

Foundations of Communion among Christian Movements and Communities

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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
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

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

⁷ See the discourse of John Paul II to the participants of the worldwide congress of ecclesial movements (Rome, 27 May 1998; Libreria Editrice Vaticana), where he says among other things speaking about the institutional

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

and charismatic dimensions of the Church: "Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus."

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.

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 Movements/Communities. They are appointed by the Steering Committee itself. Those whose mandate has expired as main leaders may remain in the Steering Committee as witnesses of our common history.
21. The members of the Steering Committee are generally the main leaders of a Movement or a Community, or their representatives. Moreover, it is desirable that a younger person from each Movement/Community is to be part as councillor. The Committee is to see that there is a balanced composition of men and women, and of members from Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Europe. Besides, it ought to discern which new Movements/Communities may be integrated. For a better communication between the members of the Steering Committee, it would be useful if in the future more multi- or bi-lingual persons are involved.
22. The members of the Steering Committee are to live among them the profoundest communion possible, so as to be a model for all the other forms of interaction between the Movements and Communities. They have – so to speak – a “second vocation”; that is, to live not only for their own Movement or Community, but are at the concrete service of *Together*.
23. In this way they safeguard and promote the spirit and the collaboration as described in the first and second paragraphs.
24. For practical reasons, some of the main leaders delegate to other persons their appointment on the Steering Committee. To make it possible for the main leaders (of the Movements/Communities that strongly support *Together*) to meet with the Steering Committee, meetings are to be organized (every 2-3 years); these will allow for the sharing and for any clarifications of the common guidelines of *Together for Europe*.
25. The Steering Committee prepares the meetings for the “Friends of *Together for Europe*”. It follows and encourages every initiative of communion in Europe and throughout the

world. It also nurtures the communication with the national Committees, the regions and the groups carrying our specific projects.

26. The Steering Committee nominates a Moderator and a general Secretary. Together with one or two other members of the Steering Committee they form the executive group: they prepare the meetings of the Steering Committee and are responsible for the carrying out of its decisions. The persons chosen for this office are elected or confirmed every two years.

27. The Steering Committee decides on the admission of new members as “Friends of *Together for Europe*”. After having informed the Steering Committee, the consent of at least two members of Movements/Communities outside the Steering Committee is required so that new main leaders of Movements/Communities are invited to join.

28. The Steering Committee promotes and supports the formation of National Committees of “*Together for Europe*”. It also promotes the contact of these National Committees between themselves and with the Steering Committees, e.g. via video conferences.

The National Committees are to be in contact with other Christian networks and important persons in their respective Countries.

29. The Steering Committee can set up various groups in response to prevalent needs and situations, so that the whole network is strengthened. The Steering Committee encourages and supports these groups in their tasks and actions, and these groups are to keep the Steering Committee regularly informed. Presently, these tasks include:

- Visits and meetings (East-West);
- Feast of Europe: May 9;
- Working Groups on the 7 Yeses;
- Public relations;
- Young people and the next generation.

Our Pact

We are united in the Pact of mutual love and we keep on journeying along our common pathway, with full trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us. We will follow him, wherever he leads us to.