risk of mistaking uniformity for justice and nationalism for respect for the common good.

But, for lack of Fraternity, the bright ideal of Liberty and Equality combined led to many armed conflicts.

Jacques ATTALI (a former adviser to François MITTERAND) states that “in this twenty-first century we must develop Fraternity between individuals and between peoples if we are to avoid socio-economic conflicts on a world scale.”

Sharing this conviction, VIVANT electronic sets out below the Concluding Document of the Conference of European Mayors held in Innsbruck on 10 November 2001, which brought together representatives of 28 European countries, together with extracts from the address by Chiara LUBICH (foundress in Italy of the Focolare Movement) to the Mayor and civil and religious authorities of Rimini (Italy).

### A. CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MAYORS AT INNSBRUCK (2001) CONCLUDING DOCUMENT

We, the mayors participating in the Innsbruck Conference, coming from 28 European nations<sup>1</sup>, affirm our commitment to become protagonists in the new phase of reflections for the building of Europe which will open with the European Council in Laeken.

Though Europe has always held **freedom and equality among peoples** and states among its fundamental values, they need to be continuously re-examined in their political dimension. Even then, these values **alone will not ensure the fulfilment of the European project**. We are firmly convinced that the only way that project will be fulfilled is by assuming **brotherhood as a political category to help us build Europe**.

**The city** is the first place where this new political commitment for Europe can be realized. Citizens live in close and reciprocal relations in a city, where they have personal, immediate and continuous access to its institutions.

The problems and dramas challenging the continent make an immediate impact on the daily life of a city, and must first be addressed there. **The political dimension of the citizen begins in the city Hall** - a gymnasium for the exercise of democracy - where new requests for competence, responsibility and solidarity are faced.

As the base element in the multiple levels of government, **municipalities become an example for a more democratic and participatory Europe**.

In order to grow together in the awareness of belonging to Europe, we mayors commit ourselves to establishing our work in a **constant dialogue** with the citizens, involving them in city projects.

What is more, our commitment must be directed towards everyone in local positions of power in order to set up a **formal and informal network of relations** through which we can share ideas, problems, experience, projects and resources.

We are convinced that the most authentic political meaning of the current construction of Europe is that it represents the aspiration to realize a true unity which enhances its diverse identities. Beginning in the municipality and then running through all political forms, this dynamic runs through the history of Europe despite its dark periods.

**A Europe united in fraternity**, with its resources and experience, cannot fail to serve those who demand **justice**, co-operation and peace in the world's most vulnerable areas.

<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.

## **B. CHIARA LUBICH'S ADDRESS**

(edited extracts)

The idea of universal brotherhood is not new, Chiara Lubich points out. Great personalities have always defended it.

Gandhi said: "**The golden rule is to be the friend of the world and to regard the human family as one.**"

Martin Luther King said in a celebrated speech : "I have a dream: that one day men ... will realise that they have been created to be brothers ... and **brotherhood will figure on the agenda of the man of business and become the motto of him who governs.**"

After the events of 11 September 2001, the Dalai Lama wrote to his disciples: "For us the cause of these events is clear ... We have forgotten the most basic truths ... **We are all one.** This message has been completely neglected by the human race. Failure to remember this truth is the sole cause of hate and of warfare."

As for Jesus of Nazareth ... he **pulled down the walls** set up between those who are "equal" and those who are "different" - **between friends and enemies.** (...)

So it is that the idea of fraternity began to make its mark on history. It makes its call to everyone, including **politicians**. This was the message of the French Revolution, which, by its motto "**Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**", summarised the great political project of modern times - although it ascribed to these three principles a somewhat restricted meaning. And if Liberty and Equality have, up to a point, been secured in the democratic institutions of numerous countries, Fraternity remains a **dead letter**.

One author has affirmed that: "The lesson of the 20th century is that the future lies in the acceptance of the three words ... Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, **purified of ideological interpretations.**" (...)

Today, the world **tends towards unity**. Unity is the sign of the times, as numerous religious, social and political factors show. This unity toward which the world is moving is a universal, global unity, to meet the situations, demands and principal characteristics of the reality of our times.

Means of communication bring together people who are geographically remote. Choices made by a young European may well be influenced by what is happening in Asia or Africa. Nothing is really foreign any more, since we look at, and are informed about, each others' lives.

Furthermore, economic and financial globalisation renders **all of us interdependent**: for what occurs in one place has immediate material repercussions in numerous other places.

Certain problems can be addressed only by humanity as a whole: no nation can address them on its own. Just think of the major issues facing the international community: environment, ecology, development and food, genetic engineering problems.

The era of individual rights, of the rights of a single category, is over. We have entered the era of the rights and obligations of peoples and of humanity as a whole.

Our world has really become a village - **a new and complex village**, but still a village. Today, humanity lives as a group, a small group. But unlike the small groups of the past, the world has not developed categories of thought that support respect for its diversity, even though its fundamental unity has come to pass. Traditional concepts of race, religion and culture, and the State, can not deal with the complexity of the situation. (...)

