



NAIROBI | MAY 27-31
KENYA | 2015

5th International Congress of Economy of Communion – Nairobi (Kenya), 27-31 May 2015

“Yes to an Economy of Communion”

MESSAGE TO THE ECONOMY OF COMMUNION SCHOOL AT NAIROBI

Emmaus Maria Voce

Mariapolis Piero, 27 May 2015

First of all I would like to greet and thank all the religious and civil authorities who have honoured this meeting with their interest and their presence.

Dearest friends, a very affectionate greeting to you all.

I am very glad that the Economy of Communion is holding its fifth world congress in Africa.

The Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) was the venue for the first pan-African Economy of Communion congress in 2011 and on that occasion the Rector of the University made a *pact of shared commitment* with the EoC so that an economy of sharing might grow in Africa.

Today the whole global reality of EoC has come back to Nairobi because that first pan-African event and the pact with the University have been fruitful. In fact 18 EoC businesses have developed since then on the African continent and there are many EoC courses in various African universities. These include two intensive courses at CUEA and a summer school at the Catholic University of Buea which was held in February and the school at the Mariapolis Piero which has just finished with good outcomes and great hope for the future. We are all glad that Africa is playing a leading role more and more in the development of EoC in the world.

I know that focus of your programme is the topic of creativity and bringing about new activities from the perspective of communion. I think this topic is particularly suited to Africa, which in today's world must show its capacity to create and bring forth a new type of economics and not only (as so often still happens) the great wounds of poverty and inequality (which of course are there and will be discussed during the congress).

The many cultures present in Africa have their own pathway regarding economy and work, which are very much linked to Africa's vocation to community and sharing. I invite all of you to go into depth with your and our communitarian vocation in this field of economics so as to develop an African economics that is truly faithful to its long-standing and deep-seated vocation, one that can connect business initiative with sharing, which means economics and communion. By doing this Africa will be able to help the world go beyond the type of economics which often exploits the earth and natural resources and creates inequality and absolute poverty.

Creativity is the great challenge for all economic action in our day, which seems no longer able to create work and a good standard of living for all in many countries in the world. Therefore we need a new stage of innovation and creativity to create new wealth and new types of work, in communion and reciprocity.



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The key concepts, ideas and experience of EoC in recent years can make a significant contribution to seeking something new.

What challenges is the EoC facing today?

Since the EoC is an expression of the charism of the Focolare Movement, it is evolving today too within the context of the whole Movement.

At the recent General Assembly of the Focolare Movement some key action points emerged for the coming years which I believe are especially suited to the EoC.

- a. Going out. The first word I would like to entrust to the EoC for now and for the coming years is “*to go out*”. We agree with Pope Francis that new life is born at the peripheries, where we meet the people of our time, who are waiting to hear about pathways to communion. We must announce and bear witness to the ‘good news’ of communion, as much as and more than we have done so far. It is not enough for the business people and those in the front line of the EoC to set up a nice business, or meet with other business people in the EoC. There is a whole world out there thirsting for communion, economic realities that suffer from isolation, individualism, lack of hope or vision. We must make the charism of unity known and woe to us if we don’t do it. This charism is at the service of the world and it is made for everyone so as to love, feed and console the many people who are awaiting it. Chiara always said this to us strongly and today I am saying it to you. Chiara’s charism and ours is *that all may be one* and our sharing will not be finished until it embraces the whole world. The crown of thorns that Chiara saw in Brazil, around the city of San Paolo, represented all the poverty in the world. We cannot rest until we have done all our part and while there are still poor people who are not able to flourish because they are trapped in material and moral deprivation. The horizons of the EoC are the horizons of the world.
- b. Together. The second word I would like to entrust to you is ‘*together*’. So as to go out in an effective way we must go out together. Together with whom? First of all with all those in the Focolare Movement who are already committed to the goals of EoC. We must strengthen the collaboration within the Focolare Movement because communion is also our culture and our way of acting in the world. But *together* also means ‘together with many other people who want to be united with us’ to bring about communion in economics and in the world. Around us there are many people, associations, movements and businesses with authentic ‘charisms’ at the service of the common good. We must seek them out and connect them to our project. By going out and collaborating with other initiatives we will not lose our identity at all, instead our specific characteristic will come out: our being an instrument of communion and unity.
- c. Suitably prepared. The third word is ‘*suitably prepared*’. Preparation is important so as to go out in an effective way, and to do so together, especially if we want to be effective in a world that is complex and specialised like economics. I invite you to strengthen the schools, to support and extend the courses on the EoC that are already happening, to start new ones and make them more numerous. I invite you to support and make the most of the work already being done at the Sophia University Institute at Loppiano in Italy, where the economics



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department has been studying and teaching the EoC for a number of years. This has enabled very important outcomes for its study, its visibility, and diffusion, most of all with young people and for them. So, we must be business people, students and teachers who are well prepared. We need credible witnesses to a new type of economics. But we also need ‘ordinary’ citizens who are well prepared. In some countries there are already non-specialist courses on the economy of communion in which people from different professions, ages and skills meet to study economics and so become citizens who consume and save responsibly, and who can therefore work more effectively to change their neighbourhood and surroundings.

Lastly, I know that international EoC wants to launch a practical project which involves us all and has Africa as its focus, an initiative which I welcome with joy and which I encourage and make my own. Africa must become the centre of the world EoC more and more and have its own role in leading it; we need this as does the whole world.

My final words are for the young people. In 1991 Chiara entrusted the new culture of communion to the young people: many took up her idea, they studied the EoC and gave it academic status over the years. Now you are there in Nairobi to continue this dream. Today we need a new generation to take up the baton of those who were young in 1991 to continue the race.

You young people are not only the future, you are also the present, because you have a different way of looking at life and the world, which is essential for us all, youth and adults. You need to be in the leadership more and more: don’t hesitate to be part of the commissions and associations of the EoC; don’t hesitate to launch yourselves into starting businesses, cooperatives, activities. You are not alone; we are all with you and together we can do it.

The EoC is still in its early days.

The time in which charisms evolve is long, they don’t follow the fashions of their day; they don’t only respond to the questions of the present but they respond to the deeper questions arising from history and those in the heart of each man and woman. There are years of life, work and fruitfulness before us: we must be aware of this and be ready to take up new challenges. It is a question of responsibility, faithfulness and love.