

Foundations of Communion among Christian Movements and Communities

(11 November 2009)

Since 1999 some leaders of Christian Movements and Communities felt urged by the Holy Spirit to embark on a journey of communion, united in the name of Jesus. The various stages of the journey travelled thus far make us think that He was the one to guide us, and at the same time they indicate the characteristics of such a communion also for the future.¹

I. Spirit

1. The Gospel led us to make a pact of reciprocal love according to Jesus' new commandment,² foundation of our communion.
2. Reciprocal love allows us to experience the presence of Christ as He promised: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."³ This is the real meaning of each meeting or activity in common: Jesus in our midst.
3. One of the effects of such love is that of highlighting the charism of the other, the gift of God of which and for which each Movement and Community lives. It is a love that is ready to "carry each other's burdens"⁴ and to "consider the other person to be better than yourself."⁵ This makes them live as people who are reconciled: forgiving and asking for forgiveness, both in personal relationships and in those among Movements and Communities.
4. This love helps to overcome prejudices and to open heart and soul to welcome other people's experiences in the Spirit. It creates unselfish and fraternal relations among persons of different Movements and Communities.⁶

¹ "The music score is written in heaven. When we meet together, we want to listen to the Holy Spirit together. He will help us to understand how to go ahead." Chiara Lubich at the first meeting of leaders of Movements and Communities from various Churches (Ottmaring, 31st October 1999).

"We have lived great, historic moments. They are like signposts that will indicate the way also in the future. We must be faithful to what God has made us live and tell this story to others." Helmut Nicklas, one of the pioneers of this communion, a few days before his death (Munich, August 2007).

² See Jn 13:34.

³ Mt 18:20.

⁴ See Gal 6:2.

⁵ See Ph 2:3.

⁶ "Europe of the Spirit begins when people open their hearts to the Word of God, that is when they find their hearts once more and start living for others and not for themselves. The Movements, made up of men and women who have received the gift of the Gospel, communicate this life to Europe. Many are the consequences individually and collectively: they are the fruits of the Spirit." Andrea Riccardi at Stuttgart 2004

5. Each Movement or Community has its own specific aim. We could say that the charisms God has entrusted to them are His answer to the needs of our times.⁷ Each Movement casts a light born from the Holy Spirit as an answer to a particular 'night' of our epoch.⁸
6. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes how the relationship among charisms should be in order to give visibility to Christ.⁹ Therefore, the size or extension of a Movement or Community does not matter, but the fact that it brings a gift of the Spirit and that it enters into communion with the others.
7. Movements and Communities that are part of such a communion are mostly a lay charismatic expression of the people of God.

II. Experiences and a culture of collaboration

8. Our shared journey is characterized by listening to the word of God. Together we want to live and witness to the Gospel in our times.
9. Communion increases unity. We experience that God is gathering together His people. We want to serve the unity of the people of God, each one in communion with their own Church.
10. We listened to the exhortation: "Europe rise up!"¹⁰ Our communion has a goal: to strengthen - "for Europe" and its unity - the soul of Europe, also participating in social, cultural and political processes.
11. Each Movement or Community is faithful to its own charism and to its own vocation. We collaborate, for common goals, as we committed ourselves in the final messages of Together for Europe 2004 and 2007, when and where it is possible.
12. Our collaboration also regards possible projects promoted by a single Movement or by several Movements, for a determined period of time, freely and according to the availability of each Movement.
13. It is not an organizational unity, nor a new structure, but a communion of friends in Christ.

III. Friends of *Together for Europe*

14. Leaders of Christians Movements and Communities can be part of Friends of *Together for Europe*, if they are willing to:
 - live the pact of reciprocal love with the other Movements and Communities,
 - spread the spirit of communion in their own Movement or community.
 - share the messages of Stuttgart 2004 and 2007,

⁷ See the discourse of John Paul II to the movements on 30th May 1998 (in: "L'Osservatore Romano" 1st -2nd June 1998), where he says among other things: "The institutional aspect and the charismatic one are co-essential to the constitution of the Church."

⁸ See discourse of Chiara Lubich "Towards a culture of communion" at Stuttgart, 12th May 2007.

⁹ See 1 Cor 12:4-27.

¹⁰ See discourse of Andrea Riccardi "Europe: history and spirit" at Stuttgart, 8th May 2004.

- concretely serve the communion among Movements and Communities investing also time and resources.

15. In communion with their own Church, they look to the other Churches and ecclesial Communities with respect and goodwill.

16. In listening to the Holy Spirit together, they avail themselves of His light in order to read the signs of the times and so achieve a prophetic service.

17. The annual meetings on a European level, to which one is invited by the Steering Committee, foster communion among Friends of *Together for Europe*, updating one another on the developments of communion and deciding on possible shared initiatives.

18. In the light of the charism received, during their annual meetings the “Friends” examine in depth an important challenge of the European continent, to discern how to make their charisms bear fruit for the good of humanity.

19. The Friends of *Together for Europe* promote communion and collaboration on a national level and organize national meetings.

IV. Steering Committee

20. The members of the Steering Committee are generally the main leaders of a Movement or a Community. They are appointed by the Steering Committee. Those whose mandate has expired as main leaders may remain in the Steering Committee as a witness of this historic journey.

21. The members of the Steering Committee should live in deep communion with one another so that it can be a model for all the realities of communion among Movements and Communities. They have, so to say, a “second vocation,” since they feel called to live not only for their own Movement or Community, but to concretely be of service to the communion among them.

22. In this way they safeguard and promote its “spirit” and “experiences and culture of collaboration” as described in the first and second paragraphs.

23. The Steering Committee prepares the meetings for the Friends of *Together for Europe* and willingly follows and encourages every initiative of communion in Europe and throughout the world in this spirit.

24. The Steering Committee decides on the admission of new members to Friends of *Together for Europe*, with the consent of at least two members of the Steering Committee. Then the whole Committee should be informed.

Gathered here in Rome, on the 11th of November 2009, at the Community of St. Egidio, remaining united in the pact of mutual love, we propose to continue this journey together fully confident that the Holy Spirit will help and guide us.

(supported by 86 signatures)