

**9:00 Chiara's speech at Sacred Heart and Vera Araujo –
What idea of the person can be found at the roots of the
EoC?**

Piacenza, January 29, 1999

**Ceremony of the honorary degree in "Economics" conferred on
Chiara Lubich
by the Sacred Heart Catholic University (53')**

... Now we come to the social aspect of the Movement.

With regard to the communion of goods, there are people who live it in a complete way. They are people – thousands - who, totally dedicated to its aims, give their entire income month after month, and make a will in which they give any future goods to the poor, especially through the formative, apostolic, charitable and social activities of this Movement, which in turn, of course, provides for their maintenance.

The others give their surplus.

The Movement's social aspect is expressed also in tangible works. They are not part of a predetermined plan; rather, they rise up naturally from the hearts of its members who are educated in loving. More than ends in themselves, they want to witness to this love so that Jesus' testament may be achieved among many.

...

We have approximately one thousand of these social works varying in size.

But typical of our Movement is the so-called *economy of communion* exercised in freedom, which is a particular experience of solidarity in economy. As an authentic expression of the spirituality of unity in the sphere of economy, it can be understood in its entirety and complexity only if considered from the spirituality's viewpoint of the human person and social relationships.

It began in Brazil in 1991. The Movement, present in that country since 1958, spread to all its States, attracting people of every social category.

However, some years ago – because of the rapid growth of the Movement (there are approximately 250,000 of us in Brazil) – I realized that we were unable to cover even the most urgent needs of our members, notwithstanding the intense communion of goods. It seemed to me, then, that God was calling our Movement to something new.

Although I am not an expert in economic problems, I thought that our people could set up firms and business enterprises so as to engage the capabilities and resources of all, and to produce together in favor of those in need. They would have to be managed by competent persons who would be capable of making them function efficiently and derive profits from them.

These profits would be put in common freely.

One part would be used for the same goals of the early Christian communities: to help those in need, to give them something to live on until they find work. Another part, to develop structures to form “new

people” (as the apostle Paul calls them), that is, people formed and animated by love, suited to what we call the “culture of giving”. Finally, one part would certainly be used for the growth of the firm.

An entrepreneurial sector would have to spring up in our little towns of witness - we have twenty of them throughout the world. They are modern townships with all the expressions of modern life. Thus the presence of business enterprises is also required alongside schools of formation, houses for families, a church, handicraft industries and other activities that have risen up for the maintenance of its inhabitants.

The idea was welcomed enthusiastically not only in Brazil and in the rest of Latin America, but in Europe and other parts of the world. Many new businesses came to life and many existing ones have adhered to the project by modifying their way of operating a business.

Adhering to this project today are some 654 companies and 91 minor productive activities. It involves enterprises operating in different economic sectors, in more than 30 countries: 164 operate in the commercial sector, 189 are industrial businesses and 301 operate in other services.

The experience of the *economy of communion*, with the specific characteristics it draws from the spirituality, takes its place alongside the numerous individual and collective initiatives that have sought and seek to “give a human face to economy”, as well as the many entrepreneurs and workers, often unknown, who envision and live this economic activity as something more and different from the pure pursuit of material benefit.

In fact, as it is in many other ideally motivated economic realities, the adherents of this project – entrepreneurs, managers, employees

and others in the work force – are on the front lines in focusing, in all aspects of their activity, on the needs and aspirations of the person and on the well-being of the common good. In particular, they seek:

- to establish loyal and respectful relations animated by a sincere spirit of service and collaboration with clients, suppliers, public administrators and also with competitors;
- to show appreciation for employees by involving them, to various degrees, in management;
- to maintain a way of operating the business which is inspired by a culture of legality;
- to be very attentive to the workplace and respect for nature, also by meeting the expenses of costly investments;
- to cooperate with other business and social realities in the area, with a look to solidarity towards the international community.

The *economy of communion* presents other characteristics, which are very significant for us, because they are directly connected to our spirituality's vision of the world. Here are a few:

1. Those involved in the business enterprises of the *economy of communion* seek to follow, albeit in the forms required by the context of a productive organization, the same style of behavior that they live out in all ambits of life. We are convinced, in fact, that we must imbue every moment of life in society with the values we believe in, therefore also economy, so that it too may become a place for human and spiritual growth.

2. The *economy of communion* proposes modes of behavior inspired by gratuitousness, solidarity and care for those in need – attitudes normally considered typical of non-profit organizations – even in businesses which naturally seek a profit. Therefore, the *economy of communion* does not present itself so much as a new form of enterprise, alternative to those already existing. Rather, it intends to transform from within the usual business structures (whether they are shareholding corporations, cooperatives, or other) by establishing all relations inside and outside the companies in the light of a lifestyle marked by communion. Everything is done in full respect for the authentic values of the business and of the market (those pointed out by the social doctrine of the Church, and in particular, by John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*).
3. Those who find themselves in economic straits, the recipients of a part of the profits, are not viewed simply as persons who are “assisted” or as “beneficiaries” of the business. Instead, they are essential members of the project, within which they give their needs as a gift to others. They too live the culture of giving. In fact, many of them renounce the help they receive as soon as they recuperate a minimum of economic independence, and not rarely, they share with others the little they have. All this is an expression of the fact that in the *economy of communion*, although it underlines the culture of giving, the emphasis is not put on the philanthropy of a few, but rather on sharing, where each one gives and receives with equal dignity, in the ambit of a substantially reciprocal relationship.

