

This letter, written by Brother Roger of Taizé and translated into 55 different languages (including 24 from Asia), was made public during the young adult European meeting in Lisbon. It will be used for reflection throughout the year 2005 during the weekly meetings in Taizé as well as those held elsewhere, in Europe or on other continents.

Letter from Taizé

A Future of Peace

Letter 2005

1. These words were written six hundred years before Christ. See Jeremiah 29:11 and 31:17.

2. This year when ten new countries have joined the European Union, many young Europeans are aware that they live on a continent which, after having suffered from divisions and conflicts for many years, is now searching for unity and moving forward on the road of peace. Tensions remain, of course, as well as forms of injustice and even violence, which awaken doubts. The important thing is not to stop ahead of time: the search for peace lies at the very foundation of the building up of Europe. But this would be of no interest if its only purpose were to create a stronger, richer continent, and if Europe succumbed to the temptation to withdraw within its own borders. Europe becomes fully itself when it is open to other continents, in solidarity with poor nations. Its construction has meaning when it is seen as a step forward in the service of peace for the entire human family. That is why, if our meeting at the end of the year is called "a European meeting," we prefer to view it as a "pilgrimage of trust on earth."

“God has plans for a future of peace for you, not of misfortune; God wants to give you a future and a hope.”¹

Today, a great many people are longing for a future of peace, for humanity to be freed from threats of violence.

If some are gripped by worry about the future and find themselves at a standstill, there are also young people all over the world who are inventive and creative.

These young people do not let themselves be caught up in a spiral of gloom. They know that God did not create us to be passive. For them, life is not subject to a blind destiny. They are aware that scepticism and discouragement have the power to paralyze human beings.

And so they are searching, with their whole soul, to prepare a future of peace and not of misfortune. More than they realize, they are already making of their lives a light that shines around them.

Some are bearers of peace and trust in situations of crisis and conflict. They keep going even when trials or failures weigh heavily on their shoulders.²

On some summer evenings in Taizé, under a sky laden with stars, we can hear the young people through our open windows. We are constantly astonished that there are so many of them. They search; they pray. And we say to ourselves: their aspirations to peace and trust are like these stars, points of lights that shine in the night.

We live at a time when many people are asking: what is faith? Faith is a simple trust in God, an indispensable surge of trusting undertaken countless times over in the course of our life.

All of us can have doubts. They are nothing to worry about. Our deepest desire is to listen to Christ who whispers in our hearts, “Do you have hesitations? Don’t worry; the Holy Spirit remains with you always.”³

Some, to their surprise, have made this discovery: God’s love can come to fulfilment even in a heart touched by doubts.⁴

One of the first things Christ says in the Gospel is this: “Happy the simple-hearted!”⁵ Yes, happy those who head towards simplicity, simplicity of heart and simplicity of life.

A simple heart attempts to live in the present moment, to welcome each day as God’s today.

Does not the spirit of simplicity shine out in serene joy, and also in cheerfulness?

A simple heart does not claim to understand everything about faith on its own. It says to itself, “Others understand better what I have trouble grasping and they help me to continue on my way.”⁶

Simplifying our life enables us to share with the least fortunate, in order to alleviate suffering where there is disease, poverty, famine...⁷

Our personal prayer is also simple. Do we think that many words are needed in order to pray?⁸ No. A few words, even

3. See John 14:16-18, 27. God exists independently of our faith or our doubts. When there is doubt within us, that does not mean that God has left us.

4. One day Dostoyevsky wrote in his *Notebook*: “I am a child of doubt and unbelief. What terrible suffering it has cost me and still costs me, this longing to believe, which is so much the stronger in my soul as more arguments against it rise up within me.... My ‘hosanna’ has passed through the crucible of doubt.” And yet Dostoyevsky could also write: “There is nothing more beautiful, more profound and more perfect than Christ. Not only is there nothing, but there can be nothing.” When that man of God suggests that the non-believer coexists in him with the believer, his passionate love for Christ still remains undiminished.

5. Matthew 5:3.

6. Even if our trust remains fragile, we do not rely only on our own faith but on the trust of all those who have gone before us as well as those who are around us.

