

Transcription

(For simultaneous translation)

Sports Arena (Rome), March 31, 1990

**A UNITED WORLD:
HISTORY IN THE MAKING**

My dear young people,

With this message we open the 1990 Genfest entitled, “A united world: history in the making.”

This is a worldwide festival of the “Youth for a United World” Movement. The participants, in fact, are young people from every continent. Eighty-six nations are represented in this stadium, another 16 nations are linked to us via telephone conference call, and via satellite many are participating in all the European nations, East and West as well as different countries of North and South America.

To everyone we extend our warmest greetings and best wishes that this day – prepared with great sacrifice – may mark an important step in the life of each of you.

Most of you already know this Movement and are a vital part of it. Others are here for the first time.

It is essential for us then, to answer a question you might have: who are the “Youth for a United World” and what do they propose to do?

The “Youth for a United World” Movement officially began five years ago with the 1985 Genfest.

Its principal animators are the “Gen,” young people who are totally committed to witnessing to the highest values in their daily lives. Thanks to the Gen, this Movement quickly assumed global dimensions and now includes young people of all races and nationalities, of more than 60 different languages, of the principal Christian Churches, of the world religions, or simply, of different cultural backgrounds.

The Youth for a United World Movement has an ambitious and lofty goal. It might appear utopian but it is not, because the overwhelming majority of its members place their trust in a force that transcends the Movement itself. This force enlightens it, guides it and leads it along its way. These youth place their trust in God, who shares in the history of every human being and in all of humanity.

The Movement believes it is possible to make the world better, as if all humanity were one family, as if we all belonged to one country, to a world coming together. The Movement believes in a united world and works toward this goal.

Its convictions and course of action in this direction stem primarily from the evidence that unity is a sign of the times today, and from the awareness that it possesses a gift (not only for itself but for many others) the gift, the charisma of unity. The Youth for a United World share it with all the members of the much vaster Focolare Movement, of which it is an expression.

An analysis of today’s world situation confirms its vision and its scope.

Although we are aware of the widespread and varied evils that still afflict humanity today, we realize that the world has been changing over the past decades; our planet is slowly, but surely, moving toward a precise goal: unification.

Already in the 1985 Genfest, we took a close look at this phenomenon and singled out the signs: the “outbreak of peace” – as it was called – instead of nuclear war between the superpowers; the formation of organizations which serve the interests of all the nations of the world; the grouping of nations into a single entity as in the Federation of European States (originally thought of for only Western Europe). And in the field of religion, we looked at the degree of openness, unthinkable in the past,

achieved through dialogue among Christian Churches, with members of other religions and with all persons of good will.

These were the observations, five years ago, which encouraged the young people of the Movement to do all in their power to hasten the process toward unity. Accordingly, they traveled along a number of different “roads” in an effort to cooperate in building world unity. Thus depending on their own possibilities and on the needs of their environment, they mended broken relationships, healed divisions, directed their energies toward a wide variety of situations in which one individual is pitted against another, one group against another. They followed the roads to unity among races and nations, between rich and poor, among various ethnic groups and among generations. The outcome has been a marvelous and fruitful blossoming of constant and dedicated daily activities.

Aware, however, that as far-reaching as their work has been, it is always only a drop in the ocean of the world’s needs, they entrusted themselves to the One who can do more than they. They decided, first and foremost, to walk along the Way par excellence. “I am the way,” (Jn 14:6) Jesus said. They followed him therefore, putting his words into practice.

And they have not been disappointed. They could see, in fact, that while they did their small part, he, the Lord of history, was indisputably intervening to do his great part.

It is marvelous and it fills our hearts with joy to see how these five years which followed the 1985 Genfest have confirmed your program, “Youth for a United World.”

You are all familiar with the recent extraordinary events which cannot be attributed to human forces alone. You know of the widespread and radical changes which have been sweeping across Eastern Europe. They seem to have doubled the scope of European unity, stretching it as far as the Ural Mountains. These changes have also been making an impact on other nations of the world, as in Central America and Asia. You know as well about attempts at reform in a great country of Asia which were, unfortunately, brutally suppressed. The significance of these events remains, however, as a guarantee of hope for the future. You have also witnessed the fall of racial barriers in Africa.

Yes, the world is changing, despite everything and everyone.

