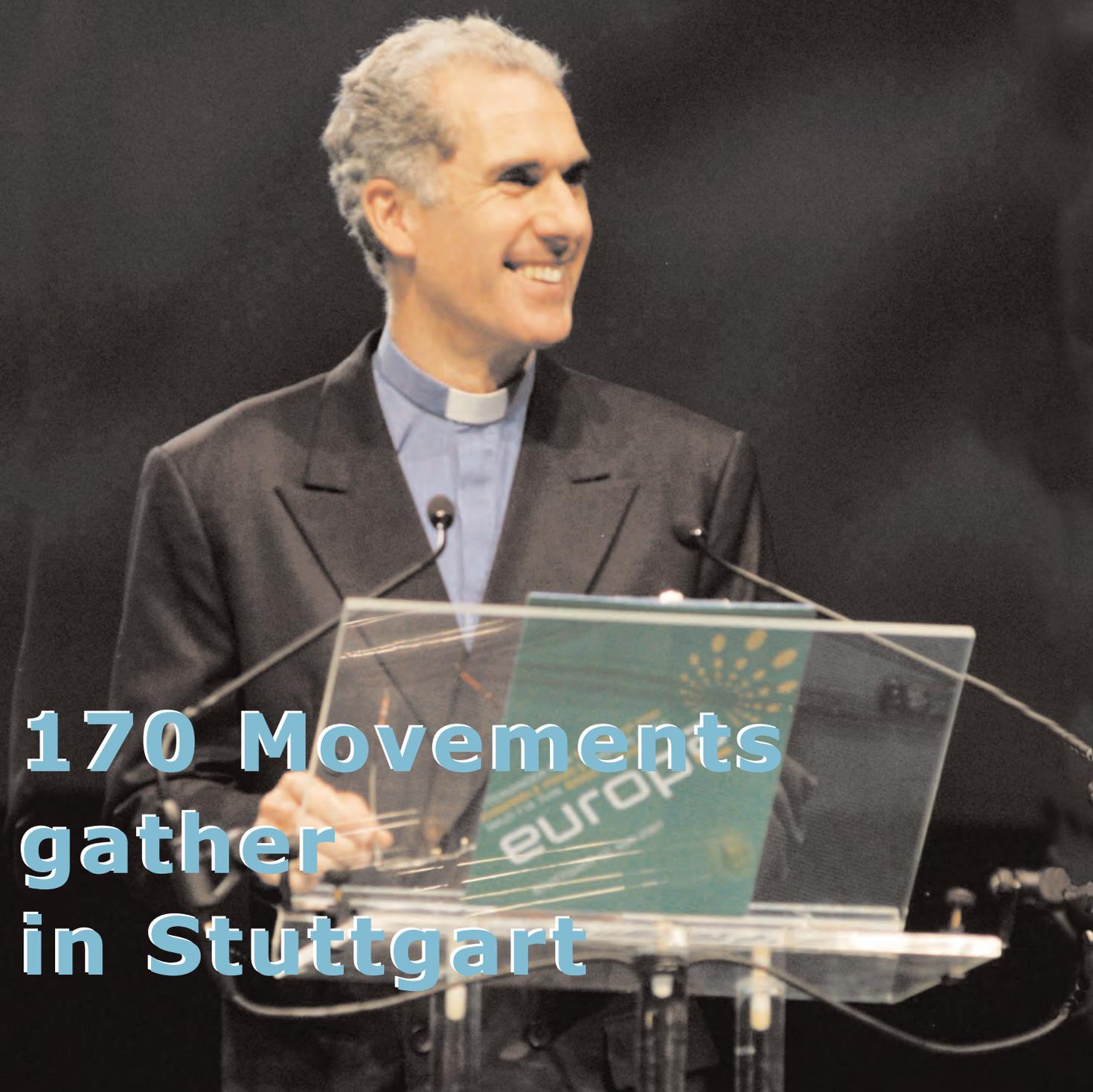


New city

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A photograph of a man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt and a white clerical collar. He is smiling and looking to his right. He is standing behind a clear acrylic podium. On the podium is a laptop with a green cover featuring the word 'europa' and a sunburst logo. Two microphones are positioned in front of him.

170 Movements gather in Stuttgart

- Art in Liverpool Cathedral
- Interfaith Gathering for Youth

Society

Three years ago thousands of members of new movements and communities from different Christian traditions and from all over Europe came together in Stuttgart to celebrate the Christian soul of Europe and to encourage one another in their mission.

In May this year they came together again to renew their intentions and strengthen their resolve.

The event coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in 1957; with Europe Week commemorating the end of the Second World War on May 8 1945; and Europe Day, May 9, the anniversary of Robert Schuman's historical declaration of 1950, proposing a community at the service of peace, forerunner of the European Union.

Frank Johnson reports.



