

Voicing a New Solidarity!

Editorial

By Rogermiller (Kenya)

For solidarity to be possible, people have to accept one another, be willing to share and work together. Solidarity can easily be achieved in places where people meet for a common purpose to achieve this effort. Sometimes solidarity becomes irritating when one's effort is not appreciated. Also it can be irritating if people don't share the same point of view. Leadership change is an important element of solidarity that helps people feel equal and encourages more participation. The spirit of solidarity is to do things that bring all people together from different regions or countries. Language barriers can be difficult but are not impossible as long as everyone makes an effort to communicate. In this newspaper we suggest possible strategies to achieve a new solidarity.

Old versus New Solidarity

By Jildou (Netherlands)

Solidarity is a concept that has always existed. But, as brother Alois suggests in his letter 2012-2015, new times ask for new solidarity: the old variant is, although still manifested by many, no longer sufficient. What has changed, and how should our attitude move along with those changes?

First of all, our increasing knowledge and always advancing technology enables people to travel across borders – not just one border, but multiple within only one day. There is a constantly growing mobility (both physical and “verbal”) amongst all people. International connectedness like this is not only a peaceful phenomenon – it leads to clashes between cultures, religions, ethnicities and social classes. This implies that “Old Solidarity”, no matter how strong, does not function as well as it used to. A New Solidarity is necessary: worldwide, not just within the borders of our own countries.

But a national pride keeps us from seeing others the way we see ourselves, to accept that in our hearts – regardless of our appearances, beliefs, norms and values – we are all similar; we all have the same basic needs. Among these needs is the need for love and acceptance. This we will receive in return for giving it.

Acceptance has more or less always existed, although it has often been created for egocentric purposes. In the very beginning, when expansion overseas found its start, individual groups “accepted” each other in order for commerce with other countries. Although times have changed, this kind of opportunistic acceptance has pretty much always been the case. On the other hand, nevertheless, people have a tendency to believe their own culture superior. Therefore there has also been a certain protectiveness. This isolationism should be removed in order to accomplish the New Solidarity.

(continued on page 2)

Editorial Staff

This newspaper is the result of the work of the reflection group "Towards a New Solidarity"; the articles have been written by some of the young people who took part in the group this week. To give your feedback and to continue the reflection write to:

echoes@taize.fr

Contents

Page 1	Editorial Old versus New Solidarity
Page 2	Media, Harmful and Helpful Meditation by brother Alois
Page 3	An Unequal Distribution of Resources
Page 4	Through Religion to Solidarity How Good It Is...

Profound contact is necessary to comprehend each other. All of us should therefore open up to other cultures, and also, consequently, open up to changes to our own culture. When two or more beliefs clash, a compromise has to be found to satisfy all of the concerned parties. Sometimes it is hard, even far-fetched to find the fitting compromise, but deep within we all know it is necessary; not to prove one of the parties right, but to give either of them the possibility to get their ways. Consequently, differences can exist, but in peace, and they will lead to conversations and deepened connections that can be helpful to solve world problems such as inequalities, riots and even wars.

Media, Harmful and Helpful

By Lieuwe (Netherlands)

Media has a lot of influence on solidarity between people. This article revolves around the following questions: why is media an issue and what can we do to solve this issue.

Influence of the media can be either positive or negative. Negative news articles often have the upper hand over positive ones. News is not objective, although it should be. News is only offered from one perspective. For example, Muslims are often associated with terrorist attacks, because of negative media, but many Muslims are equally peaceful or even more peaceful than others.

Media has become a commonly utilized way to alter the thoughts of people. This development is a very big problem for solidarity amongst people. Media creates a schism between different kinds of people, which makes solidarity less and less achievable among these peoples. On top of this, media has a tendency to exaggerate small problems. This unjustly puts certain groups of people in a bad light.

Taizé poses a good example of solidarity and how it is created. Perhaps the fact that there are no media, computers or internet in Taizé, is one of the reasons that solidarity is so present there. However, media is a fixed component of society that is impossible to leave out any more, as media is essential for learning what is happening on the other side of the world.