**The category of thought that can recognise both the unity and the diversity towards which humanity is moving today is Fraternity.** (...)

Fraternity is hence the ideal for today. It is the only factor that will bring about that spiritual unity which alone will guarantee political and economic unity. But how is it to be revived? The tools exist for bringing fraternity into the world; it is only necessary to recognise them.

One such **tool** is provided by the appearance during the 20th century of dozens of **movements** within civil society: religious, humanitarian, for solidarity. (...) Their full potential has not been fully explored; but it soon will be. This phenomenon is not purely European, but worldwide; it creates networks across nations and cultures, while respecting their diversity. It is like a premonition or preview of what this world, beginning with our continent, could become: the home of nations (or of regions).

Like all processes that one day will explode, this development has matured silently. These movements **affect** the civil domain and propose **political and economic** paths. (...) They **encourage dialogue** between people of different religions - Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jew, Muslim, Sikh...

Such dialogue is facilitated by the "**Golden Rule**", found in the great world religions, which may be expressed: "**do unto others as you would like them to do unto you**" (Luke 6:31), which ultimately means "love your neighbour." (...)

It is in Fraternity that this Golden Rule may now find its expression and become the foundation, the cement of European society and its economy. (...)

This dialogue has already succeeded in bringing about fraternal relations **beyond** our continent: relations, to take the Focolare movement as an example, with lay movements that share the humanist ideal; or with the members of a modern Buddhist movement, 6 million strong, in Tokyo; or with a Muslim Afro-American movement with 2 million members. In this last case, the dialogue was characterised by opening up 40-odd mosques in the USA and inviting everybody to express their convictions and experiences and to present examples of fraternity in practice, such as the pilot cities built on the concept of "Economy of Communion", much praised by Mr Prodi. (...)

A person who sees himself, or herself, as Fraternal and takes up **politics**, does so in **response** to a social need, to a local problem, to the sufferings of his or her fellows, to the requirements of the time - and FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

The job of such a person is one of listening and entering into dialogue, (...) of looking on others with respect, trying to understand their commitment and seeking solutions that benefit all; respecting not only those who vote the same way or are members of the same party, but also the others, the adversaries. (...) Open to the reality of all persons, one may leave particularisms behind and discover a true political reality.

The politician who sees himself, or herself, as Fraternal will not remain impassive in the face of the often bitter conflicts that divide politician and citizen, but will take the first step to re-establish communication. (...)

Creating personal relations where they did not exist or had been ruptured may serve to unfreeze the political process. (...) Such initiatives may become an **authentic innovative policy** to help overcome prejudices and party constraints which so often paralyse politicians by locking them into sterile adversarial positions. (...)

However, **the path to Fraternity is a stony one**. (...) How often does political action not cause suffering: solitude, abandonment, misunderstanding, sometimes even among those who are close to us? Which person who is engaged in politics has never felt bitterness, marginalisation or betrayal to the point of being tempted to give the whole thing up?

**Yet Fraternity in politics is not impossible to achieve:** consider the life of Joseph LUX, former vice-premier of the Czech Republic, who knew how to earn the admiration of political friend and foe alike; or Domenico MANGANO, whose political career called him to serve his fellow-citizens as a local administrator in Viterbe (Italy); (...) and there are many others. (...)

## C. THE EUROPE OF FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Through the construction of Europe, war has been avoided and peace secured for more than 50 years. Alas! this is not the case in other continents - even in the age of globalisation.

The emergence of a Europe endowed with strong social security and a dynamic economy may serve as a model for globalisation.

To enable this to happen, and to avoid becoming the victims of commerce, it is urgent to build a SOCIAL EUROPE.

**Fraternity must become the basis of European exchanges** of all kinds, and be upheld and encouraged by fair and effective institutions.

VIVANT's socio-economic model, which **relieves work of the burden of taxation**, proposes to create the conditions for a further **flowering of mankind**. Not only does it guarantee a basic income for everyone; it also ensures a **structural (and fraternal) recognition** of every human being.

It is the **Fraternity in these exchanges** that must be upheld as the founding value for Europe and source of Social Capital, so that life is really worth living in Europe - and, we should hope, elsewhere.

The Editor

## D. SOCIAL CAPITAL: A PRODUCTIVE FORCE FOR THE ECONOMY

### And what if we did nothing?

“Who said that man was **made for tightening nuts and bolts**, filing documents or tapping eternally on the computer keyboard? ... **Man was made to live** ... and living means inspiration as well as expiration, action and non-action.

“If idleness is considered the number one enemy in our civilisation, it is because the individual who is idle neither produces nor consumes. And **our market society** has come to recognise only those two rôles ‘produce and consume’, without which it teeters and falls. According to the sacred ethic of consumption, even leisure must be active. You must tinker in the house, hang-dive, garden, jog, shoot the rapids ... do, and still do more - that is to say (decoded): buy and consume. We think we’re active; actually we are ‘activated’...

“That goes for the economically secure of the west, even children in nursery school; and for the slave labour of the mines and factories of countries politely called ‘developing’...

