

HAPPY 2010?

Be more supportive with those who are permanently in crisis

In the previous and subsequent days to the New Year, I heard more than once the joke "happy 2010". The global economic crisis we are currently living is already here, and the predictions are not very optimistic. As a result of it, it is understandable that some would like to welcome the New Year 2010 as soon as possible, when the economy is expected to recover (at least to certain extend...)

The crisis is surely fuelled by many factors. Surely too, it is not easy to find political solutions to revive the economy. These days we see how the governments approve urgent measures to try to improve the situation. In Germany, for instance, a series of economic decisions have been taken, which were not seen since the end of the Second World War. People's trust is currently very weak.

From our small NGO we are convinced that the crisis must have a personal aspect we cannot ignore: What is my responsibility within this crisis? How can I contribute to improve the situation? Surely our contribution will be almost insignificant, but we know that small things can turn into miracles. Maybe this crisis teaches us how to live in a more austere way

editorial

and how to be more supportive with those who are always in crisis and are any new.

In internet (www.miniature-earth.com/) you can see a video which gives an idea of the world we live in; it can also help us to have in mind those who are permanently in crisis. If only 100 persons were living in this world, 18 out of them would not have access to potable water (like our friends from "La Mansión" in Arequipa, Perú); 43 would live without a basic health system; and 53 would have to survive with less than 2 Euros per day. Of course, 6 persons would have 59% of the community wealth; 12 persons would have a personal computer and only 3 would have access to internet.

In this publication we have the first article of two from Francesc Torralba about the solidarity. Moreover Michael Schliep shares with us a beautiful German tradition related to the Three Wise Men.

I hope this year we continue helping each other in the daily life and in the simple things in order to continue believing that a better world is possible. Happy 2009!!!

The Council

SOLIDARITY AS ENTERTAINMENT

Do you wish to help and to change the world? Don't strive to do it: just attend the charitable dinner or have whatever Médicos Sin Fronteras recommend.

Solidarity is a word under suspicion. When used in public life some questions arise but a clear mind cannot rule them out right from the start. Is solidarity, as it is practiced nowadays, just a fashion? Is it in danger of becoming mere cosmetics?

Are solidarity and social corporative responsibility very convenient to institutions? Is this a straightforward utilitarianism? Can we talk of solidarity when the main purpose is not to do right?

There is a new way of understanding solidarity arising in our western societies and we could call it solidarity as entertainment.

It is a kind of entertaining solidarity which, with the help of the media, mixes game and competition with altruism and solidarity; where utilitarianism, recreation and solidarity come together.

Institutional and social movements, NGO's, together with TV channels and radio stations make people believe that they act with solidarity while being entertained, amused and enjoy the sponsor company advertising. This has resulted on business advertisements being compared to solidarity and therefore on said solidarity ending up being entertaining.

Thus acting with solidarity is not something merely profitable, but at the same time also enjoyable. It is a painless solidarity, where work and struggle become fun and where compromise becomes entertainment. It's like if the mere attendance to a concert, the buy of an offered product or so were to eradicate the problem. We are thus all a little patrons.

thoughts

Do you wish to help? Do you wish to change the world? Don't strive to do it. You just have to go to the charitable dinner where there are some performances of famous singers and showmen; you just have to drink Pepsi-cola following the recommendation of Médicos Sin Fronteras or smoke Fortuna cigarettes because a 0,7% of said trademark will be used in the Third World. Are you contrary to violence? Buy Benetton clothes. If you wish to fight for the elimination of anti-personnel mines use Lois jeans.

Alms are included in the buy. Hence a painless way to purge bad conscience. We don't even have to move a finger in order to help. This entertaining solidarity is duty-free solidarity and it leads us to distancing and makes us not to worry about the true reasons that have caused the problem.

This causes the giving in of critical judgment where collaborator companies and their economic contributions are more important than the thinking and analysis of the reasons and its causes. One of our actual paradoxes is to pretend to collaborate with the pleasures and benefits that solidarity provides without having to suffer any inconvenience. We wish to proclaim solidarity to the whole universe and to escape from the consequences and from the commitments that the defense of said solidarity means.

It is obvious that it is better a little bit of solidarity, even if it is for vanity or marketing reasons, than none. But solidarity in terms of a virtue and a social value is, though, far from these grotesque concepts. What ever happened with charity practiced without ostentation so that others can see it? After all, isn't solidarity turned into another way of business strategy in a competitive market?

Francesc Torralba Roselló

published in "Forum Libertas" on 05/09/07 and summarized by the editorial staff of "CexDe". With the author's authorization.

