

# CARING FOR THE FUTURE



## 1. SEASON'S GREETINGS

During these weeks, we share Christmas wishes, wishes for the New year - what we call **season's greetings**. As if something new was really happening, **because something new is happening.**

We hope for a new beginning.  
Christ's coming to us is the new beginning.  
Not as a date in a calendar but as a reminder for the day to come.

A ritual? some may ask.  
No - an event which is going to prolong itself in our lives.

This is why I want to start this conversation with the words of St. Gregory, centuries ago:

*"I will need all eternity  
to go from a beginning to another beginning,  
throughout other beginnings  
which will never end."*

Closer to our time another great Christian, the jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, said something in the same line which seems to me very adequate to the days you are living here.  
Prayer, contemplation, adoration,



go hand in hand with the attentiveness to the events here in Barcelona, in your home country, in the world. He says:

*"I have always thought and felt that the supreme form of adoration was the communion with the time which carries us with it.*

*Let us go then: surrender yourself to the time you are living."*

Such is the meaning of my exhortation to you this afternoon.

## I - CARING IS TO BE ATTENTIVE

The Incarnation of Christ goes together in these days with the opening up of the future, the new year, the new millenium.

Our first step in 'caring for the future' is to be attentive to things, to events, to people, to society. We look at the world.

What do we see?

A world in transition, a planet in a process of destruction. Not anymore eastern Europe as we saw in our political analysis at the beginning of the '90s. But the whole world is in a process that requires our attention. Do you remember recently the failure of the UN Conference on the Warming



of the Climate in the Hague? The world is waiting for a new awareness to be born.

Can the world as a place, as this planet, carry the weight of our activities, of human and industrial wastes? Pg34

To look today at the real map of Amazonia and to compare it with a map of 100 years ago make us shiver - its body has been dilacerated, roads and roads in all directions in search of timber and of minerals, and its species disappearing in a frenzy speed.

To fly from any big city in continental Europe and to arrive at Stockholm or Helsinky - breathing a new quality of air, sensing how the world could be. Five years ago, in the book containing the report of the World Independent Commission, we wrote:  
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(pg.34)

To look at the planet today is not only a question of mere physical survival. (Porto) (van Gogh in Paris) It is the destruction of beauty, it is indeed "paradise lost".

In a season where God comes to dwell among us, as one of us, it is a time of redemption that caughts us, not only the salvation of our little souls but the redemption of nature, the redemption of all created things.

TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IS ALSO TO RESTAURE BEAUTY!

To be attentive to the world is also to be aware of the increase of its population. And to speak about numbers is to speak about people, more and more people:

- when you will be my age you will have on top of the 6 billion of today, 3,5 billion more, roughly the population in 1960!

This will mean a growth of 9 Swedens every year, another Latin America every 6 years.

The survival of humankind will basically depend on food and water. FAO tells us that it will be possible to produce food for all (study of habitability in the space, through new types of food). But:

- there will be an increase of imbalance between N and S as well as in every society (each society, however poor, has its N, each society, however rich, has its S.)

- there are dangers in the genetic modified food in themselves and in their use as 'weapons' of embargo and deterrence.

To mention the scarcity of water is to touch the most terrifying problem as we already in the alert zone:

- through the drain for normal use, for swimming-pools, golf areas, etc.

- through the contamination by fertilizers (Belgium) and by the urban and industrial wastes.

I speak about food and water...



I speak of the giver of the bread of heaven,  
of the one who shares the living water.  
To believe in Him is to work towards the possibility  
for all human beings to have bread and water.



### III - CARING IS TO FOSTER QL

Attentiveness speaks about actions which have to occur -  
the attention to the world has to be translated into serious  
concern for the instruments we use in our thinking.

Paradoxically, in a world where so many people are totally  
destituted, and where therefore quantity is needed,  
the paradigm of quantity has to be replaced by the paradigm  
of quality.

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Up to the level of survival we are building the basis for  
human dignity. Therefore quantity is of the essence.

Once that threshold is passed we have to learn how to do  
more with less. Quality must prevail.

(Ex. of cars in London, of cars in 100 years!)

Quality of life demands that all international juridical  
instruments ratified by practically all nations should be  
respected and promoted, namely C. on el. of all forms of  
disc. agst women, C. on the rights of the child, 1992 world  
program of nutrition, program Health for all, program  
education for all, 122 C of ILO, 1992 world charter for  
nature, etc., etc..



A long list of commitments of the international community which form the QL. These are objective indicators. But we need also subjective indicators - once we go beyond the level of mere survival, QL is a very different reality for everyone of us. For each person life-style, personal priorities are incorporated into his/her concept and feeling of QL.

To work toward a society where QL may be measured and built at the same time with objective and universal objectives as response to rights and with answers to subjective and diversified conditions is a new way to care about the world.

Didn't Christ come as he said so that we may have life and life in abundance?

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Where is then the equality of all peoples, independently of their race, religion, or size of the country to which they belong? (No fairness of the decision taken in Nice when for the first time in any international community the principle of fundamental equality among countries has been overthrown)

Where is the solidarity and the sharing among the different nations as well as the mutual appreciation in the respect of the diversity of the mosaic we shape together?