“**But by being active, activated, we lose touch with the essentials.** Leisure, which Thomas Hobbes called ‘the mother of philosophy’, and ‘letting go’ are vital for the individual to recover his centre.”

Michel PIQUEMAL, *Words of idleness, and what if we did nothing?*, Albin Michel, 1996.

### What is social capital?

**It is a capital of trust and mutual respect**, which accords to everyone the right to exist and to a social and economic activity adapted to one’s aspirations and possibilities.

The basic income is the institutional pillar that **creates the space** for producing social capital.

Such production has an **ecological effect**, for it is impossible to treat nature ecologically unless society’s social fabric develops according to the principles of respect.

So long as society is riven with tensions and the right to exist is not recognised concretely, social capital will be lacking and respect for nature cannot develop.

Social capital facilitates commercial and non-commercial exchanges fostering an **economy of needs**.

Production of social capital by each individual increases the sum of social capital and therefore the economy as well, for it **brings the ideas and initiatives of everyone to the market place**.

### Some reflections

#### Unpaid work

This is **undervalued**. In our society paid work is considered more highly. And that is not fair! VIVANT recognises all work (and all handicaps), all human activity, as the source of Social Capital.

#### What about the unpaid who do nothing?

#### **What is there to prove they do nothing?**

In the place where they live, in their own group, in the relationships they form, they act - if only by just being there:

- as human beings (social capital)

- as consumers (economic capital).

### Freedom

**Is it the privilege of the privileged to decide** that someone does not know how to choose and is not entitled to an unconditional basic income?

To confuse the choice to live in another way with laziness, to recognise the right to a decent existence only in return for a 'proper' classified job, is to fail, for the sake of a financial criterion, to recognise the human and social value of the individual ...

**VIVANT stands, not for laziness, but for freedom of choice.** And this freedom must not be compromised by administrative or other conditions.

## **E. THE CONQUEST OF CHOICE**

These days, **if one is unemployed, one is judged** because one does not work; the worker is increasingly seen as **privileged**, and the pensioner either as one who has been rejected by society too early or as one who has, at last, gained **freedom**.

In each case the common factor is FREEDOM - or its absence.

**Choice is the enjoyment of creativity**, but creativity is subjected to the condition of an income which leads many to make compromises in order to protect their future.

One may well ask what remains of freedom and the possibility of realising oneself in one's work.

Obliged to look after one's survival and one's standard of living, one is forced to adapt oneself without finding the way of taking pleasure in the activity one has to endure.

**One is happy when one knows one can** do something, and thereby feel recognised and of use in producing, in managing the socio-economic balance by one's own political actions, in cultural exchange, in developing a variety of family and leisure activities.

Self-realisation of the individual may come by means of a myriad of occupations.

For us human beings it is not the activities that are wanting, but **recognition, freedom and financial security**.

If earning money is at the centre of all activity and the only objective of education is preparation for paid employment, **SOCIAL CAPITAL is bound to fall dramatically** while levels of **anxiety and violence** are bound to rise.

And if society cannot do better than devise **awkward systems** that encourage fraud, the State as subject to the rule of law is put in danger and our children's future in jeopardy.

Creating **entitlement** to the whole gamut of human activities is to grant equality of opportunity, which should not be confused with simplistic arithmetical egalitarianism.

It is necessary to **develop those qualities and talents** that machines will never be able to acquire-rare and human qualities and talents.

A guaranteed basic income provides the individual with the basic protection needed so that one has the **TIME** to develop oneself - in **tranquillity** and with the ability to choose one's activities and one's education.

To increase choice and favour self-realisation:-

is not to punish those **who choose** to work hard and produce wealth;

nor is it to punish, or smother with guilt, those **who choose** to work in a less conventional way - for it is not perverse to prefer a different way of realising oneself;

it is to dissociate work from income by granting a universal allowance;

it is to **recognise the value of time** by guaranteeing an income simply for existing - for every choice is ultimately a choice of use of time;

it is to implement an economic policy deliberately aimed at **increasing income** rather than increasing work shorn of human dignity - for with limited income where is choice?

it is to remove from work and leisure the element of **guilt**, which reduces choice and which should rather be limited to the major moral categories which are of the domain of law and justice;

it is to refuse to impose **conditions** on entitlement to basic income, so as to conserve freedom of choice;

it is to adopt educational and employment policies deliberately aimed at increasing **multidimensional talents**.

We believe that those are the necessary conditions for the victory of Freedom.

It means that human activities may cover a **wide spectrum** and thus permit choice and enjoyment of life - for these are the antidotes for boredom, violence and moroseness.

**Man has hope when he believes he can achieve.**

Empowerment and being able to take initiatives will bring about a new way of life for the 21st century and safeguard a strong State subject to the rule of law that promotes humanism and social capital.

Jean-Paul BRASSEUR  
(Co-ordinator for Wallonia)

This text is inspired by the book by B. JARROSSON and M. ZARKA, *From the Defeat of Work to the Conquest of Choice*, Dunod.