4. In addition to the support provided by a profound understanding among the promoters of each business, the *economy of communion* enterprises feel that they are part of a vaster reality. They put in common the profits because they are already living an experience of communion. This is why the business enterprises – as I already mentioned – develop within small (at least for now) “industrial parks” in the area of the Movement’s little towns, or, if geographically distant, they are ideally “linked” to them.

Many people ask how these businesses, so attentive to the needs of all the subjects they deal with and of society as a whole, can survive in a market economy.

Certainly, the spirit that animates them helps to overcome many of those internal contrasts, which obstruct and in some cases paralyze all human organizations. In addition, their way of operating attracts the trust and benevolence of clients, suppliers, and financiers.

Nonetheless, we should not forget another essential element – Providence – which has constantly accompanied the development of the *economy of communion* during these years. In the *economy of communion*, we leave room for the intervention of God, also in concrete economic activities. And we experience that after every choice that goes against the current of usual businesses procedures, he gives that hundredfold which Jesus promised: an unexpected income, an un hoped-for opportunity, the offer of a new collaboration, an idea for a new leading product....

This, in brief, is the *economy of communion*.

In proposing it I certainly did not have a theory in mind. Nonetheless, I see that it is drawing the attention of economists, sociologists, philosophers and scholars of other disciplines, whose interest in this new experience and in the ideas and categories underlying it, go beyond the Movement in which it developed historically.

In particular, in the "trinitarian" vision of interpersonal and social relationships, which is at the basis of the *economy of communion*, some people glimpse a new key of interpretation which could also enrich the understanding of economic interactions and therefore contribute towards going beyond the individualistic foundation that prevails today in the science of economics.

Which Anthropology for an Economy of Communion ?

Assembly EoC , May 2011

Mariapolis Ginetta

by Vera Araújo

Every celebration must state its deepest reasons for its being "revoked."

Today, for us to celebrate does not so much mean to mark an event that took place 20 years ago with solemnity or to exalt with a rite. Instead, it means to recall, in the sense of rendering present, the intimate reasons that gave life to that event. And it means above all to reflect on our commitment and involvement in that event, by looking at the present and the future.

All of us here today know what the Economy of Communion is in its characteristic traits, its specific goals and methodology. We also know how it has developed over time and of its expansion throughout the world. We also are cognizant of its joyful moments and its difficult ones. Everything has by now become a patrimony to be safeguarded and from which to draw direction and suggestions to go ahead.

Certainly, we understand always more fully that the task we have been called to is neither simple nor easy, even though always fascinating. Above all, it is not an endeavour for amateurs, but, as Chiara said while launching this project, it demands people that are suitably prepared and convinced.

The EoC will increasingly take up the task of deepening the different aspects of the project and scientifically elaborate on them so as to offer all those involved valid and effective support and assistance.

I have always thought that the Economy of Communion requires a new anthropological vision with consequent concrete ramifications. In other words, we can ask ourselves: "Which anthropology for an economy of communion?" Or even: "What type of person is capable of wedding economy and communion together?"

All human beings are called to live the reality of communion in every aspect of their existence. We realize that this could seem an utopia in a society such as our current one, marked by the crisis in interpersonal relationships, with frightening consequences on the social, economic, institutional and international levels.

But in order to speak about economy in the fullest sense, we must first of all recuperate the role and the centrality of the *person*, lost in modern culture in the gaps of the various systems, or in the absolute affirmations of one's own individualism and identity.

To re-propose the centrality of the person means to purify it and free it from old and absolute ideological schemes and to place it at the basis of the historical-social sciences, in order to deepen its real meaning today, in the fragmentation and fluid state of modernity.

To say *person* means to speak of relationships, of communion, because the person is the source of communion. To say person also means identity and sociality, an identity that qualifies the person as a unique being, non-exchangeable and non-suppressible. Sociality present in his/her DNA as constitutive of his/her being, already wholly present in the individual person and which is expressed fully in the encounter with the other as an essential moment.

It follows that to live in communion is not optional, but a deep yearning that each of us has; without it, we will always be unsatisfied, in search and incomplete.

The real problem, therefore, is that of understanding how to live communion in a society that seems to be expressly made to live individualistically.

This is a problem that is overcome with the creativity typical of human beings, who are capable of transforming with their will and intelligence the negative into the positive, or vice versa. In this way, *ethnic pluralism*, instead of being a barrier becomes a chance to be

enriched (the stranger, the person who is different, that we meet on the street, at work, is a person with whom I can and must build a rapport of communion); *religious pluralism* can go from being sectarianism to an open dialogue, a unique opportunity to live respect for ideas of others, but also to seek out the truth together; *political pluralism* can move from being a clash on every action or decision made to becoming a privileged moment to discover the good together, not just for some, but for all (the good of the city, of the nation, of the world); the *economic inequalities*, the *material poverty*, but also the *moral* one, can become moments of redemption, of sharing.

In the relationships that are built between one and the other, we can create a real and true communion with a deep meaning, made of a living unity that tends to being fulfilled in the fusion of souls, in the meeting up of goals, in the accomplishment and perfection of a process of unification.

Communion can have different intensities, but must always be authentic and non-formal. Communion with our family members or with friends is not the same as with our next door neighbour or the cashier at the grocery store, but both need to be relationships with people and not with functions, or worse yet, with objects.

Simply stated, communion comes about there where people establish real relationships, meaningful and significant ones, innervated by real love, fruit of the constant thrust to give oneself to others, whoever they may be, in the effort to overcome one's own egocentric

and closed individualism, in order to reach an open and mutual understanding.

For Christian faithful, the source of this communion between persons is the Trinity itself, model of unity, reflection of the intimate life of God, One in three Persons.