History is in its beginning and we should not wait for the historians of the ages to come to write it. History is written

today, if we are attentive, if we care.

Instead of the rediscovery of universality - where difference excludes the levelling uniformity - the XXI century has started under the clout of a new hegemonic trend, not only as a result of military or economic power, but also as a consequence of the national, ethnical or religious fundamentalism, trying to impose its world vision and the law it implies.

The fierce nationalism has never reached at the same time so many peoples and thus becoming a threat to national, regional and even world peace.

The power of money has never reached the sacred proportions of a new "religion of market", the adoration of the golden calf as the hebrews did in the desert. It is the negation of all values and of the search for the meaning of human life.

The informatic and ommunication revolution has opened the way for the speed of the economic and financial agents. This led to a complete change in the process of production which has provoked an international division of labour hereto unknown. The spreading out of the units of production is also a spreading of corruption and exploitation: in every area where such a unit is located there is always peoples who are accomplices and win; in all places labour is penalized and unduly exploited. This is the evil side of globalization which the market fosters and





makes possible.

#### IV - TO CARE ABOUT A BETTER ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY

The presidential elections in the USA are still very near to us.

First time, many americans knew that in fact their direct vote for the pres. didn't count! first time they learn how prone to fraude was the system of different vote bulletins from county to county!

What a long way for democracy to be clean and transparent! and that in the country which considers itself as the first world democracy!

But where are citizens really part and parcel of the decision-making process? Certainly not in countries whose products have their prices dictated elsewhere! certainly not in most countries where their participation is limited to a vote every 4 years without the possibility of controlling the decisions that affect their lives! Without the participation of the citizens, a process of "confiscation of power" takes place while politicians claim that 'democracy is functioning well!' (Dissatisfaction among citizens leading to official commission in Sweden about 'sustainable democracy').

When I point out to these questions I am not speaking just about 'politics'. I am speaking about a life shaped by care through all we do. Questions flow one after the other. And I



would like to ask you to think about them during the coming year.

- In how far is my work an element that contributes to the definition of each society's goals? how far does it create well-being and QL for all? how far does it function as bridge among different sector of society? What do I create affects and companinship capable to overcome the fierce competition of our time?
- which are the values brought by my work in society? am I a consequence of fashions and empty slogans or do I create and stimulate new values?
- is my work a new enrichment to knowledge and to technology? is my work guaranteeing literacy in all fields?
- am I capable of indignation when my work faces or contributes to more disparaty in the QL of persons, groups, nations? am I ready to take the risks?

## V - TOWARDS A GLOBAL PARADIGM: CARING FOR THE FUTURE.

Two perversions are at stake:

- liberalism as perversion of free initiative
- individualism as perversion of personal autonomy

Against these perversions, I want to propose to you a new





ethical attitude: the capacity to care.

Let us be clear: this is not the recuperation of a sentimental attitude, though it is obvious that everyone of us is here, alive, because our parents, our families, our society cared for us;

we are here because there are people who have dedicated their life to care for others in many different ways.

Aren't we all here because of the Taizé community, because of the open hearts and spaces of families, parishes, and other institutions cared and are caring for us?

Care is a philosophical concept brought into the limelight by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. He gives to it a fundamental place in the philosophical definition of the human being. For him the human being is a being-of-care (sorge). This brings us to the idea of Teilhard de Chardin, the human beings forming a 'noosphere', a chain where we are all linked to each other. Other contemporary philosophers follow the same idea. e.g. Levinas: (We is not the plural of I') In other words, previous to our existence there is a connection among all human beings. Hence care as a guarantee of the individual and collective existence.

We join here the thinking of a contemporary German philosopher who sees the human person constituted by 'responsibility', the great all-encompassing principle which may enable us to care for the future.

Facing all the immense and difficult problems of today, a former leader of the World Bank says:

*"The guardian and enabler of freedom is care - care as an attitude and a way of being that saves the natural and human past, thereby securing a future of manifold possibilities."*

In his report of the international commission of governance, a former PM of Sweden says:

*"The task for governance is to encourage a sense of caring, through policies and mechanisms that facilitate cooperation to help those less privileged or needing comfort and support in the world."*

Finally the women's movement has developed the concept of ethics of care as a necessary juxtaposition to the ethics of justice.

The ethics of justice builds all community, social and political action on the rights to which the human person is entitled.

The ethics of care takes into account the fact that the human person is not only a person with rights but also with vulnerabilities.

How to define it then?

*"First, the ethics of care revolves more around responsibility and relationships rather than rights and rules.*

*Second, is tied to concrete circumstances rather than*

*being formal and abstract.*

*Third, is best expressed not as a set of principles but as an activity, the 'activity of care'."*

We are here in this Christmas, with the idea of the millenium twinkling from afar into our eyes. With Christ coming into us we face the times to come. The questions I raised some moments ago become more acute:

- Through what I am and what I do am I announcing the Good Tidings for today and tomorrow?
- Is that announcement made through the tools at my disposal, my work, my relationships to people and to things?
- Do I help to open up the future with my announcement of the Good Tidings?
- Am I aware that announcing the Good Tidings is not an afterthought nor is it the recompense for the work well done? Rather, do I see my role in announcing the Good Tidings as happening through in the very heart of what I am and I do?