And behind all that has happened – and we must witness to it – there is God. Speaking of Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II said: “God won.”¹

And we agree with him. God intervened, of course, through lesser protagonists whose names we all know from the news. Among these, in the sweeping process overturning the world, there is another kind of protagonist who has not received due credit. I am not referring to an individual but a category of persons: young people, yes, precisely, young people.

It is not true that today’s youth have withdrawn into their own private world and are, in general, only secondarily interested in the large-scale problems of humanity. There are many young people who, precisely because they are freer from conditioning and selfish interests, because of their need to believe in something authentic, because they long to renew the world, are sensitive to great ideals. The most vital and fascinating challenges in history often find a response among youth.

Who can not still vividly recall the striking scene of Chinese youth in Tiananmen Square? With their extraordinary courage and faith in a better society, they strove to set in motion the Great Spring of Beijing. Is there anyone who does not remember the image that stunned the world, of the unarmed young man who stopped a column of tanks?

Who could have remained unmoved as they watched on television the great number of young people in the front lines of the demonstrations and political undertakings, who provoked the demolition of the Berlin Wall, or who sparked the birth of the new springs of Prague, Budapest and Bucharest? And even before that, the Polish youth with crosses in hand, giving the “V” sign for victory in Warsaw and

¹. John Paul II: “Thanksgiving to Our Lady of Jasna Gora for the gift of the many historical changes,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, Feb. 22, 1990.

Gdansk and in many other cities during the peaceful demonstrations which have changed the face of Central and Eastern Europe? Or still, the youth in the squares of Moscow, demanding the restoration of trampled human rights?

And we all have very present the ardor of the many youth involved in the nonviolent peoples' revolts in Latin America: in Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Santiago, Montevideo and Asuncion, which led to the return of freedom after the oppression of military dictatorships.

Similarly we recall Korean youth who long for a single homeland, and those Palestinian and Lebanese youth who have acted nonviolently. And there are many others. Forgive me if I don't mention everyone.

The huge number of young people participating last summer in the great pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, symbolic site of the spiritual unity of Europe, astounded public opinion. They were determined to promote a rediscovery of the Christian values which gave life to the civilization of the continent.

Also, young people are always in the front lines in the great effort to save nature, which mankind has damaged and which is the essential backdrop to a humanity at peace.

And young people have been and are in the forefront when it comes to demanding peace.

They are among the first to freely give their time and energy to concretely help the populations of the developing worlds. This, too, is another gigantic problem facing those who long for a united world.

Yes, young people today are active in all these fields.

Let us ask, then: what is your role among today's youth, as "Youth for a United World"? What is your specific contribution? What is your place?

Undoubtedly you, first of all, want to share your peers' hope and struggles so that the great values they champion, like freedom, human rights, democracy and equality, may prevail.

You need to be strongly determined then to concretely give your contribution to resolving problems by continuing to walk along the roads to unity, supporting and initiating new projects, small-scale achievements which demonstrate to adults what can be done on a larger scale by those who have the necessary instruments, competence, experience and maturity.

But above all, you must offer the entirely original and extraordinary contribution which is specifically yours because you are "Youth for a United World."

You can give the most important element of all: you can give a "soul" to all those who labor in this immense work-site which today is our planet.

You have heard how entire nations, especially those which have gone through the traumatizing experience of atheistic materialism, are asking for spiritual things, for spirituality. All the spiritual written material at disposition, reaching even hundreds of thousands of printed copies, are gone in a day. You have seen for yourselves, then, how the most noble aspirations of the human heart can not be suffocated forever.

You have also observed that many people who are now looking toward the West, can be harmed by another kind of materialism, no less dangerous.

This then is your task: to give what is most desired, satisfy the hunger for what is sacred and holy, for the spiritual element which every heart carries within it.

But how?

We know that God, the source of all spirituality, is love.

Love, then, is the most sought after spiritual element: the love that God, who became man, brought on earth.

Let us take a look at several symptomatic scenes of today's world. We observe in Eastern Europe, in the nations which have recently experienced changes, people who are overjoyed with their new-found

freedom. Beside them, however, are people who are frightened, disillusioned and depressed over having seen their ideals collapse. We can read on some faces threats of retaliation, revenge and even hatred.

Let's stop to think: what would Jesus say if he appeared among them? We can be certain: he would still speak, today as he did in his time, of love. He would say: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Only together, in harmony and in forgiveness, can a solid future be built.