This is the teaching of the Church as we can find it in the encyclical by John Paul II *Sollicitudo rei socialis*: « At that point, awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ - "children in the Son" - and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit will bring to our vision of the world *a new criterion for interpreting it*. Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and strong, there is discerned in the light of faith a new model of the unity of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our solidarity. This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word "communion."» (40).

This model of Trinitarian communion is not abstract or distant, but wants to be realized on earth among human beings. Chiara Lubich wrote: «This is the life of the Trinity which we must try to imitate by loving one another, with that love which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts, just as the Father and the Son love one another. Since the beginning of our Movement we were deeply struck by the words of Jesus' prayer for unity: "As you Father are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us ..." (Jn 17:21). We understood that we had to love one another to the point of being consumed in one and then becoming

distinct again in that oneness. Like God who, being Love, is One and Three.» (“Lesson” on occasion of the conferment of the Honorary Doctorate in Theology from the University of Trnava [Slovak Republic], 23.06.2003, Castelgandolfo [Rome], Publishing House: Nové Mesto, Bratislava, p. 36).

In order to reach this high level of human communal life, it is necessary to pay attention to our relationships, to develop our interpersonal skills, to understand in depth the essence of human relationships in order to build them in our daily lives and include them in our societal plans.

Let’s pause a bit to investigate this reality that is so central to our existence.

There is a felt urgent need for a culture of relationships, a true revolution capable of facing the challenges of our time. In other words, one feels the need for a formation to the knowledge and practice of those *values* that permeate significant relationships.

At the risk of appearing out of touch, I would indicate *love* to be one of these fundamental elements. I am comforted by the fact that mine is not a “religious” talk, or at least not only religious. I find myself in good company in assigning love the pre-eminence and foundation of relationships.

The great Russian sociologist Sorokin, in the introduction of one of his later works, thus confesses: «Whatever may happen in the future, I know that I have learned three things that remain forever as firm convictions in my heart and mind. Life, even the hardest life, is the most

valuable, beautiful, wonderful and miraculous good in the world. The carrying out of one's duty is another stupendous thing that makes one's life happy, and this is my second conviction. The third is that cruelty, hate, violence and injustice can never and will never bring about a psychological, moral or material rebirth. The only way to reach it is through the noble way of creative and generous love, not only preached but also coherently lived.»¹

For him, the forms of human relationships are three:
compulsory (coercive);
contractual (establishing contract)
love relationship (of love).

I would also like to cite the Polish sociologist, Bauman, who stated: «Love consists in adding something to the world, and each addition is the living trace of the loving I; in love, our own self is gradually transplanted in the world. Our loving self is spread through our self-giving to the object loved. Love consists in the survival of the self through the alterity of the self.»²

For us Christians, love is agape, love that is essence itself of God, given to us by the Holy Spirit («the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.» [Rm 5:5]). It is with this love that we can nourish our relationships in order to reach communion. We well know this art of loving that Chiara, through her

¹ P.A. SOROKIN, *Il potere dell'amore*, Città Nuova, Roma 2005, p. 35.

² Z. BAUMAN, *Amore liquido*, Laterza, Bari 2004, p. VI.

charism, taught us with words and her witness of life, drawn from the source of the Word of God, from the Gospel of Jesus.

Let us quickly review the basic points of the art of loving:

- *love everyone*

Real love is universal, it is not partisan, it does not exclude according to who is just, or categories of every type: sex, ethnicity, race, social standing, citizenship, faith and every other diversity. Everyone, but really everyone, must be included in the circuit of love.

- *be the first to love*

To take the initiative in loving means to break down barriers, overcome obstacles, tear down fences, and go beyond the walls in order to enkindle a flame, a light; still yet, it means overcoming a certain "fear" to arm oneself with courage and... to begin with energy. To begin is a key attitude: it means to break the ice, to find the right word or phrase that sets off the process, the advancement.

In a page from her Diary in 1971 Chiara wrote: «"To love everyone" and "to be the first to love" places our souls in such a dynamic that it sure does not leave them dormant: and so – the Gen would say: 'for the gift of science' – as the stars exist as long as they move, we exist as long as we love. These two sentences are so powerful that they alone would be enough to give the maximum speed to our inner life with all the consequences that we can imagine".»

- *To make ourselves one*

These are a few words that contain a century full of wisdom and that are not only useful, but often determinant in our relational life.

To make ourselves one includes the urge to seek out the other person – whoever they may be – there where they are and in the situation in which they live, without prejudice and expectations from us. And, consequently, to share in the joys and burdens of the other and make them our own, by following Paul's teaching: «Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another...» (*Rm 12:14-15*).

- To love our enemy

Here it is not a matter of ancient wisdom. Here we are speaking about something new, that novelty that Jesus brings.

The Gospel message that is proposed to us asks us to overcome and get rid of the concept of the enemy, for example, of the heavenly Father who sends the sun and rain on the good and the bad. «Love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you» (*Lk 6:27*). They are simple and clear words that decree a change of mentality and judgement and, above all, that contain a precise mandate to inaugurate a type of human society that excludes, because of the resolution of contrasts, conflicts and simple oppositions, the use of force, vengeance and lies, the instruments of war, the transgressions of power, and abuse and oppression.

To love one's enemy, today, in our time, is a pressing invitation to total global disarmament, firstly the disarmament of hearts, of intellects and also arms, not to fall into tolerance and anarchy, chaos

and disorder, but to invent, with creative imagination that is nourished on love, tools, forms and ways that are more in tune and coherent with a person's dignity, that of the community and of peoples; to bring about a justice – so corrupt today – that is not inspired by violence, but gives room to methods where forgiveness and mercy are included; a real possibility for rehabilitation.

