



Message to Taizé on the Occasion of the August 16, 2015 Jubilee Celebrations

Ora et labora – pray and work

We gather in a poignant moment of commemoration. 75 years after this extraordinary vision took life, Taizé continues to attract and inspire thousands upon thousands of young people all over the world. Taizé is a village, it is a religious Community, but more than that it is a spiritual home – a precious station on life's journey and a meeting point with others together on the way. This is equally true whether they gather here in this place or meet in the spirit of Taizé at many other occasions around the world. The attraction to an experience of simplicity in life and prayer is an extraordinary testimony to how so many young people offer new expression to the centuries old Christian motto of 'ora et labora' – 'pray and work.' Deepening my spirituality and inspiring my action, Taizé has also played a transforming role in my own journey of faith. I will remain always grateful to Brother Roger and the Community he founded.

Under your leadership, dear Brother Alois, the Community has called for a "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth". Young people responded enthusiastically, motivated by the strong link between shared spirituality and practice of solidarity. You wrote: "As we continue the pilgrimage of trust on earth that brings together young people from many countries, we understand more and more deeply this reality: all humanity forms a single family and God lives within every human being without exception." (Letter from Kolkata)

It is vital for us today to cherish the deep spiritual truth that we belong together as one human family and that we are part of the entire web of life. The recognition of our interrelatedness is the beginning of the mutual trust and solidarity needed to change and transform the ambivalent reality we are facing. We need to feel deep in our hearts that our belonging to our Triune God entails our belonging to each other and to creation. This is true today as it is true tomorrow. Belonging together means that our future is inextricably linked to the future of the other. There is only one common future for all of us.

The experience of life in community is a compelling reflection of the interdependence of human beings. Week after week in Taizé, young people join together with the brothers in a common rhythm of life, sharing in prayer and bible study and encounter, and sharing also in the practical tasks that make it possible to live comfortably together. The lessons of committing ourselves to a common purpose show that our diverse gifts can flourish most when they are developed together in a pattern of prayer and work and reaching out to others. This often challenges us; it often changes us. But throughout the history of Christianity, the most inspiring and important aspects of our faith and mission in God's world have been discerned and expressed in community.

And so the lessons learned here about a commitment to life together, to sharing a common vision, are profound gifts as we face the uncertainties of our future. An understanding of the strength of the connectedness of the church, humanity and all of creation is imperative as we acknowledge the devastating threat of climate change. It is vital in a world marked by wounding inequality and lack of solidarity, where socioeconomic conditions still keep millions in abject poverty. It is essential in a world where a lack of adequate health care has deadly consequences for too many infected by viruses and preventable diseases. We have just commemorated the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a dreadful reminder of the horrors of war and continuing danger of nuclear power. These threats to life afflict indiscriminately, and yet affect us all. Indeed, we need to understand: “all humanity forms a single family and God lives within every human being without exception.”

Pilgrimage is the defining quality of the ecumenical movement today. The Taizé Community’s call for a Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth echoes and resounds with the invitation of the World Council of Churches’ 10th Assembly in Busan to embark on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Speaking of a pilgrimage that combines spiritual dimensions of prayer and worship and practical action for justice and peace, we are reminded that Christian life and identity are part of something greater than ourselves, something which binds us together in solidarity with each other as an expression of God’s grace and love. We move out of a merely self-centred or self-serving approach to Christian faith and life. Walking together on this pilgrimage requires and encourages openness to dialogue, the acceptance and practice of mutual accountability, and the inclusion of the other in my own future. Searching for meaning beyond myself or ourselves as part of a particular group, a church, a tradition, we discover the life-affirming meaning of the wider fellowship of those together on the way.

For me it is indeed very meaningful that we celebrate together with the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Taizé community also the centenary of the birth of Brother Roger and the 10th anniversary of his death. Walking together on the pilgrimage of justice and peace, we affirm each other as persons with our specific gifts and commitments that we are ready to share. As Christians we look at each other as sisters and brothers who support each other to live as disciples of Christ following the way of Jesus. Brother Roger demonstrated the joy and pain of discipleship through his life and witness. His life journey helps us to see the deeper meaning of being one in the body of Christ in prayer and practice. His reflections on faith in Christ in the middle of Nazi terror and war and finally the tragedy of his death keep us focused on the cross of Christ. We are reminded of Christ’s uniting, reconciling and self-sacrificial love to the world and the gift of new life in the Eucharist.

During the WCC’s assembly in Busan, we asked brothers of the Taizé Community along with a number of youth to close a plenary session on Unity with prayer. Being one in the body of Christ, the Church is to be a prophetic sign and foretaste of God’s reign of justice and peace to come. This is a vision, but one we only understand through experience. Ora et labora – pray and work – worship and practice, turning to God and turning to the world belong

together and mark the basic rhythm of our lives as Christians. It is my own experience that what we see and learn in Taizé is lasting inspiration for our own pilgrimages.



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