Let us move on to other locations, to a country of Latin America, for example, as if watching a series of images fading in and out. On one side, we see skyscrapers, often modern cathedrals erected to the god of consumerism, and on the other side are slums and misery, moral and physical degradation, and sickness.

What would Jesus say about this distressing scene? "I told you to love one another. You didn't, and these are the consequences."

And if other pictures, as in a collage, were to offer us flashes from cities known as the richest in the world, and then from other cities of the most advanced technologies, and then panoramas of desert wastelands with starving men, women and children. What would Jesus say if he appeared on the scene? "Love one another."

Of if we were to see scenes of racial strife with massacres and violations of human rights.... Or unending conflicts like those taking place in the Middle East with homes collapsing, injuries, deaths and the continual use of deadly bombs or other fatal weapons?.... Let us ask ourselves once again: what would Jesus say looking upon such dramatic situations? "I told you to seek each other's good. Love one another as I have loved you."

Yes, this is what he would say looking upon these and all the grave situations in today's world.

But his words are not only words of regret for what has not been done. He truly repeats these words to us today. He has died but he is risen and – as he promised – he is with us every day, to the end of the world.

And what he said is of enormous importance. This sentence, "Love one another as I have loved you" is the master key to solve every problem; it is the fundamental answer to overcome every evil affecting humanity.

The "Youth for a United World" can find no better way to fulfill their task of cooperating in giving a soul to the world than by bringing love back into it.

Certainly, it is not what it might seem at first glance; it is no easy task. Challenging and arduous as it might be, this love has the power to change the world.

Jesus defined the commandment of love as "mine" and "new." It is especially his since he filled it with a unique and new content. "Love one another," he said, "as I have loved you." And he gave his life for us.

Therefore with this love, life is at stake. He is asking us to love our brothers and sisters to the point of being ready to give our lives for them.

Friendship or kindness towards others is not enough for Jesus, neither philanthropy nor solidarity alone. The kind of love that Jesus asks for is more than nonviolence.

It is something active, dynamic. He asks that we no longer live for ourselves but for others. And this requires sacrifice and hard work. He asks everyone to change from cowardly and egotistical individuals concerned only with their own interests and things, into small heroes who, day after day, are at the service of their neighbors, ready to give even their lives for them.

Dearest young people, your vocation calls you to this, if you don't want your ideals to vanish in utopian dreams.

You must love in this way, love one another in this way, beginning yourselves to be witnesses to this love before you propose it to others.

Witnesses, models: may the world see how you love one another and therefore, repeat what was once said of the early Christians: “See how they love one another and are ready to give their lives for one another.”²

Then a solid foundation will have been laid; the root of the tree we want to see blossom will have been planted.

This mutual love among you will, in fact, bring consequences of what we could call an infinite value. In fact, where there is love, there is God. As Jesus said: “Where two or three are united in my name (and this is to say, in his love) I am there in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

You will then have Christ among you, Christ himself, the Almighty and from him you can hope for all things.

Jesus himself will work with you in your countries, because he will, in a certain way, come again into the world, wherever you meet, because you will make him present through your mutual love, through your unity.

He will enlighten you about all that is to be done. He will guide you, he will sustain you, he will be your strength, your fervor, your joy.

Because of him, the world around you will convert and live in harmony; every division will be healed. He said so: “That they may be one and the world will believe” (Jn 17:21).

The commitment you have made for yourselves is a magnificent one and no one but he can be your leader in the struggle.

The commitment, therefore, is to love. Generate love among you and sow love in every corner of the earth among individuals, groups and nations. Make every effort so that the invasion of love of which we have spoken in the past, may become a reality, and also with your contribution, the civilization of love which we all await, may begin to take shape. It is to this that you are called. And you will see great things.

Just think. If God has won in the chapter of history we have been living through, what is going to happen if we add to the direct action of God, the efforts of young people, of many young people whose actions are guided by Christ present among them through love?

Go ahead, then, without hesitating. The youth you possess does not count the cost; it is generous: make the most of it.

Go ahead, those of you who are Christian, who believe in Christ.

Go ahead, those of you who are members of other religions, sustained by the very noble principles which you hold.

Go ahead, all of you young people of other cultures who may not know God but you feel in your hearts the need to spend all your energies for the ideal of a united world!

All of you, hand in hand, be certain of this: the victory will be yours.

Chiara Lubich

². Tertullian, *Apologetics*, 39:7.