The enemy then is not only the terrorist, the violent person, the oppressor, but is simply whoever hurts me, or does not have my best interests at heart. It is the person who does not greet me, who spreads lies about me, who stops me from being promoted at work.

I feel it dutiful to make this message and teaching sink into the very core of our daily life, in our work activities, in our participation in civic and political life, in our families, social communities and towns, in our nations and global community.

Love-agape then takes on colour, or better, assumes at its heart and in its manifestations all the *civic virtues*, all the *values* that mark a society that is truly *human*, with cultural and spiritual dimensions.

We can discern a *growth* in love, a quantitative but also qualitative growth. The first tends to become a *habitus*, that is, an attitude which is always more constant, stable, solid and less precarious, variable or rare.

The qualitative growth of love-agape instead regards a series of value contents, that only gradually are we able to take on in a lasting way.

Let's try and list a few.

A minimum, indispensable grade of social relationships lived in love is *tolerance*. Tolerance means that, in relationships, the other person can be him/herself, can reveal who she/he is, while I can maintain an attitude of almost indifference. It is already something positive but, we can understand right away, also insufficient. Tolerance can impede open contrasts, a harsh exchange or even outright conflict, but it is certainly not able to build constructive relationships.

Another important value is *respect*. It means something more than tolerance. Respect recognizes the value and identity of the other person as something that speaks to me and communicates something of their self. A true societal life is not possible without respect for the dignity of others.

Richard Sennett, an American sociologist, recently published a significant work entitled: "Respect – Human Dignity in an Unequal World." In commenting the social welfare system in his country, he stated that it does not safeguard people's dignity because in offering social services, it does not do so with due respect.

Another attitude that is always more necessary for our relationships is that of *gift*. In a society such as our current one, characterized always more by the culture of having in which money is able to commodify the most varied expressions, the concept of gift emerges as the element of liberation and freedom. There is currently a real re-discovery of the concept of gift happening. Just to quote two sources: «The gift contains an unalienable social and relational aspect;

and in it is present a concretization of expressions and consequences, also independently from the internal or interior orientations – for example, charitable, philanthropic or ‘interested’ orientations – of the person who makes it.»³

The great sociologist Simmel states that a reciprocal action is formed in giving and accepting a gift: «In every giving, beyond the intrinsic value of the gift, is included a spiritual value which we cannot absolutely undo or annul with another gift that is externally equivalent to the inner bond created through the acceptance of the gift. The acceptance of the gift is not only a passive enrichment, but also an acknowledgement of the donor. As in giving, also in soliciting that someone give to you, emerges a predilection that goes well beyond the value of its object.»⁴

We can say that the human being is a giver, able of self-giving and to give. This capacity is innate to his/her nature.

For believers, this is the fruit of their being “in the image and likeness of God” (see *Jn* 1:26), the first and generous giver. For non-believers, it is a fruit of their relational nature, capable of opening up to others in gift of self.

For both the first and the latter, the gift and self-giving are an existential category that should be included at all levels of relational life, be it private or public, in order to build a healthy and civil society.

³ G. GASPARINI, *Elementi per una sociologia del dono*, in AA. VV., *Il dono – tra etica e scienze sociali*, Ed Lavoro, Rome 1999, pp. 17-18.

⁴ G. SIMMEL, *La religione*, Bulzoni, Rome 1994, p. 73.

But we must be careful. The real gift and a true gift, has its own characteristics: it is *gratuitous* («Freely you received, freely give» *Mt* 10:8), *altruistic* (and not egotistical), *disinterested* (and not utilitarian) *joyful* («Each one should give as much as he has decided on his own initiative, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver» *2 Cor* 9:7) *abundant*, *generous* (and not calculated) *simple and sincere* («When you give, you should give generously from the heart...» *Rm* 12:8).

Also Chiara has always encouraged us to live the culture of giving.

Two brief excerpts from her writings:

«Let's give always, let's give a smile, understanding and forgiveness; let's listen; let's give our intelligence, will and availability; let's give our time, talents and ideas ...; let's give our actions; experiences and capabilities; let's give our goods ... so that nothing accumulates and everything circulates. Giving: let this be the word that gives us no respite.» (C. Lubich, *Santi insieme*, Rome 1994, p 104).

«As each plant created by God absorbs from the earth only the water that it needs, let's also make the effort to possess only the things that we need. We are better off if once in a while we realize we are in need of something. It's better to be a bit poor, than a bit rich.» (C. Lubich, *On the Holy Journey*, New York 1988, p 66).

Also *solidarity* is a connecting element in relational life. Solidarity means to pay attention to the *other* who is in need and with whom we identify by sharing in their worries, pains, sufferings, anguish, spiritual

and material needs. Solidarity involves the vital forces of society that, organized into so-called “active volunteerism,” meets the most diverse needs which the other persons, whatever person, finds themselves in. Solidarity is not only a question of committing to doing, it is a virtue that is born from the conviction that the other person not only must be aided, but must enter again in the actions of each one; it is a virtue that is born from the heart, a heart that is capable of feeling and of being moved by the suffering of others, which then becomes the firm and persevering resolve to give for the good of everyone and each one, because each one feels and is truly responsible for all.

Tolerance, respect, gift, solidarity: these are some of the expressions of agape. Each one of us can add others, already experienced in our lives.