Concrete solutions to the problems that are caused by the media are hard to achieve. It is, for instance, tough to found a channel that everybody can agree with, because everybody has their own interests. In some countries, corruption is still a huge problem. The media plays a big role in the elections: it will take the side of the candidate that pays sufficiently. One image may influence the opinion of the viewer. It weakens solidarity, both within the country and internationally.

Objective media would therefore be a large step towards a new solidarity. In Taizé, Bible groups offer a possibility to become acquainted with and learn to understand other cultures in a peaceful way. This principle could be spread out over a whole country with the help of the media: they could broadcast news articles in which expressions of belief and culture would be explained. Like so, these expressions could be made comprehensible for other beliefs and cultures.

Another solution is to change the train of thoughts of the media which insinuates that news “must” be negative. Positive news about beautiful things can bring hope to people. The solution is to educate journalists so that they are encouraged to publish positive news rather than negative news.

All in all, media has a lot of influence. The current manner of bringing the news has to be changed, by expanding the solidarity that you can find within Taizé with the help of the media.

Meditation by Brother Alois

Church of Reconciliation, Thursday 18th of July

Each one of us can ask ourselves: what concrete act of compassion can I undertake in the coming days and weeks? This can be done in our immediate surroundings, in our families, among friends. But some among us are also ready to take a further step to go towards the poorest, the outcast, the ill, the children, the immigrants. Or to search together with unemployed people for ways to deal with their trial.

Everyone has gifts. There are those who know how to help the poor, or to listen to others, or to brighten the life of other people by means of art. Perhaps you can encourage one another and, in small groups, look for what act of compassion, even very small, very simple ones, you want to accomplish. Our societies are in great need of such actions. God will be close to you in this search. When we support others we understand better that, by the Holy Spirit, God supports us. And still more. Jesus tells us so clearly and simply: “What you did to the least, you did to me.”

An Unequal Distribution of Resources

By Alison (United States)

One of the biggest issues facing the world today is that there is an unequal distribution of resources. This is a multifaceted problem. On a global scale it is evident that some areas of the world are better off than other regions. One can compare Western Europe with Eastern Europe or North and South America for example. Individual countries vary greatly in their resources as well both globally and regionally.

To complicate matters, there are also discrepancies between people within each country. A few people tend to control or possess the majority of the wealth and/or resources while everyone else has less; some much, much less. This is a reality. It is not up for debate. Everyone can agree that of course some people have a lot and others have very little.

So if this is the case, why is it an issue for solidarity amongst all people? It seems that the biggest area that demands attention is on the extremes. There are people who are struggling to survive day to day while others have such exuberant wealth they don't know what to do with it all. But this is not just about focusing in on one group of people and what they should or shouldn't be doing to help the poor. All people should be held accountable for their mindset in addressing the worldwide standard of living. Everyone will need to have a change in mindset in order to move forward towards a new solidarity.

Many people become very anxious or even angry when the topic of how they should spend their money comes up. It is certainly a very challenging issue that faces each individual. In a time where economic uncertainty is the norm, attention to the distribution of resources is particularly important while at the same time there is a heightened fear about giving up one's money.

If this was an article directed at Christians, it would be logical to talk about stewardship and the need for people to remember that all that they have is a gift from God and should be shared with others. But, as we are looking for ways to reach a New Solidarity across religious barriers, another approach is needed. Fortunately, we don't need to start from scratch. The issue of an inequitable distribution of resources has been weighing on the hearts of many who have come before us. The United Nations published the "New Millennium Development Goals" in an effort to address the pressing issues of our time.



As you can see, there are a variety of issues to address. A lot of progress has been made in many of these areas, but there is still plenty of work to be done. If everyone picked just one of the goals to work on, huge progress could be made. There are a variety of forms this could take from using your time, talents, and treasures to make an impact.

While it is important that we pay attention to the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world, many of us see a need closer to home. All of us need to make a better effort to be informed about what is going on in our communities and in order to hold our respective governments accountable for their efforts. Individually political involvement can seem like a waste of time, but collectively we have a voice and can call on our governments to make better decisions about managing our resources and foreign and domestic aid programs.

