

Leaping Over Walls of Separation

In the four issues of 2012, the “Letter from Taizé” will develop the theme of “trust among human beings” announced by Brother Alois as an axis of reflection for the coming year. In this first issue, young people who took part in the European meeting share their personal experiences. Other texts on the same topic are available at www.taize.fr/letter.

Berlin is a symbol for all those who, throughout the world, try to leap over walls of separation in order to spread trust. (Brother Alois, *Letter 2012: Towards a New Solidarity*, introduction)

Sinwoo (Korea)

As a Korean, for me the Berlin meeting was a strong sign of hope. Even if no one had predicted the rapid reunification of Germany, it came about. In my country, there are walls not only between North and South but also in South Korea itself. For instance we have a different point of view between the younger generation, which does not care about separation so much, and older people, who still have family members on the other side. Unfortunately each political party has a different point of view, even for humanitarian support to North Korea.

I worked at the information point during the meeting, and I saw with my own eyes how many participants brought medications and medical equipment for North Korea. Even if some medications brought by participants were very small or already used, I was happy to see their warm heart, their generosity. I will try to pray for Korea persistently, trusting that the prayer, which is from God’s goodness, has power and that God has a plan for our country. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Opening ways of trust responds to an urgent need: although communication is becoming easier and easier, our human societies remain compartmentalized and fragmented. Walls exist not just between peoples and continents, but also close to us, and even within the human heart.

Sérgio (Portugal)

Taking part in the European meeting in Berlin, I saw how the wall was the symbol of this separation for many years, and when it came down, it came as a victory for the hopeful, for those who never lost their trust.

In our society, big efforts were made to make people connected; however, there is still a long way to go to make them united. To connect we need to overcome visible barriers, but to unite we have to tear down the invisible ones. These invisible barriers live inside of our hearts and are not taken down by organizations or social movements. These barriers are only taken down by each one of us. It’s the exercise of a personal reflection that can break these invisible walls and lay the way to a future in communion with one another and with Christ.

Religions are still ignorant of one another, and Christians themselves are divided into a host of different denominations.

Luc and Claire (France)

The history of the parish that welcomed us in Berlin is an image of reconciliation. The church of St Nikolai was destroyed during the Second World War and the reconstruction only began in the 1980s. When the Wall came down, an organ to accompany the celebrations was still missing. A parish in West Berlin had only one instrument that they offered to them as a sign of reconciliation.

Thanks to the sound of that organ, the parish little by little found some life and the church’s restoration could continue. Then, the question of the bells which had disappeared during the war arose. In the vicinity of the Lutheran parish there is a Catholic parish. They decided together that their bells were not dissonant, and rather than buy the same bells as before the war, the parish of St Nikolai chose bells that would ring in harmony with those of the Catholics. A beautiful witness to a Germany which is now building bridges and no longer walls.

Angelo (Italy)

The European meeting was a great experience for me, characterized by a wonderful family (they were Protestant) and new friends made during the meeting. Although it was my fourth pilgrimage of trust, the atmosphere of those days made me realize once again that there should be no divisions in the Church. And especially in Berlin, a city now united, but until twenty years ago divided by an unnecessary wall, one could see the unity that there should be among Christians. No more separation, but union among peoples. Only with trust and hope can this wall be torn down, so that we can live in community with all our Christian brothers and sisters. The task is difficult, but in Christ all the obstacles are eliminated.

To initiate solidarity, we need to go towards others, sometimes with empty hands, listening, trying to understand the man or woman who does not think like us... and already a deadlocked situation can be transformed.

Sam (England)

An inner change that I am taking away from Berlin is the knowledge that the love I feel for those around me does not detract from my love of God. Quite the opposite, they are one and the same. Even when those I love most do not share my faith, a love of humanity is always a love of God. Breaking down this wall in my heart has led to a liberation and greater security in my faith. When we are at unity with ourselves and start to find inner peace, this is when we can begin to project this peace onto the world around us.

An impetus towards a new solidarity is possible. It is nourished by the conviction that the history of the world is not predetermined. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 was unimaginable a few years before it happened. (Note 2)

Qvinny (Netherlands)

During the European meeting I attended a workshop about the Berlin Wall. People from those days shared their experiences; there was a film and we went to see the last piece of the wall. The crowd of people was so large that unfortunately I had to miss a large part of the personal stories. However, some bits of the stories I remember ("What was the first thing you did after the wall fell?" "I went to Taizé!") and the film were very impressive. What struck me most was the extent to which, after being separated for so many years, the people on both sides of the wall still felt so connected, still saw Berlin as one city, and never accepted their separation.

This is the image that I will take home with me: that the wall of which you are so afraid in the morning can have fallen unexpectedly by nightfall. And that your children will dare to play on the remaining pieces of your fear.

Prayer leads us at one and the same time towards God and towards the world.

Emöke (Romania)

Midday, after the sharing in the parishes all over Berlin and in the evening, we all came together for the same reason—to meet each other through prayer. For an hour we tried to forget our tiredness after a full day, and also we tried to forget those problems we brought with us from home. I'm always amazed by the power of the silence. And now, when thousands of young adults were in silence trying to open their hearts to welcome the same God, I was even more amazed. These are true moments of honesty. We become one, and for some moments those walls between nations are broken down. We become one in Christ and we all speak a common language, the "language of faith."