This programme to create “new people” is certainly demanding but a bearer of joy, of satisfaction, of inner serenity, of deep peace, of human fulfilment.

The question that may come to us is this one: are we capable of so much? Are we able to face the cost, the inevitable sufferings that such actions bring? Is it worth it all? Is there hope on the horizon of our life?

Benedict XVI dedicated one of his encyclical letters to hope, the *Spe Salvi*. Together with you, I would like to follow him in his deep and convincing reflection:

«To suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person

who truly loves—these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself. Yet once again the question arises: are we capable of this? Is the other important enough to warrant my becoming, on his account, a person who suffers? Does truth matter to me enough to make suffering worthwhile? Is the promise of love so great that it justifies the gift of myself? In the history of humanity, it was the Christian faith that had the particular merit of bringing forth within man a new and deeper capacity for these kinds of suffering that are decisive for his humanity. The Christian faith has shown us that truth, justice and love are not simply ideals, but enormously weighty realities. It has shown us that God —Truth and Love in person—desired to suffer for us and with us.» (SS 39).

Which anthropology for an economy of communion? For an economy that is adept for our times? What anthropology is needed for our global challenges?

In the course of its evolution, of its growth, the human being was called to face new realities, to set off on unknown paths and head for foreign horizons, at times full of unforeseeable things. And the human being has always been able to plunge in and adapt in order to still be the protagonist, according to the loving plan of God, as his representative on earth.

From his awareness of being *homo sapiens sapiens*, he slowly took on many new traits – *homo faber*, *homo oeconomicus*, *homo politicus*, *homo comunitarius*, *homo psychologicus*, *homo ludens* and so on, according to the transformations in his personal and societal life. In

these characteristics, one can feel the influence of one or the other reality.

The Globalization on the move in our world, the growing sense of interdependence, the search for unified solutions to our economic problems, to those of science, political participation, concerns for the environment, etc., seem to demand a different type of person, less territorial and... exactly, global, a sort of *universal-person*, according to a great expression by Chiara Lubich.

Maybe, and without maybe, this is the era that intensely awaits the emergence of a new type of man and woman, capable and able to embrace all the dimensions of life: from the spiritual to the material ones, from the economic to the political, social and civil spheres, from the relational to the communion dimension. These are the suitable times for the *homo agapicus* to inhabit our planet: the person who knows how to love and finds in love the seed, the light, the strength and the truth of everything and of each thing; who will be able to bring all works and diversities into communion.

9:45 Panel 1: entrepreneur and business

The Importance of *Working in and for Communion* in the Economy of Communion John A. Mundell, President/CEO, Mundell & Associates

May 25-28, 2011 International Economy of Communion Assembly

Introduction

Protagonists Today of a New Economy

Mariapolis Ginetta, Brazil

What I want to share today are some practical perspectives on the Economy of Communion that may be of special interest to my fellow EoC business owners here at this meeting. If someone would ask each of us: "*How does an EoC business operate?*" they would likely get a slightly different answer from each owner. This was one of the dilemmas we faced when we began writing the new *General Guidelines for Operating an Economy of Communion Business* that we will discuss in the next several days in our afternoon working groups. What is 'it' that makes us so unique or so different from a typical business? Perhaps this question leads us to a more important, more fundamental question that I ask myself at the end of each week as a personal 'examination of conscience': "*Is our business really an Economy of Communion company?*"

The answer might at first seem obvious. Some of us business owners might respond: "*Well, yes, I'm here at this congress, and I'm on the EoC business list, and I've even shared some of my profits with those in need.*"

However, the real answer requires us to consider something that Chiara Lubich reminded us of from time to time (I will paraphrase here): We are truly part of the Focolare Movement only when we love with a

love that has no limits. Or, said in a negative way for emphasis (with my words, and not Chiara's):and we are not a part of it when we don't love with a love that has no limits. So, perhaps we could also say for our meeting here: We are truly part of the Economy *of* Communion only when we work '*in communion*' and '*for communion*', and we are not, when we don't.

Working In and For Communion

So, what does it mean to work '*in communion*' and '*for communion*'? What does it 'look like'? '*In communion*' denotes both an 'action' and an 'attitude': the 'way' we work when we work. '*For communion*' denotes a 'purpose' behind the action: why we work, the intent behind our activities. And so, two good businesses could appear to perform exactly the same 'outward action' by producing the same tangible product (e.g., tennis shoes, cookies, perfumes, hair products). The first company may do good work and offer a good product – its job is done! But the EoC company must maintain an atmosphere of communion as it works, and produce communion as a result. If it produced a good tennis shoe but did not produce communion, it is a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and it is not an EoC company! (note: it is by far better to produce communion and fewer tennis shoes!). This is an important point, because one of the distinguishing characteristics of our EoC business lifestyle is the fact that behind each moment of each business day, an EoC business owner tries to live with a continuous awareness of the other person, in order to create and maintain a workplace and business *of communion*. There are many, many business owners in the world, and many socially-responsible companies that do 'good works' with

'good hearts'. But that alone, for us, is not enough. We desire an added dimension, an intangible but nevertheless real product: communion.

Each one of us – business owners, employees, advisors, and interested academics – must examine this idea of working *in* and *for communion*, and I would ask you to look at it with me on three levels:

§ *On the business level* - that is, within the company, between the employees and those who support the business operations, between the company and its clients, between the company and its competitors, and between the company and the daily mail carrier.

§ *On the local community level* - within the local geographic area where the business operates, including the local Focolare community; and

§ *On the global level* - within the world community, including the global Focolare community.

I would like to say a few things about each of these levels.

