

## TO REDISCOVER THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN BEING

**Let's not get tired of rediscovering the dignity of the human being in every person. Let's not get tired of rediscovering Christmas time**

The human being is anxious by nature, he is always in states of search. Many times we would like this not to be this way, as we live pleasant situations or we feel good as we are, both in the physical and in the spiritual level: many people strive to avoid growing older or to ignore this search that comes from our inmost being, from our heart. Some other times, we would leave it all behind because we do not find the lifestyle that makes us happy. Anyway, it is a fact that life keeps passing and it does not stop depending on our personal situation. This is another sign that confirms the fragility of our being but also makes clear that we are all eager for an eternal happiness, in spite of having an expiry date, at least from the physical point of view.

To carry through to a good end this anxiety and this vital search that always accompany us and to live with a certain peace, it is a fact that we need some order. Parents of young children, for instance, are told about the importance of repeating the same ritual when taking them to bed (go to the toilet, wash their teeth and read them a tale, as an example). Students are invited one day after the other to strengthen their habits of study with a much wider horizon than the one of an imminent exam. Professionals that work without order nor tidiness end up producing much lower than their real possibilities and sometimes creating discomfort between their colleagues at work

## editorial

due to the disorder transmitted. The human being needs order, repetition and a day to day rhythm to live.

To live with a certain order does not have to be mixed up with a life based on repetitions without sense. On the contrary, this vital frame that enables us to a certain repetition, a certain order, should help us to live more intensively and deeply. It should make it easier to live the reality with more tints and to see clearer whatever is not seen. Every day is a gift and every moment is different, however much it is "repeated".

In this capacity to see what is not being seen remains with no doubt the dignity of the human being. How many times we live as if we already know everything about ourselves and about the others; how many times we "disconnect" from reality thinking that "I already know what this is about"; how many times we think that we are all worthy but we keep on living as if we agree with the social order of our world. The power of the volunteering that Torralba talks about on this bulletin, insisting on the fact that the essence of the volunteering task is not to do a lot but mainly to live differently, as well as the experience that Paz shares with us from her year volunteering in Madrid where she experienced on her own skin that every human being has the same dignity, should help us to live our daily life with more wisdom and to see other people with different eyes.

Let's not get tired of rediscovering the dignity of the human being in every person. Let's not get tired of rediscovering Christmas time.

Merry Christmas to all of you!

The Council

## THE STRENGTH OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE

**Experience is what it forms and shapes us as human beings. Solidarity is also at risk of being kidnapped**

The height of social voluntary service is one of the symptoms of a transformation for facing unjust life models. For the longest time, volunteers have been presented as extraordinary people who knew how to help others.

Although this is true, they do not constitute a small social minority, but a relatively numerous group. Composed, fundamentally, by students and pensioners, this group operates in different fields and contributes unconditionally to the development of our societies and their proper functioning.

The strength of voluntary service cannot be dismissed in areas such as the assimilation and alphabetization of extra-communitarian immigrants, the care for infants and attention to dependant elders.

Beyond all topics, volunteers are humans, like any of us, who have learned to discover the radical indigence of all creatures and have understood that, upon the recognition of self-weakness, authentic strength is founded.

In European letter for the Volunteers and in Universal declaration on Voluntarism, approved in the World-wide Congress of Paris of 1990, voluntary service is characterized by the following attributes: free of charge, continuous, with priorities, tied with personal responsibility and knowledge, respect and valuing and acknowledging different peoples and communities. Social voluntarism comes from an ethical demand against any and all form of discrimination due to race, sex, beliefs, culture, economic situation, political age or ideas, participating in some project of solidarity within a humanitarian organization of proven experience. There's no room for a providential State, with pretensions for regulating everything, nor is there room for dreaming of a utopia apart from public institutions with pressure groups altering social order.

A voluntary service with potential for organization recognizes that there is a fundamental balance between vindication and personal commitment that encourages a coherent change of structures that is manifested as a political calling directed towards the common and greater good.

The authentic social voluntarism, once it has overcome the emotional stage, stage of sensitivity and compassion, and of the eagerness to console in front of pain perceived as unjust, invests in commitment for alternate proposals.

