



Message from Chiara Lubich, President of Focolare Movement

To the inaugural Interdependence Day in Philadelphia

Read on Interdependence Day 2003 in Philadelphia by William Neu

Mr. Edward Rendell, Governor of Pennsylvania,
Professor Benjamin Barber,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address such a distinguished audience gathered today in Philadelphia to declare their commitment to building a world that is more united, more just and more fraternal.

I would have liked to be present in person, but since this was not possible, allow me to offer you a brief, personal reflection through this message.

When Professor Benjamin Barber informed me of this first World Day of Interdependence during a long and cordial meeting in Rome last June, it was a joy for me to support it right away.

Actually the reality of interdependence calls to mind an ideal which is very dear to me, an ideal for which I decided to give my life, together with many people of good will involved in politics, economics and different fields of action and study, the unity of the human family.

On the day after September 11, many of us felt the need to reflect deeply about the causes, but above all, to work towards a true, responsible, resolute alternative to terrorism and war. For me, it was a little like reliving the devastation and feeling of human powerlessness that I experienced in the Italian city of Trent as it was bombed during World War II.

And yet it was precisely beneath the bombs that my first companions and I discovered in the Gospel the light of mutual love which prompted us to be ready to give our lives for one another. It was in the midst of that debris and destruction, convinced that "Love wins everything", that we felt the strong desire to share this love with all our neighbors, without discriminating among persons, groups, peoples, and without paying attention to social conditions, cultures or religious convictions.

Likewise, many of us are asking today, in New York as in Bogota, in Rome as in Nairobi, in London as in Baghdad, if it is possible to live in a world of peoples who are free, equal and united, not only respecting one another's identity, but also attentive to their particular needs.

There is only one answer: not only is it possible, but it is the very essence of the political plan for humanity.

While respectful of thousands of different identities, the unity of peoples is the very goal of politics. This is put into question today by the violence of terrorism, war, the unjust distribution of the world's resources and social and cultural inequities.

In many places in the world today, a cry of abandonment rises from millions of refugees, from millions of people who are starving, from millions of people who are exploited, from millions of unemployed who are excluded and seemingly "cut off" from the political body. It is this separation, and not only the privations and economic difficulties, which makes them even poorer, which increases their desperation, if this is possible.

The goal of politics will not be reached; its vocation will not be fulfilled unless this unity is rebuilt and these open wounds in humanity's political body are healed.

But how is it possible to reach such a demanding goal, a goal which would appear to be beyond our strength? In front of the challenges of the present and future of humanity, liberty and equality alone are not enough. Our experience teaches us and we believe that there is need for a third element long forgotten in political thought and practice: brotherhood. Without brotherhood, no person and no people are truly free and equal, deep down. Equality and liberty will always be incomplete and precarious until fraternity is an integral part of the programs and political processes in every part of the world.

Dear friends, doesn't the name itself of the city you are in - Philadelphia - evoke a program of brotherly love?

Brotherhood can give new meaning today to the reality of interdependence. Brotherhood can give rise to projects and actions in the complex political, economic, cultural and social tissue of our world. Brotherhood brings peoples out from isolation and opens the door of development to those who are still excluded. Brotherhood shows the way to peacefully resolving differences and relegates war to history books. A lived brotherhood allows us to dream and even to hope for some kind of communion of goods between rich countries and poor countries, since the scandalous inequity in today's world is one of the main causes of terrorism.

The profound need for peace expressed by humanity today indicates that brotherhood is not only a value, not only a method, but it is a global paradigm for political development. This is why a world that is always more interdependent needs politicians, entrepreneurs, intellectuals and artists who put brotherhood - a tool of unity - at the center of their actions and thoughts. Martin Luther King dreamed that brotherhood would become the order of the day for businesspersons and the password for statesmen and women.

Dear friends, what a change would take place in relationships among individuals, groups and peoples if only we would recognize that we are all children of one Father, God, who is Love and who loves each one personally and immensely and who takes care of everyone! This love, translated into infinitely many forms, including politics and economics, would lead to overcoming narrow-minded nationalism and limited perspectives, opening the minds and hearts of peoples and their governments, urging everyone - as I affirmed in a speech to the United Nations in New York in 1997 - to love the others' country as their own.

This is the decades-long experience of the Focolare Movement, present in 182 countries of the world by now, with millions and millions of adherents around the globe.

My wish for this first World Day of Interdependence then, is that it will be an opportunity for all those supporting it, to have a new commitment to live and work together for the unity of the whole human family, always helping one another out with dedication and trust.

Translated from Italian

<http://www.civworld.org/lubich.htm>