Communion within the Company

The first of these levels of working in communion – within the company - is the one that hits us business owners 'right in the face'. It is the everyday happenings; the 'hustle and bustle' of operating the business; the managing of relationships between everyone within the company, and with everyone who works directly with the company. It is the daily demands and unexpected events that must be worked through to make the business productive and function as it should. In some ways, this is the most significant 'communion level' for a business, because it is the true 'testing ground' for living the life of the EoC. We must give attention to working in and for communion within the business, so that the business may develop the capacity to go out 'beyond itself', to grow

and to achieve long-term economic sustainability. A company that cannot sustain itself and its workers cannot contribute to the ongoing mission of the EoC.

Within the company, the starting point of all of our efforts must be to continually convert ourselves to this 'new' mode of business operation. And, as Chiara often reminded us: before everything else, we must 'be and live' before we speak. Our choice to live a business lifestyle of communion means: being the first to reach out and demonstrate care or concern for the other, treating everyone with equal care and respect no matter what position they hold or how they impact the company, demonstrating our concern and care for others with concrete actions; and sharing the others' challenges and successes as if they are our own.

This 'Art of Business

Management' you may recognize as coming from the 'Art of Loving' which Chiara gave us and the Focolare promotes, but now we apply it in our day-to-day business operations as an owner or an employee of a company.

What does this 'Art' look like in our companies? It may take the form of helping a colleague complete an unexpected task with a deadline; of providing a comfortable work environment for our employees; of treating everyone fairly; of allowing periodic breaks in the work schedule to reduce stress; or of controlling the amount of overtime someone is asked to work. It may mean encouraging clear and consistent communications among everyone, to foster open and honest dialogue. It may also mean planning and finding time for 'non-productive' office activities that foster teamwork and build relationships

– from birthday celebrations, to picnics, to after-work entertainment events.

So what does this lifestyle of communion compel us to do? - To consult with others when making decisions. - To listen. To really listen. - To consider everyone else's ideas as I consider my own.

- To share, daily, moment-by-moment, with those who are placed next to us. - To share work responsibilities with everyone according to their abilities. - To go beyond our own egos and to be willing to give our lives for the others.

Working in communion reminds us that the best work comes from 'the group' and not from 'the individual', and that only if we are ready to 'lose' our ideas, will we be able to find 'the' idea that is best for the everyone and for the company. And so, our biggest challenge to work in communion within the company is - ourselves.

These are all things that focus on supporting a healthy 'internal' office atmosphere. In a small startup company with just a few people, the entrepreneur's individual efforts to live the values of the EoC are easily seen by everyone and they directly impact all operations. Flexibility in the handling of employee-specific circumstances exercised by the owner and a willingness to consider case-by-case situations contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of communion, just like in a family. However, as a company grows, its operations become more complex and the owner has less flexibility in responding to varying circumstances. The owner is no longer able to follow every detail, so he/she must delegate some authority and decision- making to others. Then, the owner must closely follow these delegations so that, through

them, the intangible goals of the EoC remain intact and the values of the EoC stay at the forefront in all decisions.

In this stage of the EoC business, this likely requires the development of training programs that teach EoC principles and integrate its values into all aspects of the business: administrative, production, accounting and finance, sales and marketing, and human resources procedures. In this way, the EoC atmosphere permeates the company at all levels. Our ideal is an EoC company where everyone knows and understands its values and freely chooses to live them. To effectively achieve this is one of our greatest challenges going forward into the future. However, we must meet this challenge to assure the sustainability of the EoC culture as a company grows, as its management expands, and even as the founder retires and is replaced by others.

Communion with the Local Community

A second level of working in communion – within the local geographic community – develops gradually over time. As it develops, it affects how the business is seen by all who come in contact with it. Any business, whether it wants to or not, influences - for good or not so good – people and businesses outside of its regular operations. The idea of spreading the ‘culture of giving’ by the business’ example begins at this level. When the employees of the EoC business understand that the company is not only interested in itself, they begin to see its wider mission, as part of a community. For example, when we purchase company supplies from nearby businesses and eat at local restaurants, even when it might be cheaper elsewhere, they see that we value ‘relationships’ more than ‘monetary costs’. When we give them time to

help in local social projects in our neighborhoods, they see that it is not all about profit, and they experience a new world, where everyone gives and receives. Becoming part of the community changes attitudes within the company; giving back to the community evangelizes everyone within the company. These changes are both personal and company-wide, and when they become visible to the community because they are real and mutual, they can show other business owners and community members a new way forward to a more authentic and close-knit community. The culture of giving begins to spread beyond the business, and manifests itself in small and not-so-small ways.

These 'local' relationships must also extend in concrete ways to other EoC companies in our countries, and to others we know within the Focolare. This might mean purchasing products and services from other EoC businesses or Focolare people when possible, which begins a string of 'win-win' situations that helps both ends of the transaction. It surely means a commitment to relationships such as staying in contact with other EoC business owners through emails, lunches, SKYPE calls, or meetings. I can't tell you how important regular, deep sharing of our 'souls' with other EoC entrepreneurs is! This is one of our 'secret weapons' of sanity! We can help one another to face successes and failures, resignations and firings, financial disasters, and difficult clients. In our EoC neighbor, we find someone who chooses to 'love your company as his/her own'. This 'special' relationship gives us the strength and courage to persevere in difficult times, and to persevere in both business and in communion. There are many financial and business advisors in the world (and we need them). But the EoC entrepreneur is a

rare breed who can offer advice and support in living out our ideal to produce our intangible product: communion.