The roots of *Together for Europe* go back to 1998 when Pope John Paul II invited the new movements and ecclesial communities of the Catholic Church to come together in St Peter's Square on the eve of Pentecost. This huge and historic gathering gave birth not only to greater communion between Roman Catholic movements, but eventually to the idea of meeting with Christian movements and communities of many other traditions. The first *Together for Europe* came about through an inspiration of Chiara Lubich, who had already been charged by John Paul II with ensuring that the Roman Catholic movements grew in unity, resulting in a great gathering at Speyer, Germany, in

1999. In a way, the first Stuttgart meeting, held in 2004, was a logical consequence of the 1998 one, especially in the mind of someone like Chiara, who is always open to widening the circle of dialogue.

Not what divides, but what unites
Nicknamed Stuttgart II, the second *Together for Europe*, held on 12 May at the same venue as three years earlier, was, in many ways like a gathering of old friends, except that the aim went far beyond that of a friends' reunion. In fact what happened was that the unity built and sustained over the intervening three years meant that, if anything, the atmosphere of unity was even stronger than



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on the previous occasion and there was no sense of competition between the various movements but a strong feeling that each was a different aspect of an integral whole, with a specific gift for bringing the Gospel message to the continent of Europe.

Emma Barnes, an English member of Alpha, introduced the day saying, 'There are members from 170 different communities and organizations, with many differences and visions, but what is important is not what divides us but what unites us. The love of Jesus Christ is the only means by which a continent of such diversity: race, language, faith, denomination, economy, etc., can come together with one common vision.' The scene was

set for an enthralling presentation of living Christianity across the whole of Europe, a presentation which, through satellite television and the Internet, reached far beyond the 8,000 people in the hall to the furthest corners of the world.

And Emma concluded her introduction by summarizing the programme and offering the joint vision of the groups taking part in *Together for Europe*: 'Throughout today we will discuss some very real and significant issues surrounding life in Europe: family, work and our economy, working with the poor and disadvantaged, peace and justice, and the life of our cities. There is so much combined passion and experience

among the organisations represented here today, and through uniting our independent visions, we can bring the re-evangelisation of nations and the transformation of society within Europe. Together with our partners, the yield is great.' (Cf. Luke 5: 1-11)

Path of reconciled diversity

The great strength of Stuttgart II came from the deeper understanding of the expression 'unity in diversity', the fact that we don't all have to be the same. On the contrary, each group, each movement, has a unique and valid contribution to make. Gerhard Pross, one of the chief organizers of the event put it like this: 'God gathers and unites, but he does not make all things uniform! We experienced this again during the last two days here in Stuttgart, during the congress entitled "Journeying together": God loves the multiplicity – and we do too. What is foreign and different from us does not frighten us. We should not place limits or judge. In discovering the gifts of others, we have been enriched. We remain in awe in front of the many spiritual ways with which God has created his people.' He admitted that 'there were, and still are these other things among us: barriers, trenches, walls and lacerations. For this reason, our initial experience of communion together was marked by a profound sense of penance and reconciliation. We feel called to take the path of reconciled diversity.'

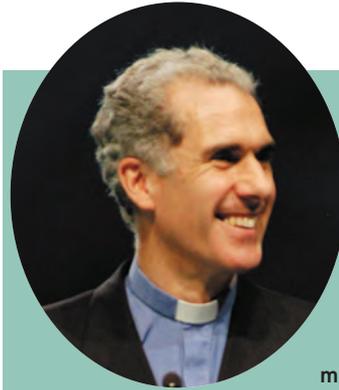
And Gerhard Pross concluded by explaining what the aims of Stuttgart II are: 'Together, we feel the responsibility for our society, for all of Europe. In an era in which Europe is dominated by a paralysis, darkness and a true culture of death, we want to bring the clear light of the Gospel into the different sectors of society and to call Europe back to life. This will be elaborated on in the morning's talks. We are ready to use our gifts and our potentialities in our society. We are ready to collaborate and help. We are ready to bring our specific contribution, especially to the weak and crisis areas of our cities, to those in need, the elderly, the most fragile and to youth.'

Society

Pact of mutual love

The programme was a carefully thought out blend of talks and experiences interspersed with musical and artistic pieces provided by groups of many different nationalities. But one very important moment, at the beginning of the day, was the renewal of the pact of mutual love, first made at Stuttgart I, and read on this occasion by a married couple, the Refles, from Germany: 'We want to commit ourselves to living the New Commandment which marked the common journey of our Movements, communities and groups right from the beginning as its basic foundation. We will now freely repeat it, using the words in John's Gospel (Jn 13: 34-35), inwardly expressing our "yes" without any reservations: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."'

