

(English translation)

Bratislava (Parliament), 10 May 2001

Chiara to a group of Slovak members of parliament:

“Fraternity in Politics”

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The Focolare Movement ... has always shown an interest in the world of politics. In fact, right from its beginning in Trent, in 1943, reading of the words of the Gospel had urged us to love each neighbour, especially the most needy. Then in Rome, with the participation of the Hon. Iginio Giordani, a prominent multi-faceted figure: ecumenist, journalist, Italian historian and one of the dozen Italian members of Parliament, this love had opened up to greater expressions, towards the *polis*, the foundation of a new politics. Alcide De Gasperi himself, the first head of the Italian government after World War II, touched by our spirituality, had reinforced his commitment to build a united Europe together with Adenauer and Schuman. ...

Then in 1959, the so-called “Saint Catherine Centre” was formed in Rome, because Catherine had dealt with politicians. It offered a meeting point for those who wanted to conduct politics in a Gospel spirit of unity.

But we needed to wait until 1996, for the occasion of a meeting of politicians in Naples, to see the Movement for Unity come to life, precisely this political branch.

In these recent years, it has taken shape in a number of European nations and elsewhere, as in Brazil, for example, while it was spoken about – I also went, I had been invited - in Strasbourg to politicians of the European Parliament, and even before that at the UN.

Then in June 2000, recently, in an international conference of about 800 politicians at Castel Gandolfo, close to Rome, we realized that fraternity could become an authentic meeting point among everyone, both for method and the content of politics. Whoever of us had a religious orientation saw it as a way to fulfil in politics the experience of having discovered that we are all children of God and, therefore, brothers and sisters among us. Those who were lay and had as reference point the project of modernity, politically expressed through the positives and negatives of the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality and Fraternity - grasped it in the profound roots of every human being, even if among those goals, fraternity had not been lived out as much as the others.

Now we discovered that the value that could bring everyone together was really fraternity, synonymous with unity, that unity that is also the aim of our Movement. And in that conference, they committed to getting to know our spirit, so as to better apply it in the world of politics.

Later on, last December 15, we spoke about it in the San Macuto Hall of Parliament, a hall of the Italian Parliament, in front of the president of the Senate, representatives of the ruling government and of the opposition, mayors, administrators, leaders and party activists. They welcomed this idea unanimously, so much so that we thought to begin a series of regular meetings to go in depth, for a few hours a month, in a hall right next to the Parliament. These meetings have the end goal of helping them and us to firstly be persons who, in fraternity, believe in deep and eternal human values, and then to be active in political life. We want to first of all feel that we are brothers and sisters - we are one family - then each one can work in their own political domain.

The Movement for Unity, in which exponents from the most varied political parties take part, from the left to the right, certainly does not wish to found a new party. It only proposes and bears witness to a lifestyle that allows politics to best reach its end goal: the common good in the unity of the social body. This is because fraternity offers unthinkable possibilities. For example, it permits one to understand even the other person’s point of view, so that no interests or needs are overlooked.

Fraternity permits us to bring together and appreciate human experiences that otherwise run the risk of becoming endless conflicts. Fraternity harmonizes the experiences of local autonomies, of citizen councils that contribute a great deal to the maturation of democracy, with a full sense of belonging to their homeland. Fraternity sheds light on our duty to be Europeans, in a Europe that – due to its history and culture – goes from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. It strengthens the awareness of the importance of international bodies and of all the processes that aim to overcome barriers and accomplish significant steps forward towards the unity of the human family. In addition, fraternity allows for the introduction of new principles in daily political activity; it makes it possible to never govern against someone, or to never be only a partial expression of the nation. There are those who have the task to govern, and those who are the opposition, but only together can they guarantee the sovereignty of their citizens.

Besides, fraternity allows one to fully live out the relationship between elected officials and citizens in the territory: a privileged place for a dialogue that brings to life a program of collaboration between civil society and the political forum. In addition, with fraternity, which bestows peace and serenity, the parties would find it easier to renew themselves and would discover the greatness of their calling, because none of them were born by chance, but from a historical need, from a shared need to affirm a value; and they would be encouraged to highlight their own original inspiration and their founding values. At the same time, every party would recognize the values and mission of the other ones, stimulating them, also through constructive criticism, full of love and respect, to express their true identity and to do that part which the common good expects from them.

The adherents of the Movement for Unity are committed to all this, while they try and live out what is apparently paradoxical... here gentlemen, do not get frightened because when I said these things also in Italy, some of them got scared. In any case, it is an ideal to which we must always tend. The adherents of the “Movement for Unity” commit to all of this, while they try and live out the apparent paradox of loving the other party as their own, because the good of the nation needs everyone’s contribution. Therefore, fraternity would not constitute “something more” in politics, but the substance of it, and its should define the methods and objectives for it. Only in this way can politics acquire its real mission: to be of service to the community, with its citizens as active players.

And I think that this is a politics worth living for, which increases the stature of those who work in it and gives meaning to their entire lives, making them a solid point of reference for citizens, especially for the most needy, who have been entrusted to them.

I think that this is the authoritative politics that every nation needs: in fact, power confers strength, but it is love which gives authority.

Therefore, the only thing to do is to resume one’s political work with this new vision, with a new spirit, strengthened in those who are believers also by their conviction that the efficacy of one’s efforts is multiplied by God’s intervention in history, by his Providence that accompanies each one and the collectivity with his love and light; which opens up unimagined roads; which creates the conditions to find solutions to the most difficult dilemmas that seem unsolvable. He will be the one, at the end of time, to gather all that has been done, to give value to even the small things that have been built with effort and despite all adversity, to transform the work of each one into “new Heavens” and “new Earth,” that perfect city to which, in the depths of our hearts and in our own way, each one aspires to.

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