The practical wisdom of Chiara in calling for the development of business parks next to our Focolare little cities is immense, since communion lived among the businesses is not some nebulous, idyllic concept, but a true, lived, concrete and essential reality that grows deeper and deeper as we engage more and more with each other in the daily happenings of our businesses. Proximity to other EoC businesses also leads to some very practical sharing of resources: from printers and computers, to conference rooms, internet connections, and emergency office supplies.

Finally, it should be said that we also need to pay special attention to our first 'immediate community' – our own families. Being an entrepreneur and maintaining a healthy 'work-life' balance is a difficult and challenging task. Sometimes it demands extremely hard work, great creativity, long hours, and supreme personal sacrifices to carve out the time needed to meet our business responsibilities and maintain strong relationships with our spouses, children, family members and friends. Oftentimes, these tough decisions create high levels of stress, leaving us feeling lonely and isolated and forcing us to consider: 'What does it all mean?' The EoC lifestyle calls for each of us to continually evaluate the large and small choices we have to make, balancing between 'family' and 'business', and trying to determine what is right for each circumstance. The EoC lifestyle helps us look at everyone and everything through the 'filter' of communion. When we look together rather than in isolation, we find solutions and this process helps us

accept difficult circumstances and to see that we are not alone. Difficulties and personal suffering can then be transformed into avenues of personal growth and meaning for our lives.

Communion with the Global Community

Finally, at the third level of working in communion – with the global community – we come to understand that our daily and local business operations go well beyond those of a typical business. Each of us is also a part of a global network aimed at sharing needs and resources to assist all of us to self-sufficiency. We are in this together. We each have our part to contribute. And this resonates within each person, to respond to one of the greatest desires of humanity: to be a family. Our small role in it can at times seem inconsequential. After all, how can one company really change anything?

But then, if we allow ourselves to answer the call within our hearts to become a part of this wonderful network of communion across the planet – by sharing our profits and needs, by getting to know other companies on the Business-to-Business (B2B) website, or by offering EoC work internships to young people from other countries, it will open up ever wider the pathways to communion for our employees and ourselves. And, we will experience something stupendous – universal brotherhood in the making. And this experience, resulting from the communion and ‘oneness’ that we have achieved, will spread the culture of giving in ways we cannot imagine and far beyond what our meager human efforts would indicate. This ‘oneness’, Chiara reminds us: “May they all be one...so that the world may believe”, is, in fact, our greatest way to evangelize the world.

Conclusion

Being an Economy of Communion business means putting the highest priority on living a business lifestyle of working *in and for communion* at various levels – within the business, with the local geographic community and with the global community. This lifestyle is ‘the secret’ key that we offer other business owners for experiencing joy, happiness, fulfillment and a sense of purpose in life - not despite owning and running a business, but because of it! It also reinforces a resolute belief in Chiara’s dream: to re- live the experience of the early community in Jerusalem. ‘They were of one heart and mind...and no one was in need among them’ (Acts 4:32-34). This dream is still within our grasp. We need only do our part.

The Crucible of EOC Entrepreneurship **John Gallagher, Professor of Management, Maryville College,** **Maryville, TN USA**

I should like to begin my remarks about the future and a vision for the Economy of Communion by first focusing on the entrepreneur. For in some ways the challenges facing the entrepreneur are the challenges facing the EOC.

The entrepreneur occupies a unique social role. In their wonderful new book, Thomas Masters and Amy Uelmen write about living the spirituality of unity in the United States. And at one point, they suggest that “Focolare members live shoulder to shoulder with family, friends, and neighbors in urban, suburban, and rural communities, immersed in the challenges of everyday life...”¹ In addition to family, friends, and

neighbors, the Economy of Communion entrepreneur stands shoulder to shoulder with employees, customers, suppliers, advisers, competitors, customers, and others, all also immersed in the challenges of everyday life. The entrepreneur intentionally takes on a "layer" of responsibility that a non-entrepreneur does not.

Please not that this is not a qualitative judgment but an empirical observation. This is not to elevate the entrepreneur in any way or to privilege entrepreneurial responsibilities over any other responsibilities. It is simply to note that the entrepreneur, in the very act of starting a business and sustaining a business, also takes on a very real responsibility for a particular set of relationships that are now governed by the business.

And, the entrepreneur takes on a responsibility for the business itself. To my mind, this places the entrepreneur in a crucible of formation that is a different from other life and livelihood choices and vocations.

As mentioned, these relationships include employees, customers, competitors, creditors, investors, advisers, family, friends, the local community, the wider community, and the state. He takes on the responsibility for the company itself as well and so decisions must be taken that consider the future and sustainability of the company itself.

This is true of all entrepreneurial ventures – that there is a set of responsibilities assumed. But there are two important implications I think for the case of an EOC entrepreneur. First, there is long tradition of received wisdom and practical experience about how to be a successful businessperson. We know much about the mechanics of business – operations and finance so to speak, and indeed in our global

economic system business practices are similar and widespread. But there is a very real problem at the heart of our best business and management thinking, and this is the question of instrumentality which in turn is a question about the fundamental purpose of business. One dominant view is that the purpose of business is to satisfy shareholders. This has the effect of instrumentalizing every aspect of the business, including most of its persons, to the interests of a much smaller group of persons, the shareholders. Everything about the business including, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, become a means to the shareholder's ends, which is generally characterized as profit maximization. This shareholder view of business is somewhat countermanded by a stakeholder view of business whereby, the purpose of business extends beyond the narrow interests of shareholders to include the interests of a wide range of possible constituents; namely, anyone with a "stake" in the enterprise. This view at least opens the possibility for considering the legitimate needs and aspirations of all persons associated with the enterprise. But in the end, this view of business also takes an instrumental view. Persons are still the means to other ends.²