Stuttgart II was a consolidation of the 2004 event and a further step on the road to unity. However, although the way ahead lies in dialogue and in working together on common projects, these activities will only bear fruit inasmuch as they are done in this attitude of mutual love as laid down in the pact. If the members of the groups and communities manage to do that, then they will give the credible witness that will help re-evangelise Europe. ■



Is there more to life? Nicky Gumbel (Alpha)

Young people today all over the world including in Europe are asking the question 'Is there more to life than this?' They are searching for something outside of this material world: for transcendence, for purpose and for community. This quest has led nearly ten million people to come on an Alpha course in 168 countries around the world. To me there is nothing more exciting than seeing people's lives change as they experience a relationship with God through Jesus Christ...

...We believe that God is calling us to work in partnership with you to continue to proclaim this gospel so that we might see the re-evangelisation of Europe and the transformation of society.



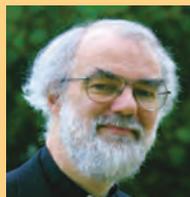
Europe should look at Africa Andrea Riccardi (St Egidio Community)

If our communities are more like sisters among themselves then our European peoples will be more brothers. The unity among Christians must become the mother of daily collaboration that unites us and of the common prayer that gathers us. This is the cement of a united Europe...

...After this event, *Together for Europe* must become a movement of feelings, of ideas in the countries of Europe so that Europe may look at Africa, so that it may feed its soul, so that a current of passion for unity may overwhelm rigidity and boundaries. *Together for Europe*, dear friends, is not just a beautiful event, but the expression of a destiny we feel as a vocation for us Christians, as a chance for our fellow citizens, as a gift for the whole world.



POPE BENEDICT XVI



ARCH. R. WILLIAMS



P. BARTHOLOMEW I



REV. DR S. KOBIA



J.M. BARROSO



M. McALEESE

GIRTA NUOVA (8)

Support of Church and political leaders

The list of 'celebrities' in Stuttgart was impressive, with Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy; Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Vatican's Council for Christian Unity and Nicky Gumbel, Anglican priest and founder of the Alpha Course; Cardinal Milsolav Vlk of Prague; Lutheran Bishop Huber and Pastor Inglof Ellssel, chairman of the Pentecostal Communion. Amongst the messages offering their support and best wishes for the meeting were those from Pope Bene-

dict XVI, Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop Rowan Williams, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, Mary McAleese, President of Ireland and Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary for the World Council of Churches, as well as many, many more in a list too numerous to mention everyone in these pages.



My Night has no Darkness

Chiara Lubich (from her talk read by Bruna Tomasi)

At times people think that the Gospel only brings about the Kingdom of God in a religious sense and does not solve human problems.

But this is not true.

Every Christian, as another Christ, as a member of the Mystical Body, can give his or her particular contribution towards a culture of communion in each field: in science, in arts, in politics, in communications, and so on. And their effectiveness will be all the greater, if they work together with others united in the name of Christ.

This gives birth to and spreads in the world, what we could call the 'culture of the Resurrection': the culture of the risen Lord, the New Man, and in him, the culture of a new humanity.

.... Jesus forsaken, the modern-day Crucifix, radiates the light of the risen Lord and makes us generous in sharing his gifts. If, in 2004 we took a step ahead with a determination to strive towards fraternity, in a universal sense, now we want to take a step further, deeper: to give priority to loving and following our model: Christ crucified and forsaken. In this way, we will be able to take upon ourselves the cry of today's humanity, and through his 'cry' which redeemed everything, build around us that human family for which the world is yearning.

Then we will be truly able to say with the young martyr of the third century, St Laurence: 'My night has no darkness, and all things are full of light to me.'

The Commitment

(Extracts from the commitment of *Together for Europe* 2007)

United by this Pact of mutual love, let us say **yes** to life and let us work to defend its inviolable dignity at every stage, from conception to its natural end.

Let us say **Yes** to the family united by an indissoluble bond of love between man and woman, the foundation of a united society that looks to the future.

Let us say **Yes** to creation, by defending nature and the environment, gifts of God to be safeguarded with commitment that respects future generations.

Let us say **Yes** to a just economy, at the service of every person and of all humankind.

Let us say **Yes** to solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, be they near or far - they are our brothers and sisters.

Let us ask our governments and the European Union to work in a determined manner for the poor and for the development of disadvantaged nations, especially those of Africa.

Let us say **Yes** to peace, and let us commit ourselves to bringing it about that, through dialogue, understanding and reconciliation may be found in situations of conflict. Our world has no future without peace.

Let us say **Yes** to our responsibility towards the whole of society and let us work so that through everyone's participation, cities might become places of solidarity and welcome for people of different nationalities and cultures.

To this end, we want to take on this commitment together, each movement and community in accordance with its own charism and potentialities.

To this end, we want to work together with all men and women, with institutions and with all social and political entities.

Together we want to place ourselves once again at the service of peace and unity that are at the foundation of today's Europe.

