



Dear Everyone,

In the meeting of the "**Friends of Together for Europe**" in Paris, we experienced a new step in communion.

"Here I saw the embodiment of a prophetic vision that gives great joy and hope for the future", said the leader of a Movement who took part for the first time.

Held from 7th-9th November in Paris, the event this year had been prepared with great care by the French National Committee of *Together for Europe*. There were 125 founders and leaders of 46 Movements and Communities, from different Churches and from 13 European countries.

The first night, a sequence of experiences presented by members of the National Committees of 7 European countries showed that "communion is developing." As it is in Portugal, Belgium and Italy. Of interest was the start of the "Ecumenical Institute" of Fribourg, Switzerland (linked to the Theology Faculty of the University), to which young people and members of *Together for Europe* are invited to collaborate.

The second day brought us into the heart of the theme: the "Yes" to the poor and the marginalized, as expressed in the message of Stuttgart 2007.

The many contributions, including the Diaconia action, which took place in France, showed how much the Communities and Movements are linked to the commitment to and with the most needy. It is not just acts of solidarity, but of friendship and brotherhood.

An intense and "special" hour was spent with Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche Communities.

The gift of his experience, began with him saying: "Jesus says that the kingdom of God is like a wedding feast - but everyone is too busy - and the king who had issued the invitations sent his servants to look for the maimed and the lame. This is what I have tried to live in my life."



Jean Vanier devotes himself especially to people with mental disorders "the most oppressed people". "They have changed me, I saw that the Kingdom of God is theirs". There are now 140 communities, ecumenical and interreligious, in which "fragile and strong" live together.

Then there were testimonies of solidarity, including the YMCA and Youth for Unity with "Schoolmates", then group meetings.

In the evening we went to the Chapel of St. Bernard, in the Montparnasse metro station, which is entrusted to the Community of Sant'Egidio, a warm moment of prayer together and hearing about their action in the heart of Paris.

There were many lively exchanges on the progress made, when Gerhard Pross retraced the most significant stages, and explored what the next steps might be.

Recalling the expression of Chiara Lubich, "the score is written in heaven" we understood in listening to each other, that the most valuable experience of this journey together is the profound communion that has grown between Movements and Communities of different churches.

And it is precisely this "common Christian witness" that Europe needs today "so that the world may believe". Cyrille Sollogoub illustrated this with his beautiful text on the "Sacrament of the brother".

In mutual consent, we agreed to give a contribution in 2016, in the form of a congress, which will probably take place in a town of Germany, in order to show the extent of our journey of communion.

There was a solemn atmosphere when in prayer we entrusted the next stage to God and renewed the commitment to love one another.

Next meeting: in May 2014, the Steering Committee will meet again in

Dillingen, Germany, to receive the prestigious "St. Ulrich European Award" for 2014, which has been awarded to *Together for Europe*.

VISITING ONE ANOTHER

In Paris we also lived "the culture of visiting each other." Some people went to learn about the Catholic Community Emmanuël, founded by Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte - Catta, which includes various vocations in the same adventure: to announce that holiness is accessible to all, as illustrated by the Moderator Laurent Landete.

Others went to the headquarters of Acer-Mjo (Russian students' Christian Action - an Orthodox Youth Movement).



There we were welcomed by the young President Cyrille Sollogoub who described the Movement's birth in the 1920s when "everything was crumbling". "The founding fathers, including theologians Florovsky and Berdyaev, had a new understanding of what the Church is: not built from bricks, but by living people, bearers of Christ and of his Church".

Previously the "culture of visiting each other" was experienced at the beginning of the 100th anniversary of the Schoenstatt Movement, celebrated in Germany on 18th-20th October. Some of *Together for Europe* took part, sharing the experience of the journey of communion with the 3,000 participants.

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The English version of the Proceedings of the Brussels' 2012 Event will be ready in December 2013. It is available from: The International Secretariat of *Together for Europe*
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