7. The UN World Food Program recently published a map of world hunger. Despite the progress accomplished in the last few years, 840 million people suffer from hunger, including 180 million children under the age of five.

8. See Matthew 6:7-8

9. This road of surrender can be sustained by simple songs, sung over and over again, such as this one: "My soul finds rest and peace in God alone." While we work or when we rest, these songs keep echoing within our hearts.

10. Matthew 19:14.

11. A nine-year-old boy who came to pray with us for a week said to me one day, "My father left us. I never see him, but I still love him and at night I pray for him."

12. See 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16.

inept ones, are enough to entrust everything to God, our fears as well as our hopes.

By surrendering ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we will find the way that leads from worry to confident trust.⁹ And we tell him:

"Holy Spirit, enable us
to turn to you at every moment.
So often we forget that you dwell within us,
that you pray in us, that you love in us.
Your presence in us is trust
and constant forgiveness."

Yes, the Holy Spirit kindles a glimmer of light within us. However faint it may be, it awakens in our hearts the desire for God. And the simple desire for God is already prayer.

Prayer does not make us less involved in the world. On the contrary, nothing is more responsible than to pray. The more we make our own a prayer which is simple and humble, the more we are led to love and to express it with our life.

Where can we find the simplicity indispensable for living out the Gospel? Some words of Christ enlighten us. One day he said to his disciples, "Let the little children come to me; the realities of God are for those who are like them."¹⁰

Who can express adequately what some children can communicate by their trusting?¹¹

And so we would like to say to God: "God, you love us: turn us into people who are humble; give us great simplicity in our prayer, in human relationships, in welcoming others..."

Jesus, the Christ, came to earth not to condemn anyone but to open paths of communion for human beings.

For two thousand years Christ has been present through the Holy Spirit,¹² and his mysterious presence

is made tangible in a visible communion¹³ that brings together women, men and young people who are called to go forward together, without separating from one another.¹⁴

And yet throughout their history Christians have experienced many upheavals: separations have arisen between those who nonetheless professed faith in the same God of love.

Re-establishing communion is urgent today; it cannot continually be put off until later, until the end of time.¹⁵ Will we do all we can for Christians to wake up to the spirit of communion?¹⁶

There are Christians who, without waiting, are already in communion with one another in the places where they live, quite humbly, quite simply.¹⁷

Through their own life, they would like to make Christ present for many others. They know that the Church does not exist for itself but for the world, to place within it a ferment of peace.

“Communion” is one of the most beautiful names of the Church. In it, there can be no harsh words exchanged but only transparency, heartfelt kindness, compassion...and the gates of holiness swing open.

The Gospel lets us discover this surprising reality: God creates neither fear nor worry. All God can do is love us.

By the presence of the Holy Spirit, God comes to transfigure our hearts.

And in a simple prayer, we can sense that we are never alone: the Holy Spirit sustains in us a communion with God, not just for a fleeting moment but right on into the life which never ends.

13. That communion is called the Church. In the heart of God, the Church is one; it cannot be divided.

14. The closer we come to the Gospel, the closer we come to one another. And the separations that tear us apart draw to an end.

15. Christ calls us to be reconciled without delay. We cannot forget his words in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, first go and be reconciled” (5:23-24). “First go” not “Put it off till later.”

16. In Damascus, in the Middle East beset by trials, there lives the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius IV. He has written these striking words: “The ecumenical movement is going backwards. What remains of the prophetic event of the early days incarnated in figures like Pope John XXIII and Patriarch Athenagoras? Our divisions make Christ unrecognizable; they are contrary to his will to see us be one ‘so that the world may believe.’ We have an urgent need for prophetic initiatives in order to bring ecumenism out of the twists and turns in which I fear it is getting stuck. We have an urgent need for prophets and saints to help our Churches to be converted by mutual forgiveness.”

17. During his visit to Taizé on October 5th, 1986, Pope John Paul II suggested a path to communion by saying to our community: “By desiring to be yourselves a ‘parable of community’, you will help all whom you meet to be faithful to their denominational ties, the fruit of their education and their choice in conscience, but also to enter more and more deeply into the mystery of communion that the Church is in God’s plan.”

© Ateliers et Presses de Taizé
Taizé-Communauté,
71250 Taizé, France
www.taize.fr