Suffering, crises, abyss, disagreement or misery are schools, which have not been seek, but are authentic nonetheless. The golden rule for distinguishing authen-

## thoughts

tic social voluntarism from other forms of altruism resides in verifying that proclamation and alternate proposals are a consequence of the passion emerged by the sentiment of justice.

The feeling of compassion is not enough, although it is essential for developing commitment. Once more, is not just about what we do but also about how we do it.

Nothing is further from an authentic social voluntary service than intrusiveness or entertainment. Voluntarism is not there for replacing jobs but for delivering necessary tasks that could not be handled otherwise, given this requires a form of action non-existing in the labor market.

Authentic voluntarism has nothing to do with the entertainment of those that approach it due to whim or caprice and use it to observe others as if they were objects of curiosity or experimentation. What defines the social volunteer is a serious and formal commitment to achieve and develop concrete functions and tasks founded in projects previously programmed in common.

To be a voluntary, as Luis Aranguren says, is to think and to live in a different way; assimilating into an organized group or action; considering yourself a carrier of unedited feasibilities; loading the will with action and the action with transforming determination; stepping fully into the land of exclusion to live it; to experience it and to respond with full knowledge; understanding that the steps for walking the walk are more important that the arrival's stepping stone; to know how to take into count the personal and common limits; and accepting that our contribution is significant; but modest; to believe in ourselves and in the others, and believe that modifying the unjust reality is possible, and, finally, to be a voluntary is to maximize and develop the senses to the fullest: the sense of smell, anticipation; sight, astonishment; hearing, contemplation; touch, tenderness and the ethics of care, taste, sensitiveness, space, the sense of time and common existence, like the sense of the measurement.

In our culture, social voluntarism is a positive beat, a source of hope. The degree of civilization of a society can be perceived just through the observation of how children, women and elders are treated.

Social voluntarism especially tends to these groups. It contributes, then, to the matter of making solidarity real and encouraging others to not elude responsibilities, but to commit to actions of solidarity from their peculiar and personal situation. All without the expectation for having it be recognized by the State or a political party.

Francesc Torralba Roselló

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## CAN I SEE ANOTHER'S WOE, AND NOT BE IN SORROW TOO? (W. BLAKE)

**One year working for justice, to  
deepen my relationship with God,  
for living austere and in community  
with other volunteers**

I am a young woman from Barcelona, but I write from Madrid. I quitted my job as a teacher to have an experience as a volunteer\*. Yes, in Madrid! Here my life is going through a period of introspection. Who knows towards which new direction I will be going...

A year to work for justice, to deepen my relationship with God, to live austere and in community with other volunteers. Once I read about these four props in a website and then I knew that it was exactly what I was looking for. Action + reflection at 50%, an accompanied experience (by the Jesuits)... it all pointed to a great opportunity, a great gift; a made-to-measure thing.

When I came here I gave up security; I followed intuition. It was like going to the deck and leaving the gale hit me. I put myself within range. It meant to risk, to offer, to stop. I left the "sum of all" to touch me and stir up my thoughts and approaches, in order to "live as I think and thus to think how to live".

I have not gone far to get to know pain and injustice. This is just around my corner: immigrants without (identification) papers, new submerged job market, ravages of drugs, alcohol, loneliness, lack of opportunities... Nothing I did not know before, but at the same time everything so unknown to me.

We live in the first world with this: with lots of fragility! Some people of the projects were already born in precarious situations; others have an education, a family and potential, but the circumstances of their lives led them to loose "EVERYTHING". All of them live in the suburbs of the city... My desire to approach them from affection and equality is flooded by broken realities that surpass me. Nevertheless, the suffering is not the only arrow that marks my experience.

## experiences

Day by day I live my life with admiration and joy because I discover customs, cultures and very different situations „RIGHT HERE“, but above all because I meet people who keep on trying to make their way despite their enormous vulnerability.

