

Mobilize people's hearts to circulate goods

The Economy of Communion

BY CHIARA LUBICH

WE ARE ALL AWARE OF THE SERIOUS STATE OF affairs currently weighing down our planet. First and foremost is rampant terrorism, a result, as stated by John Paul II on several recent occasions, of the dark forces of Evil with a capital E. It is an Evil that calls forth the forces of Good with a capital G: God above all else and everything that is rooted in him—the spiritual dimension of life, the enduring quality of great values, and the strength of prayer. These forces of Good have brought about such outstanding events as the Day of Prayer for Peace, which took place in Assisi in January 2002.

Yet, notwithstanding their paramount role in defeating such terrible phenomena, interreligious dialogue, a more spiritually grounded life, and increased prayer do not seem to be enough. We know, in fact, that one of the causes of terrorism is the disparity existing between rich and poor nations. This intolerable division of the world into two parts—the have and have-nots—generates hatred, vengeance, and episodes of terrorism. We, need, therefore, to foster a more equitable distribution of goods and a sense of solidarity among all nations.

We know, however, that goods don't circulate by themselves. A change of heart and the idea and practice of brotherhood need to reach as many people as possible. The widespread problems that we are facing cry out for universal brotherhood.

A confirmation of this is the so-called "Economy of Communion in Freedom" (EOC) of the Focolare Movement, a system based on economic solidarity. The EOC is an economic activity which—while operating within the current economic market—is in direct contrast with fundamental economic principles. EOC business owners follow new lines of conduct inspired by the guiding principles of the spirituality of unity. This new model urges them to give first priority to their relationships with employees and the clients and to avoid attitudes and ways of acting that are in contrast to the Gospel message of love of neighbor. It also encourages entrepreneurs to ask for their employees' involvement in making managerial decisions and it requires them to conduct business with clients, suppliers, and government and taxation entities according to just ethical standards—therefore, in a law-abiding fashion. Special consideration must also be given to the care of



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Founded in 1991 as an answer to social inequality, the Economy of Communion (EOC) is currently comprised of 800 businesses worldwide. They follow its guidelines which include sharing part of their profit to help those in need and to foster the growth of the structures and programs of formation for the spreading of a culture of giving. Above: The inauguration of a new EOC industrial park in Italy.

the environment, should it potentially be affected by a business' production.

In the end, but also right from the beginning, one must also remember to allow for God's intervention, to count on his providential intervention even in the concrete aspects of running a business. This may come in the form of unexpected payments, an ingenious solution to a technical problem, novel ideas for new products, and in many, many other ways.

(from the acceptance speech upon receiving the Castelgandolfo City Award, April 13, 2003)

Focolare founder Chiara Lubich gave the initial inspiration for the Economy of Communion. She has been given various honorary doctorates in economics as well as other awards of recognition, which have contributed to spreading the EOC on a worldwide scale, including numerous academic circles.