

12th September 2003

**Message for the First World Interdependence Day in Philadelphia**

Mr Edward Rendell, Governor of Pennsylvania,  
Professor Benjamin Barber,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address such a distinguished audience gathered today in Philadelphia to declare your commitment to building a world that is more united, more just and more fraternal.

I would have liked to be present in person, but since this is not possible, allow me to offer you a brief, personal reflection in this message.

When Professor Benjamin Barber informed me of this first World Interdependence Day during a long and cordial meeting in Rome last June, I was immediately delighted to express my support.

Actually the reality of interdependence calls to mind an ideal which is very dear to me, an ideal for which I decided to give my life, together with many people of good will who are involved in politics, economics and different fields of action and study: the unity of the human family.

On the day after September 11, many of us felt the need to reflect deeply on the causes, but above all, to work towards a true, responsible and resolute alternative to terrorism and war. For me, it was a little like reliving the devastation and feeling of human powerlessness that I experienced in the Italian city of Trent when it was bombed during World War II.

And yet it was precisely beneath the bombs that my first companions and I discovered in the Gospel the light of mutual love which prompted us to be ready to give our lives for one another. It was in the midst of that debris and destruction, convinced that "Love conquers all", that we felt the passionate desire to share this love with all our neighbours, with no discrimination among persons, groups, peoples, and without being conditioned by the other person's social condition, culture or religious convictions.

Likewise, many of us are asking today, whether in New York or Bogota, in Rome or in Nairobi, in London or Baghdad, if it is possible to live in a world of peoples who are free, equal and united, not only respecting one another's identity, but also mindful of their particular needs.

There is only one answer: not only is it possible, but it is the essence of the political plan for humanity.

While respectful of thousands of different identities, the unity of peoples is the very goal of politics. This is put into question today by the violence of terrorism, wars, the unjust distribution of the world's resources, and social and cultural inequality.

In many places in the world today, a cry of abandonment is heard from millions of refugees, from millions of hungry people, from millions of people who are exploited, from millions of unemployed who are excluded and seemingly "cut off" from the body politic. It is this separation, and not only the hardships and economic difficulties, which makes them even poorer, which increases their desperation, if this were possible.

The goal of politics will not be reached, its vocation will not be fulfilled unless it rebuilds this unity and these open wounds in humanity's political body are healed.

But how is it possible to reach such a demanding goal, a goal which seems to be beyond our strength? Faced with the present and future challenges of humanity, liberty and equality on their own are not enough. Our experience teaches us and we believe there is need for a third element long forgotten in political thought and practice: fraternity, living as brothers and sisters. Without this, individuals and peoples are not truly and completely free and equal. Equality and liberty will always be incomplete and fragile until fraternity becomes an integral part of the programs and political processes in every part of the world.

Dear friends, doesn't the name itself of the city you are in – Philadelphia – evoke a program of brotherly and sisterly love?

Living as brothers and sisters can give new meaning today to the reality of interdependence. It can give rise to projects and actions in the complex political, economic, cultural and social fabric of our world. Fraternity brings peoples out of their isolation and opens the door of development to those who are still excluded. It shows the way to resolving differences peacefully and relegates war to history books. By living as one family we can dream and even hope for some level of communion of goods between rich and poor countries, given that the scandalous economic inequality in today's world is one of the main causes of terrorism.

The profound need for peace expressed by humanity today indicates that living as brothers and sisters is not only a value, not only a method, but is a global paradigm for political development. This is why a world that is ever more interdependent needs politicians, business people, intellectuals and artists who put fraternity – as a tool for unity – at the centre of their thoughts and actions. Martin Luther King dreamed that brotherhood would become the order of the day both for business people and statesmen and women.

Dear friends, what a change would take place in relationships among individuals, groups and peoples if only we would recognize that we are all children of one Father, God, who is Love and who loves each one personally and immensely and who takes care of everyone! This love, translated into its many applications, including politics and economics, would lead to overcoming narrow-minded nationalism and limited perspectives. It would open the minds and hearts of peoples and their governments, urging everyone – as I affirmed in a speech to the United Nations in New York in 1997 – to love other people's countries as they love their own.

This is the longstanding experience of the Focolare Movement, which is now present in 182 countries in the world, with millions and millions of adherents around the globe.

My wish is that this first World Interdependence Day will be an opportunity for all those supporting it to commit themselves once more to live and work together for the unity of the whole human family, always helping one another with dedication and trust.

*Chiara Lubich*