



World Council of Churches

Greetings for the Conference on Christians on the Way to Unity 9-13 May 2017, Mariapolis Centre, Castelgandolfo, Rome, Italy

From Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in Christ,

The World Council of Churches and the Focolare movement are walking together on the way to Christian unity for many years now. We remember the visits to Geneva of both Chiara Lubich and her successor as president of the movement, Maria Voce. I also have fond memories of my own visits to Rocca di Papa and Castelgandolfo where I could meet you, dear Emmaus, and we became friends.

The theme of your conference resonates well with the motif of the *Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, which is the framework of all the work of the WCC following the 2013 WCC Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea. We were praying in Busan: *God of life, lead us to justice and peace!* And we affirmed that the way to Christian unity and the way to justice and peace are inseparable and belong together. The unity of the church is meaningless when it is not a sign and a foretaste of the unity of all human kind and creation, of life in its fullness in justice and peace.

The Focolare movement has shared with us the Spirituality of Unity which is focusing on Jesus forsaken. In the shattered image of Christ on the cross, we rediscover the face of the human being that we all were meant to be and are to become on our pilgrimage towards God's reign. Many of those who were instrumental in the formation of the World Council of Churches declared already in 1925 in Stockholm: *The closer we come to the cross of Christ, the closer we come to each other.*

It is in the death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ, that the truth is revealed among us that Jesus is the true expression of the one God to whom our mission to be one relates. It is the truth that there is one God who has created all people in God's image and with equal worth and dignity. It is the truth about the one God who has loved the world. It is the truth about the one God who is love. It is the truth about the one God who may not be renounced, and who leads to confront the false, the cowardly, injustice, abuse of power, who also leads to the cross. And who was affirmed in his resurrection.

To be one is to be in the true God, who is love. Unity means a life in the communion of love and that we are together on our way towards justice and peace as one in the bond of love.

The unity of the church is inseparable from reconciliation and peace-building and so urgently needed in a world that is torn apart by fragmentation, polarisation, ignorance, exclusion, hatred and violence. Because religions are being misused to justify and fuel such hatred and violence, we need to engage together in inter-faith cooperation with all people of good will. I am very grateful that exactly this was happening in the international peace conference at the end of April in Cairo. It was a great gift for me to be there together with Pope Francis, with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, with Pope Tawadros I of the Coptic Orthodox and with other Christian leaders together with Muslim leaders from all continents who came together at the invitation of Prof. Dr Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar mosque and university. Unanimously we called for peace and reconciliation as a shared commitment of our different faiths. I am encouraged by this experience and hope that it will motivate also all of you to be steadfast in the commitment to unity and love of all life.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen us in mission and in service in the world; for we are strangers no longer, but pilgrims together on the way to God's reign of justice and peace.

May God bless you all.

Amen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Olav Fykse Tveit". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary

Geneva, 09 May 2017