Supporting local businesses when possible can help elevate the living conditions of our communities, but this often requires us to spend more than we would on products produced in countries where labor is very cheap. It is a choice all of us can make. In an effort to care for our global brothers and sisters in poorer countries we should commit to informing ourselves about what we buy and from where it comes. Frequently we enjoy buying inexpensive products without thinking about the possibility of slave or child labor being behind our cheap purchases. When purchasing foreign products is necessary, try to buy something with the Fair Trade logo on it. The Fairtrade market is making an effort to ensure people receive just payment for their labor.

In summary, an inequitable distribution of resources is an issue that affects a new solidarity amongst the people of the world. But rather than give up in light of such a daunting issue, we ask that you resolve to do what you can to make a difference. This article is only a starting point. Surely you have your own ideas and can see areas in your community in which you can help elevate the standard of living of those around you. We hope you will join us in our effort to increase awareness and promote action in an attempt to bring about a New Solidarity.

Through Religion to Solidarity

By Iryna, Ostap and Andriy
(Ukraine)

Each person, sooner or later begins to feel a craving for knowledge, a need to search for the essence of life. One of the universal methods which helps to reach this goal is offered by religion. Religion helps people to come closer to God, who represents the essence of life.

The variety of nations, races, geographical regions, social and political theories, led to the emergence of many world religions. Each religion seeks to answer questions about the meaning of life, our relationship to the Creator, and what happens after death. The answers reflect the unique worldviews of these religions. But these different perceptions are not deprived of common features and such basic features are presented by a faith in God. This can take a variety of forms from a higher mind, absolute kindness, harmony and eternal of the soul.

As there is a vast number of varying beliefs between faiths, discrepancies and conflicts arise between their followers and the absence of solidarity causes destructive consequences such as wars, terrorism, racism, intolerance and an unwillingness to compromise. All which serve to compromise the solution of global problems, namely famine, the spread of dangerous diseases, pollution of the environment, climate changes, exhaustion of resources and many others. Under such conditions we should build up such features of our character as sympathy and tolerance. We should seek to understand each other on a domestic level. In order to achieve this it will be necessary to hold back our egoism, and avoid prejudices and judgments. God exists to us as never ending wisdom and love which is offered freely to all.

Furthermore we need to love each other with a brotherly love and show

one another respect. We should smile with those who are smiling, and cry with those who are crying. As Saint Paul said in his letter to the Romans 10:12, God is the God for all who call on Him, whether they are rich or poor.

In order to solve the problem of solidarity between representatives of different religions and nationalities we may offer one more radical solution: joining of all beliefs and worldviews under the guidance of one faith. But this idea is quite complicated for implementation, taking into account the previously mentioned contradictions of the worldviews. Each of us seeks a common essence of life so we need to join our efforts. The outstanding Indian philosopher and humanist Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "Those who want to be in friendship with God should remain lonely or make the entire world their friend."

How Good It Is...

No Taizé project is complete without a Taizé-style song, but how to write a song about solidarity? What is solidarity? Nations like unity, community, and justice, seem to have something to do with it. If you open the Bible in the middle you will find yourself close to Psalm 133. The first verse of this song of David reads: "How good it is and how pleasant for brothers to live together." This line expresses exactly what solidarity and Taizé are about. Sharing a road and living together like brothers and sisters. It can be a common goal for everyone regardless of race, culture and religion. To those who live together like brothers and sisters, God gives his blessing as it says further on in the same Psalm.

How good it is, how pleasant for brothers / sisters / people to live together.

God gives his blessing to brothers / sisters / people who live together.

Workshops

This week, two workshops are led by the young people: on Friday, "Some ideas for implementing a "new solidarity" today"; on Saturday, "One human family!"

In the reflection towards a new solidarity, other topics to be dealt with could be welcoming refugees and migrants; interreligious dialogue; respecting ethnic minorities across the world; new forms of poverty. If you want to share a concrete experience linked to one of these topics, you can write to echoes@taize.fr

