

San Paolo, May 29, 2011

CONCLUSIONS

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We returned to San Paolo where Chiara had the first inspiration, to allow these places to change us. In the history of peoples, especially in the history of the action of the Holy Spirit, places are significant; geography has the same importance as history. If someone wants to know in depth the charism of St. Francis, sooner or later they have to go to Assisi; if you want to meet and understand Martin Luther King Jr., you have to spend time with African-Americans. In the same way, if you want to know and understand the EOC, sooner or later in your lifetime, you need to come to San Paolo. This is where 20 years ago, a woman, looking at this city, gave life to the EOC, where today we find a network that is growing to embrace the entire world.

We came here to re-examine and understand Chiara's inspiration better. Certainly, we rejoice for the many fruits of the past 20 years, but we recognize that today we all need to take a step, a new commitment by each one and all together if we want to keep this appointment with history, and move forward with hope toward 2031.

What have we understood anew and remembered?

- A. That the capitalistic economic system has to evolve into something new (there are already signs of this if we're able to read them between the lines of history). The environmental crisis, the financial crises, the growing inequality, the growing unhappiness in the affluent countries, are all signs that speak eloquently to the fact that the capitalistic system has to develop into something else, maintaining the market where creativity and freedom can flourish: but in order to save what human beings have accomplished in the market and in business, it is necessary to go beyond this kind of capitalism that is unable to feed the children who are dying on the sidewalks of our wealthy cities.

- B. We understood that the mission of the EOC, its specific note in the concert composed by many who are working for an economy that is more human and more just, regards those three parts of the profits that Chiara indicated to us from the beginning: New businesses, a new culture, and above all a response to poverty. Especially, EOC can give its contribution to relieving destitution and emargination, first of all by changing the economic relationships of production. The “crown of thorns” of San Paolo and of every city will be obliterated in a definitive way, if and when the businesses will include those who have been excluded; if and when their governance becomes communion, if and when profits are no longer the exclusive goal of a business, but rather a means for serving the common good, the good of all and of each one.
- C. We understood that we are not doomed to have poverty with us; humanity is not condemned to this irrevocably. It is first and foremost a result of relationships that are not healthy, incorrect, where there is an imbalance of power, a result of political and economic choices made at the local and global levels: If the economic system fails to evolve in the direction of universal brotherhood, if businesses do not become communion, poverty and emargination will increase, more people will suffer losses, and become victims of the system. The EOC resolves the problem of poverty by changing relationships at the social, economic and productive levels. Certainly we want to change people, but this is not enough. We know from history that it is also necessary to change the institutions, including that fundamental economic institution, businesses. If the ideals of the individuals are true, these same ideals live and grow throughout time only with institutions that have come to life from these ideals. As we continue to bring ahead our social projects, especially with the ONG AMU, where we are concerned with caring for the poor (and we want to and must do this always better), simultaneously all of EOC is committed to changing businesses and institutions, so that one day – this is our dream – there will no longer be a need for our developmental

projects, because with an economy of communion on a vast scale, the root causes of unhealthy relationships, which give rise to our poverty and destitution, will be eliminated. In fact in these days we have been reminded that at the time when Chiara saw the slums of San Paolo alongside the skyscrapers, she didn't start, as one might have expected, a social action project in the periphery of San Paolo (activities that existed and still do exist thank God, also within the Focolare Movement). Instead, looking at these slums, Chiara proposed that new businesses arise, in a business park far from the city of San Paolo, in the little city Araceli, now called Ginetta. She understood that unless the businesses changed, the key structure in a market economy, it would never be possible to eradicate the slums of San Paolo and of capitalism.

- D. In the end, we explored the fact that also today in an economy that puts too much emphasis on financial and technical capital, the EOC knows and repeats that the primary, fundamental capital of any business, of every economy, are the people. It is the creativity, the passion of the people that makes the difference, that creates wealth, the success of the businesses and of the communities. And today more than ever before, it is true that without new women and men there will be no human, economic or social innovation: this is why the formation of new women and men is today, more than before, a co-essential element of the EOC and of its humanism. In addition to this, we know and see every day that the protagonists of economic life, the workers, the entrepreneurs, draw their moral, spiritual and professional energy, above all from outside their business, in the families and in the life of society: this is where they receive the nourishment that provides for the success of the business. EOC knows this well and knows that if its protagonists lose contact with the communities around them, among which are the communities of the Focolare, the wellsprings of water will dry up, upon which depends the success of the businesses. This is why EOC is certainly an economic reality, but it is

also something more than economy and it draws its strength to resist and go ahead especially in difficult moments – that in these 20 years have never lacked and will always be present – because they have this life, especially in the communities in which they live. Woe to us if we lose this life-giving contact, because we would meet the same end as Antaeus in his battle with Hercules. The myth is well-known that every time Hercules threw Antaeus to the ground to kill him, since he was son of the Earth, instead of dying, he gained more strength. Only when Hercules raised him up from the earth was he able to conquer him: the same sad fate awaits our businesses and the entire EOC if we lose contact with the communities, with all those people who are living with us to give life to a world of fraternity, as your presence here today also signifies.

- E. To conclude. The EOC bases its hope in 2031 and beyond, on an anthropological reality: the certainty, supported by life, that every person carries, written within their heart, a profound vocation to communion, to love and be loved, as Chiara wrote in one of her first thoughts about the EOC: “The human person, created in the image of God who is Love, reaches their fulfillment essentially in loving, whether they believe in God or not.” Because of this profound call to communion, individual and collective life blossoms only in communion, and happiness, that of the individual person and of society, can be reached only through relationships characterized by communion.

The EOC was born and is born every day from a charism: this is also why a profound bond exists between the EOC and the youth: because charisms and young people have this in common: faith in the future, in vast projects and high ideals. Let’s entrust to them the closing words of this 20th anniversary celebration of the EOC: “From San Paolo to the world.”