

At Taizé, the reflection continues with the young people

SOLIDARITY: A COMPASS FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Editorial

What is the meaning of a “New Solidarity”? In our reflection group, we have been discovering the meaning of the word solidarity in several languages and also some personal definitions. Usually solidarity means supporting ideas and convictions of other persons or groups and readiness to work together. Some have also talked about sharing and helping others.

We have also discussed some practical examples of solidarity in our daily life, initiatives that are already in place in order to welcome migrants, to take care of the children or to use social media to cooperate. These are the signs of solidarity in our lives.

So why this call for a “new solidarity”? Jesus teaches us that God is present in every human being. He teaches us to love our neighbors, even those who sometimes hurt us, and maybe especially those. Does looking at other people through the eyes of God as his beloved creation can help us change our perspective on solidarity? What kind of new quality can we as Christians bring into solidarity?

By Marta (Poland)



Image from <http://www.freebievectors.com>

Deeper into the Word

By Varia (Russia)

How to start a discussion if everybody has a different definition of “Solidarity”? Shouldn’t we find common basis for this complicated and huge topic, should we? If solidarity could be a compass, it would need the only one pointer. So, let’s begin with the word itself.

The word Solidarity came from Latin “solid”, which means “firm”, “strong”, “durable”.

But what does it mean today?

- Oxford English Dictionary said, solidarity means unity or agreement of feelings or actions among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

- In German language solidarity stands for absolute unity, implicitly alliance based on the same beliefs and goals, the support given because of a feeling of a union .

- Russian dictionaries and encyclopedias also say that solidarity means people’s interdependency, common responsibility and concordance.

- In Italian: relationship or commonship among members of a collectivity who are ready to cooperate and help with each other, sharing of opinions ideas problems and sorrows.

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 Deeper into the Word
Page 2	Those who are next to us... The children in difficulty across the World
Page 3	What is your first idea? Solidarity with the non-smokers
Page 4	Meditation by brother Alois Sharing in small groups

- In Polish: It is a way of acting, supporting people, groups etc. or their convictions; acting together, unity. Being in solidarity with others means being ready to cooperate, being loyal.

These ideas can help us on the way of our personal and common reflection. What is the next step?

Those who are next to us...

What does concretely solidarity consist in? The answer is that it means helping the members of one's own community, those who have bonds with you and with whom you share your life. The word "solidarity" itself means something in the whole, in its entirety. One is in solidarity with the people felt as part of one's world: the dimension can vary according to the different mentalities: for someone it can have the size of a family, for someone else it can embrace their own sport club, their little town or a religious community, in short, what they feel belong to them and what they belong to either.

Solidarity has become "new" since now we are in a new world, ruled by cosmopolitan and multiethnic populations always in movement and even when still connected to each other through a globalized culture. This new and modern dimension of human existence must bring to an expansion of the border of our living sphere: we have to be in solidarity to our neighbours, but our neighbours, the person we share our life with, with whom we feel tight by common faith and beliefs, can live thousands of kilometres from our living place.

If we want our earth to be clean, it is not sufficient that we make the collection in our quartier to avoid having trash. We have to think wider, as citizens of the world and go beyond every political and national border in order to take the courageous but necessary economical decisions that would avoid the trash backlog everywhere under the sky, the only true roof of our home.

According to a recent opinion poll by an English institute, sharing makes 8 in 10 of us feel happier, so why aren't we doing more? 81% of us say sharing makes us happy, 75%

By Amina (Italy)

say it is good for our self-esteem. 79% of women feel better about themselves when they share compared with a lower 71% of men.

Solidarity can be found in our everyday life, in initiatives such as kleiderkreisel, couchsurfing, blablacar where people spontaneously organized to share clothes, couches or even free places in the cars!

On a wider scale these principles of sharing and cooperation have been applied in the last decade to the economy of many countries of South America, in particular Argentina. In this moment of deep crises, the economic model of solidarity represents a hope.

Indeed, economies of countries such as Argentina and Ecuador are growing despite the world wide crises and their backward economic system : what's their secret? Sharing. The city of Rosario, Argentina's third largest city with a population of 1.3 million, has developed some innovative responses. Instead of resorting to privatization, the municipality is trying to redevelop the economy based upon local means while encouraging cooperatives. Workshops guide participants in identifying their skills, evaluating the market, and deciding what services they can offer to the enterprise. Participants learn that a cooperative is a business that is jointly owned and democratically controlled, based on the values of mutual aid, responsibility, democracy, equality, equity.

Solidarity is the hard choice, egotism is always simpler. But as every hard choice, is the right one, for all those who believe that the size of their world go beyond their nose, and embrace all the beauty of the Creation.

The children in difficulty across the World

By Appolinaire (Benin), Lazare (Haiti) and Clémence (France)

During our group discussions we have come to a conclusion that there are many different kinds of difficulties across the world. We have realized that solidarity towards children in difficult situations is not organized in the same manner between France, Benin and Haiti.

In France, since 1945, the government has put in place laws to organize two forms of children care. For children who suffer physical and mental abuse the state allows for the child to be taken away from the family and placed in the care of shelters or host families. When it comes to children lacking care, the state has prepared home interventions system where social workers work directly with a family in order to assist them in their challenges. This assistance is provided by specially prepared educators, social assistants and animators in social centers as well as volunteers from different associations.