Together we want to communicate to Europe and to the world the Gospel of life and peace that animates our Movements and Communities.

Together in Belfast

Catherine McIlvenna reports.

In Belfast about one hundred people, including families, young adults, lay and religious, met at the Church of the Resurrection, Elmwood Avenue. Among the participants were members from Focolare, Charis Community, Cornerstone, Cursillos, Corrymeela, L'Arche, Restoration Ministries, Youth Initiatives, Lamb of God and YWAM. The day began and ended with interdenominational worship and song, a Cor-

rymeela prayer service in the morning and the Charis Community leading the closing prayers.

During the day, a representative from each group gave memorable personal testimony and witness to their Christian faith. Dr Brendan Leahy from Maynooth, spoke first, acknowledging the social awareness of Christianity and how this faith-based spirituality must influence how individuals engage with others. He praised the interdenominational diversity of Christian groups, comparing the differences in Christian traditions to the admirable beauty of different flowers in a garden.

Youth Initiatives presented a stirring musical dramatisation of Northern Ireland's sectarian conflict with a moving and uplifting resolution. This was an aptly optimistic presentation, as a few days earlier politicians in Northern Ireland finally listened to the community's call for self-government.

Addresses by Rev Ruth Patterson, Restoration Ministries; Isobel Hunter, Cornerstone; Dr David Stevens, Corrymeela; and Marie Garvey, L'Arche, demonstrated the significance and relevance of these groups in forming a cohesive, Christian society. Although coming from different denominations

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across Ireland, the Christian response is one of welcome to marginalised, rejected, forgotten or disenfranchised people. Listening to each of the speakers in Belfast, all shared a common experience: a quest to challenge indifference and detachment, an enthusiasm to live according to Christian principles of justice, peace, love, tolerance and fraternity.

The groups meeting in Belfast identified with this pan-European approach inspired by Christ's teaching and example which seeks to establish safety, economic stability, social inclusion and support for family life. *Together on the Way* is not a slogan or a mere philosophy, it is a code by which lives are lived and communities



Gemma Nuova

are built. Its fruits are evident across Belfast, throughout Ireland and elsewhere in Europe by the participation of young and old, single, married and religious who adhere to an active, alive Christianity which improves lives for families and communities. ■

Above: The participants at the meeting of different movements and ecclesial communities held at the Church of the Resurrection, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast.

Below: Two delegates of the British group at the two-days congress in Stuttgart.

Together on the Way

On the two days previous to the *Together for Europe* gathering, a congress for leaders of the new movements and communities took place.

Celia Blackden reports.

Joy, depth and unity characterised the two days of the congress for founders as leaders and coordinators of movements, groups and communities gathered in Stuttgart early in May. The group from Britain included Dennis Wrigley, co-founder of Maranatha, Veronica Williams, founder of Mothers' Prayers, and representatives from Madonna House, Teams of Our Lady, the Society for Ecumenical Studies, Fresh Expressions, the International Ecumenical Fellowship, Focolare, Christian Life Communities and the Community of St Margaret and St Columba.

The two days were founded on strong biblical themes, beginning with a powerful talk by Gerhard Pross from Stuttgart YMCA, one of the main organisers of the Stuttgart events. He unpacked God's call in Isaiah 40 to prepare the way of the Lord, inviting the movements, communities and groups present in Europe to 'Get up and walk'.

We must respond to God's call, he said, and prepare the way of the Lord in the societies in which we live; indeed we must bring the presence of Christ into the world so much in need of his love and his light.

Genuine and heartfelt testimony helped deepen the relationships amongst the groups and associations over years of ecumenical engagement and also since Stuttgart One in 2004. It was clear that real bridges had been built over gulfs that have endured for centuries, resulting in a new sense of family amongst Christians hitherto strangers to one another. Gatherings and events had taken place in many countries including Albania, Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands, and the European model had been taken overseas in the form of 'Together for Central America' and 'Together for Venezuela'.

Sister Anna-Maria aus der Wiesche, of the Christusbruderschaft Community in Selbitz and an organiser of the event, gave a profound talk on the spiritual treasures of the communities and groups. She said 'God has chosen communities so that we sanctify his name. God has chosen communities so

that we rely on the power of his Word. God has chosen communities so that we approach the poor and needy ... so that we love one another, so that we make room for his presence.' She ended saying 'Let's sing a new song, all of us with our different spiritualities, and participate in the building of the European society by bringing our manifold gifts to it. Let's take part in making Europe a place where God's gentleness is visible.'

One of our group wrote: 'The two days of the conference filled me with



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wonder and gratitude – first for the fullness of the Spirit in the hall – bringing with it the great joy and enthusiasm of BEING united. We in the UK ... need to be part of this miraculous wave of new life in unity together.' ■