CHRIST BLESS THIS HOUSE

Children are helping children in need

For several years in between the Christmas days and Epiphany I have been walking with a local group of children, a Star Boys' Singing Procession, bringing God's blessing to the people: "Christus mansionem benedicat – God bless this house" (C+M+B). There are about 150 children dressed up as the Three Wise Men walking the streets of our town (population approx. 10 000).

Since 1959 the Star Boys' Singing Procession in Germany ("Aktion Dreikönigssingen") has become the biggest charity project worldwide where children are helping children in need. It is organized by the children's association "Die Sternsinger" and the Association of German Catholic Youth Groups in every Catholic parish.

The collected money (till now are 657 Million Euro, this year about 39,7 Million Euro) is distributed among 3000 different projects in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Oceania.

Each year my twelve years old daughter and her friends are looking forward to this special event. On the day of the procession they dress up as Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar and star singers. Then we walk through cold and snowy weather to the houses of our neighbours. Throughout the years we got to know a lot of them. But each year we get to know new people. And they are looking forward to meeting us. We ring at their doors, we sing a song, we speak the blessing and write with chalk above their doors the initials: 20*C+M+B*09.

The people we meet often tell stories we wouldn't have heard otherwise and we

experiences

are touched by their lives. This year we were visiting an elderly lady and remembered the death of her husband last year. We hear about dying family members, about people caring for their partners suffering from dementia or about people who are lonely and are happy to see us. These little impressions show us the true meaning of our work.

For the first time this year my sister, her 10 years old daughter and her 6 years old son came along. As I visited them a little while ago we remembered that wonderful experience we shared. My nephew gave me a star he had made himself out of wood. Next year they will join us again and be part of the procession.

When I meet our neighbours now I look and them with different eyes and we often remember our prior meeting.

I put the wooden star at my window as a guide for me and everybody else.

Michael Schliep



NEWS OF "CLAM PER LA DIGNITAT" – SPAIN

- On 27 December in Barcelona the Fifth Member Assembly of „Clam per la Dignitat“ took place. There were goals for the year 2009, which we can summarize: (1) support for the project of international cooperation in education versus Malnutrition in „La Mansion“ (Arequipa, Peru) with the local NGO CIESCU and with our sister organization in Germany, „Claim for Dignity e.V.“, (2) support for a local project „Sostre“ in Barceloneta, (3) continue the quarterly bulletin „CexDe“ and the website (4) the possible change of our association headquarters (the new headquarters would be the community center of the Catholic community of Sant Vicenç de Sarrià Barcelona) and (5) carry out the necessary modifications so that the donations to our association become relevant for tax refunds. Viola Durán and Miriam Fernández quit the council. We thank them for their dedication and cooperation and we hope to continue with them as active members of the association. Manuel Martín Carmona as secretary and Toni Valls i Castellví as vocal are the new members of the council of „Clam per la Dignitat“: Welcome!

- As a association we have decided to participate at the platform „Derecho a vivir“ („right to life“). On our website is the linked to the platform to their website <http://derechoavivir.org/>.

- We have requested funds for the project in „La Mansion“ from the AMB (Metropolitan Area of Barcelona). The application is titled „VIP at La Mansión“ as VIP stands for „ventilated improved pit latrine“. We request funding to build one (or two) latrines in the school „La Mansión“ in Arequipa (Peru).

- We try to run the annual dinner against hunger. Date and place are not fixed yet.

- We would like to thank all for membership fees

news

and donations paid. This year we should have a zero balance, one of the objectives of the Assembly.

- We need volunteer translators (Catalan / Spanish, Catalan or Spanish / English).

- Who is interested to participate in the voluntary service of Sostre in Barcelona contact Javi Laguno (xavierlaguno at gmail.com) or contact the secretary.

NEWS OF "CLAIM FOR DIGNITY e.V." - GERMANY

On our website is an information booklet on nutrition sponsoring for our project in Arequipa / Peru. We ask for your support and distribution to potentially interested people to keep the project alive.

The students of the Melanchtron School in Bretten started with the development of solutions to improve the living conditions in „La Mansion / Arequipa“.

Stephanie reported on 6th February in the Tübingen based free radio „Wüste Welle“ one hour about the project in Arequipa and the association „Claim for Dignity“.

On 13th and 14th February Stephanie, Edi and Michael took part of an event of BDKJ about the program Weltwärts, the voluntary service of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. There were already interviews with interested persons for voluntary work in Arequipa.

The Robert-Bosch-Gymnasium in Langenau prepare the Project days 2009 with the main subject „School in La Mansion“.

Translations: Pati Auset – Manuel Martín - Leire Sarachaga

Published by Clam per la Dignitat

Legal deposit: B-21.862-2004

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