The second implication is that in addition to the received wisdom of management theory, there is currently a great deal of interest in ideas about faith and spirituality in the work place. This interest might be in issues related to "religious freedom" in the workplace; namely the extent to which a business should make allowances for various religious practices and traditions of employees, or in issues related to the imposition of particular "religious values" among employees. Some

argue that the workplace should be strictly secular, while others argue that tangible benefits arise from explicitly faith-based values in the workplace. The problem with this strain of thinking, however, is that in almost all cases, religious freedom, religious values, faith, and spirituality are all viewed as instrumental to the demands of the business. That is, more often than not, the central question revolves around whether or not spirituality can make the business more successful and more profitable.

So, for the Economy of Communion entrepreneur, not only have they taken on a particular set of responsibilities to a broader and wider group of persons, but they also take on these challenges of instrumentality. For an EOC entrepreneur, rather than persons serving the business, the business must serve persons. And rather than the spirituality serving the business, the business must serve the spirituality.

These challenges form the crucible of EOC entrepreneurship. For many EOC entrepreneurs, their business practices, decisions, policies, are formed in this very crucible; formed in the day-to-day experience. The EOC entrepreneur may very well grapple with questions, problems, difficulties, situations, where answers are not readily available. The formation of EOC entrepreneurs then is a challenge for the EOC in the future, for it is not enough to simply encourage people to become entrepreneurs. We must learn to live in the crucible.

An important part of this formation is the continued work and development of guidelines and of best management practices. These will become the received wisdom of the Economy of Communion. But great care must be exercised here as well. For in the task of forming

entrepreneurs, the goal is not to provide a set of static rules that can be applied in particular situations, but to contribute to the continuing growth and development of the entrepreneur. The objective is not to develop a set of principles or guidelines that themselves then begin to take the place of living in the moment. It is not good to substitute the presence of a "guideline" for the presence of a decision made in love in the moment.

The purpose of the guidelines is to remain always in conversation about the challenges of the crucible. In North America, at least, the EOC owners already know this; that they can and must share their experiences and talk about with what they are confronted on a daily basis; to, in effect see things together at all times.

And, with respect to a vision for the future, there are two important implications associated with the larger question about formation. One has to do with the younger generation; the next generation of EOC entrepreneurs and the other has to do with the question of EOC identity; that is, what are the distinguishing characteristics of an EOC business? What does "belonging to" or "participating in" the EOC mean?

As to the first, the younger generation must be a part of these conversations for the next 20 years will surely see the evolution of many of the current generations EOC companies. What will happen to these companies? Will they handed down to the next generation? How so? To me, this question of sustainability is a complete example of the particular chalennegs faced by EOC entrepreneurs.

As to the second, I have been at EOC meetings where the question has

arisen (and been debated) about what exactly qualifies a company to become an EOC company. There are two extremes here. First we might consider an EOC company to be one whose owner – the entrepreneur - has a lifetime of experience and formation in the spirituality of unity – in the Focolare – and so, when such an individual steps forward to begin a company, he or she is doing so where it is clear it is an extension of the manner in which they have lived and approached their daily life for a number of years.

But there are also those who might view the EOC as an “entry port” for business people who are skilled entrepreneurs but who have not had the lifelong experience of formation of the Spirituality but who are intrigued and attracted to the spirituality as they become aware of it. These might run their businesses very well, but might struggle over the demands of the spirituality. Others might practice the spirituality faithfully, but stumble over practices that could sustain the business.

Let me relate a story. I had a conversation one year ago with a university student who was presenting a very good and astute argument that that a large multinational such as Nestle, S.A. could easily become an EOC business. Nestle, of course, is one of the largest, most diverse, and global of our companies. It is certainly not a small entrepreneurial venture. Moreover, it is a company whose business practices from time to time have raised ethical and moral questions. But the student’s argument was that an EOC company must fulfill three criteria. It must devote part of its profits to meeting the needs of the poor, it must devote part of the profits to spreading and developing the culture of communion, and it must devote part of the profits to reinvestment in

the business. And so, Nestle certainly reinvests in its business. Nestle also gives away a significant amount of money to development and to worthwhile charities and causes. So, if Nestle would start some sort of training institute to educate employees about the virtues of profit reinvestment and of philanthropy, then Nestle would be an EOC company.

I disagreed with the student then, as I would do so now, but this argument raises an important question. Certainly the EOC is a concrete expression of the spirituality of unity in economic life. That is, the EOC is an opportunity for persons formed in the Focolare spirituality to practice that spirituality amid the challenges of everyday life. Can it also be a gateway for persons formed in the dominant culture of business to enter in to the spirituality? I believe that in principle the answer is yes, for we are all familiar with the differing ways that God works in our lives.

At

times, this might be through the gentle and prayerful intercession on our behalf while we are busily pursuing some secular ends. Perhaps Monica praying for her son, Augustine is an example of this. But, others may experience a lightning bolt of intervention similar to that of Saul of Tarsus. So, in some ways, the question here is whether the EOC can be a "road to Damascus" for businesspeople not formed in the spirituality of unity.

To all of these ends, there needs to be intentional, purposeful, structured, and ongoing conversation. And, the younger generation must be a part of these conversations. Business guidelines and recorded best practices will become the most visible and ongoing manifestation



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of that conversation but they must also be the “place” to hold this conversation in perpetuity.