

(English translation)

Mollens, 24 March 1987

Chiara Lubich's message to the Genfest '87

A very warm greeting to all of you, especially to those who came a distance. Here we are at Genfest 1987. It's not being celebrated only in this place, but as you know, in many other countries of the world.

This event is a continuation of the International Genfest held in Rome in 1985, entitled: "Many Roads Towards a United World."

(...)

Can we give credit to the young people of our time? Can we trust their thoughts and decisions?

When sociologists consider the reality of young people today, they speak of pessimism, disinterest, of withdrawing into private life and, therefore, of escaping from reality, of being cut off from society, and so forth. All of this may be true for some young people. The fact is that young people do not live in an abstract historical setting. On the contrary, they live in a very concrete human reality with determined economic, political, social, cultural and religious conditions. Thus we cannot deny the fact that many of our young people today are a product of society. They are what society wants them to be.

But not all young people are like this. Many are not merely the result of social factors. On the contrary, they show themselves to be independent individuals, that they are what they want to be. In fact, when we least expect it, they manifest attitudes, sentiments and values which have the power of influencing society and of changing it. The recent youth riots in Paris, Madrid, Rome, and Peking, for example, evidenced their own image of humanity and sent out a series of positive impulses to those who hold the reins of society.

These children of the civilization of images and television commercials know how to show their hope in a world based on high ideals, a world without barriers, without racism; in other words, in a united world.

This is why the young people gathered for the 1985 Genfest also agreed with what had been proposed during that large meeting. They believed that it is possible to change the course of humanity.

They know that in many countries there are very serious social injustices, wars are being fought, human rights are being violated, people are unable to stand on their own after years of colonization. People are living in conditions marked by real racism and other anomalous situations. Yet young people have believed in the possibility of the world's rebirth and they have rolled up their sleeves in order to give their contribution. They have done so through a wealth of incredible initiatives.

They are present, walking along the different pathways in order to reach the goal of a united world. There is the pathway of unity among races, of unity among peoples; the pathway of development, of unity between the rich and the poor, of unity among generations; the pathway of unity among nations at war, in order to achieve peace; among the faithful of different religions, between people and nature; among persons of different ideologies; the pathway of unity among ethnic minorities, of unity with those who are alone or who suffer in every way.

They are present, above all, because they are aware of the very high ideal they have proposed for themselves. Rather than relying too much on their own strength and activities, they trust in Him who can do everything because He is all powerful.

This is why they have begun to walk, first of all, along the only pathway that gives hope for an enormous change in the life of the world.

Without being concerned about what people might think of them, they have recognized this pathway in Jesus. "I am the way," (Jn 14:6) Jesus said, and they have followed Him trying to live His

doctrine to the letter by putting the Word of God into practice.

Everything that they have built, although small and in need of improvement, does not give the impression of being out of proportion with the end goal. In "doing," in opening the pathway to unity, step by step, each activity appeared to be truly valid. Each activity has expanded and spread a new mentality, open to peace and universal brotherhood. The foundation stone has been laid for the project of a united world.

Now, with these Genfests, we want to continue along the same line. We want to multiply activities all over the world, taking the most varied pathways in order to reconcile severed relations, to annul opposing differences, to recompose unity wherever it has been compromised. We wish to do all we can so that in seeing what we have accomplished, perhaps on a small scale, people will see the possibility of doing something on a larger scale.

Furthermore, going against the current in this world saturated with materialism, secularism, and consumerism, we wish to continue proclaiming the great value of the spirit. We want to renew our trust in Him who is above us, who can compensate our insufficiency with His Providence.

Moreover, in whom can young people trust if not in Him? He alone can help them to realize the ideals that they have in their hearts and that they seek to defend.

They love freedom; they strive for it; they want it. Who can give them freedom if not Jesus, who said: "If you remain in my word ... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:31-32).

Young people want respect for nature. In many countries, they struggle to save people from self-destruction due to pollution. Who can respond to this desire more than the One who has created nature for human beings?

Young people love peace; they want peace. Who can guarantee peace more than the One who said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give it you" (Jn 14:27).

Young people want human rights to be respected. Did Christ not come on earth precisely to announce the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to prisoners, to give sight to the blind and the oppressed back their freedom? (see Lk 4:18).

Young people ask for social justice. Where do they find the courage to come face to face with contradictions, misery and hypocrisy, the open wounds of a consumer society, if not in Him who calls blessed "...the hungry and thirsty for justice?" (Mt 5:6).

Young people do not love divisions. Who can satisfy them more than the One who sees humanity as one and who came to knock down the barriers between different groups, ethnicities, cultures and peoples?

Young people are attracted to non-violence. Where can they find the incarnation of their ideal if not in the One who has told us to love even our enemies, thus bringing non-violence to its extreme consequences?

Young people love solidarity and the communion of goods between the rich and the poor. Jesus, who told us to give to whoever asks and not to turn our backs on whoever asks for a loan, is their model of solidarity.

Just as the first Christians had understood Jesus' requirements, so that no one kept any property as his or her own, likewise, young people find all their needs satisfied in Jesus.

They are convinced, therefore, that to walk along the way, which is Jesus Himself, is the most reasonable, useful, opportune, and fruitful way to move towards a united world.

Yes, young people with Jesus, young people and Jesus, the ways and the Way: this is the binomial which can give us true hope.

Let us live this big day of our Genfest as an important step in our New Youth Movement. Let us try to take stock of these two years of life. And let us make good and solid resolutions for an even better

future. God will help us in a special way because the ideal of unity is His.

Go ahead, my dear young people, with total confidence. Go ahead with perseverance. Enlighten people with your actions. Let your faith shine forth before a humanity which often drags on with a life that is mediocre and meaningless. Show it how disunity can be avoided and how unity can be built. Speak out clearly on how this Ideal is not a utopia; indeed, only those who have great ideals make history.