On the other hand in countries like Haiti or Benin the solidarity is rather on the familial level where the members of an extended family take responsibility for the child. If they are not capable of that, in come associations organized with the help of international actors like UNICEF or the International Red Cross. Generally the states do not define any policies in the area of child care.

First ideas, personal reflections

By Dilgo (Switzerland)

To find out what people think about solidarity, I asked them to tell me, what comes to their mind first if they hear the word solidarity. There are two words that were mentioned regularly: helping and friendship.

These words can stand for different meanings of the word solidarity. There is the personal and the global aspect of solidarity. While friendship pronounces more the personal and local effort, helping is often mentioned in a global and political context. Friendship starts in the family and includes attitude of unity. But to get unity solidarity is needed. Helping, however, is a more general idea. It is often expressed as a wish for a global adjustment done by the rich countries. But it does not exclude any personal effort. Other

words that were mentioned are: sharing, cooperation, respect and responsibility. Together these words can give us a good idea, what we can do to improve solidarity among people.

When I asked about the „new solidarity“, the responses were divided in positive and negative reactions. Many were agreeing that there is indeed the need for a new solidarity. And even if it may not be a new theme they supported the idea and committed least to think about it. But some also pointed at the many attempts have already been made to help and that seem to have only so little success. One person told me the following story as response:

During wartime a warrior asked a monk what the monastery is doing to protect themselves. The monk

answered: „We are praying. We are praying for peace and love among all people“. Hearing this, the warrior starts to laugh and says: „That sounds like the answer of a little child. That is the way little children are thinking.“ But the monk responded: „If every child would think so, there would be no war today.“

Peace and justice in connection with solidarity are words that express the wish for a better world. They are so simple but at the same time so hard to put into practice. But even though a global solidarity sometimes seems to be so far away, we shall never give up. If we always remember ourselves about solidarity, practice it in our neighborhood and pray for it, we will get there every day a little closer.

A calling of the heart: Solidarity with the non-smokers!

By Anton (Sweden)

Taizé is a wonderful place where people come together. Exciting meetings with new people, sharing of ideas and visions with complete strangers that you somehow know and feel connected to in a deep and beautiful way, are mixed with silence and much needed personal reflection.

People come to Taizé for different reasons. Some people come in search for God, others come to meet new people, some come for silence and quiet contemplation. We are not all Christians. We all have different perspectives of life, but what unites us is that we all search for something. Maybe we all share the vision of hope for a better world.

I hope for a world where people live longer, happier and disease-free lives. This week there are around 5000 people here in Taizé. The meeting continues in the breakfast line. Long lines of eagerly chatting people. Laughing, smiling, telling each other about the plans for the day. The community of Taizé and its population for the week begin another day filled with joy, excitement, inspiration and happiness.

Someone somewhere in the middle of the line lights a cigarette and we all share the more than 3000 different

substances that the cigarette smoke contains. In a second the idillic picture of Taizé is destroyed for me.

It is estimated that about five million people die every year of tobacco related diseases, and tobacco use is considered on the leading prevenible causes of death. As a medical student i have seen a 35 year old mom with a medical history of 15 years of smoking going through a heart surgery. I have seen lifelong smokers who develop lung disease and can not go anywhere without needing an oxigen canister. I have seen stroke parents with a long history of smoking. When i was doing my specialization at the cardiology department every single patient had similar medical history of smoking. Heart disease is the biggest cause of death in the western countries.

So please think twice before lighting a cigarette and show respect to the people around you. Smoking is a big health problem in the world and i believe that people in Taizé are intelligent and inspired to make the world a better place. A ban of smoking or at least smoking zones would be a step on the right way for longer and healthier lives. To me solidarity is about equal rights to live a healthier life.

Meditation by Brother Alois

Church of Reconciliation, Thursday 8th of August 2013

Our lives can shine with the light of God when, in following Jesus, we put ourselves at the service of others, when we transcend our egos and are welcoming to all, even those who have hurt us. Our life shines when we seek to recognize and promote the human dignity of the poorest.

Putting ourselves at the service of one another. That is how we want to live here at Taizé, passionately, with all our strength, each with the gifts he or she has received. What joy when we succeed, even just a little, even imperfectly! That joy impels us to go further.

Sharing in small groups

During the Friday workshop, four small groups will be offered. For each theme, a Biblical verse and some questions are proposed below.

Another workshop will be held tomorrow with another group of young people. The theme will be: "A Daily Life in Solidarity. How to Start?"



Picture by Sabine Leutenegger

Technologies and solidarity

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (Acts 2, 1-4)

Where do you realize solidarity in your daily life?
Are you a member of a social network?
What and with who do you share?
Have you ever heard about sharing websites?
Do you think the new solidarity can arise from technology?

Solidarity in economy

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack" he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Mark 10,21)

In your country which are the differences between different levels of society?
Do you think the rich countries should balance and contribute to the world economy?

Solidarity in welcoming refugees and migrants

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19, 33-34)

Where do you realize solidarity in your daily life?
What are your experiences with refugees and migrants?
How your country receives and integrates the migrants?
What can we do to help them?

Solidarity in children's care

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19,14)

Do you know the kind of difficulties that children can encounter in underclass countries and in rich countries?
Do you know how is organized the help to children with difficulties? (lack of education, bad treatments, ...)