And why did I choose Madrid? Well, in order to question in situ which attitude I wanted to adopt in my own society, how to engage myself in my daily life. In the past, the experience in another countries was very beneficial, where needs clamoured not only around the corner but in every millimetre of the street. It was there where I felt the deep equality between individuals. This equality changes the outlook and connects me through love to them and to their stories. Dignity makes me deeply equal to others, because my need to love and to be loved is the same as the other's need. Maybe that other one is the man lying on the ground, the man nobody talks to for days, with the dirt of several months, a terrible smell, lice, alcohol. Am I equal to "that man"? Yes: EQUAL!

An acquaintance told me that it is fashionable „to talk about poor people, and not WITH them.“ And it is precisely in them and with them when I see the miracle of life: people that being alone, cast-offs, bursting with drugs... feeling so and so down, that are able to change, who choose to cling to life and to give up what kills them (something easy to say... but sadly slow to achieve). Can you imagine the feeling of an afternoon of solitude... but the WHOLE life? I have enjoyed life from the other shore, from the shore of those who do not have the same opportunities I have. With affection (and other commitments) it could become everybody's shore. That was already the choice of Someone who came to „camp among us“...

How important have reflection, prayer, education and meeting other people proved for checking criteria and experiences... and how important community life as a vessel where to share, to enjoy, to respect, to learn. And a revelation: these 4 props do NOT finish with the JVC year! My next challenge is that these 4 props that have spoken to me so much become the deep structure of my life... wherever my home is, back in Barcelona.

Paz

\* JVC, Jesuit Volunteer Community <http://www.jesuitascastilla.org/>





# communication

- So far, Stephanie Wildenberg, our German cooperater currently in Peru, has adapted very well to the country and the local reality. Little by little, along with CIESCU, the local ONG, together they are shaping the project "La Mansion: reducing infant undernourishment with education". The German foundation „Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg“ has granted us an economic aid of 14.000 € for the project of „The Mansion“; that fills us with joy and with responsibility. Thank you very much!

- On the upcoming 15 of December, at of 15:00h, the annual Assembly of "Claim for Dignity e.V" will be celebrated in Aich/Aichtal, where a presentation of the experience that Annette and Andreas carried out in central Asia he will be emphasized. At the end of the Assembly, all together we will celebrate our traditional Christmas dinner. All of you, friends and partners of "Claim for Dignity e.V." are invited.

- In order increase attendance, the members of the Council decided at the last minute to postpone the celebration of our IV Assembly, anticipated for Sunday October 21st, so as to set it for the date of Friday the 28th of December, date which we also had reserved for an open meeting to all and for the Christmas dinner. Therefore, the celebration of IV the Assembly open to all the partners and friends of "Clam per la Dignitat", as well as the Christmas dinner following, will be celebrated in Sant Just Desvern. The beginning of the Assembly is scheduled to begin at 18:00h. Please RSVP to the Secretary's office to confirm attendance...and please be on time.

- Donations for the projects that Annette and Andreas are carrying out in central Asia, and Stephanie in Peru, can be made either to our current account in Spain or the one in Germany. Please specify for what project you are placing your donation ("Central Asia" or "Peru"). Donations can represent tax relief in tax returns in Germany, however, not yet in Spain.

- In November, a letter was sent to all members and friends from "Clam per la Dignitat" with the request for transferring the annual quota. We ask for all partners and friends who still have not made their transfer of the quota or their desired donation to please place it before the end 2007. Thank you very much!

- Would you like to be in contact with us free-of-charge through our digital bulletin? Would you like to share our bulletin with your friends? Has your electronic or postal address changed? Those of you, who would like to receive our digital bulletin free-of-charge by e-mail, please notify it to the Secretary's office. The bulletin is published in Catalan, Castilian, German and English.

- We needed translators-cooperators to translate our bulletins, especially from Spanish to Catalan and vice versa. In addition, if anyone would like to volunteer for translations of Spanish/Catalan into English or German, they will be welcome in our group of translators-cooperators. The following web page can be very useful for translations: <http://www.translendum.com/>. By no means are more than four pages a year handed out for translation. Thanks

- Your contributions to the bulletin, as well as your ideas and proposals are always welcome!

- Those interested in voluntary service with "Sostre" in Barcelona please get in contact with Javi Laguno ([jlaguno@yahoo.es](mailto:jlaguno@yahoo.es)) or our Secretary's office.

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