

To introduce the work of art

My brothers in the episcopate, Dear hosts, Ladies and Gentlemen,

What a joy to be together here in this place of considerable historical significance for our old-catholic community. It was in this house that five courageous men took a decision that changed some important details on the ecclesiastical landscape. Although it wasn't about another 'ecclesiastical power' coming into being, what they did was undoubtedly historic. They saw themselves compelled to give ecclesiastical structure to a movement that otherwise would have been condemned to disappear. By doing that, they preserved its inspiration for the church. Those five bishops were convinced that the message of the old-catholic movement was of importance for the future of the church and its unity. They didn't have any other aim than serving the proclamation of the gospel in the modern world, deeply believing that the truth of the gospel is able to offer the quality of life human beings are longing for.

This work of art, that we shall bless today, tells us about this truth, and about the relationship and solidarity as the concrete shape of it. That's also what 'catholicity', in its deep theological and spiritual meaning, is all about. Catholicity has to do with the global community of Christians, not as a kind of closed castle fighting for its own right, but as a network that promotes sister- en brotherhood among all human beings. But it is not me who has to explain what the artist did mean, she will do it herself in a moment.

But perhaps it is even not the most important thing to know what the artist has meant with its shape, lines, colours and materials. Priority shall have the fact that we can enjoy it ... and we already are enjoying it.

And as we are enjoying this work of art, we are building on a relationship between two institutions representing two very different areas of our society: the business-world and the church. That's the power of art: bringing people together and building bridges between them. Art is able to build bridges because of its capacity to go beyond instrumentality and interests of profit. Therefore: both of them, business and church, need art. Of course, the church can't survive without theology in order to guarantee the rationality of the faith. But we will never get into the lively dynamic of faith if theology won't lead us to art. What theology is for the church, is economy for the business world. The role of the economy is to manage the scarcity of goods and the just division of it among people, but if the business interest of maximising profit is the ultimate goal of the economy those goods will never bring the joy in human society they should bring. Business people need aside from the efficiency of economy also the generosity of art. Economy offers life a steady structure, art offers it air to breathe.

Church people and business people need one another in at least two ways. In the first place they need one another in the reflection about the ethical side of the economy. This is about justice and about sharing goods, about solidarity and caring for poor people. Christian ideals in this respect have to be translated into concrete economic strategies. In the second place it is about spirituality. The economic world tells us about the concreteness of life and bodily condition of human beings. There is no faith that can deny this crucial aspect of human life without taking the risk to alienate human

beings from themselves. That's what the economy tells the church. The church, from its side, tells the economy that people are able to go beyond their own needs in order to care for one another and building community in which the ultimate drive isn't profit, but love.

Thanks to the unique history of this house, those two, the business world and the church, meet each another here today.

For this house once was a church house, a bishop's house, but it has been 'converted' into a house that plays an important role in the business strategy of a multinational. Perhaps the people who will be hosted here, may be 'converted' to relate to one another and to build community beyond borders of cultures and nationalities. In doing so, they would be taking up a practical spirituality of relationship and community. We have to take into mind that catholicity is about this spirituality. Catholicity is about relating beyond borders, even beyond the borders of human perception. That was what that historic moment on September 24, 1889, was about.

'We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all; that is truly and properly catholic' (*Id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum*). When the monk Vincent of Lérin wrote these sentences, he was not thinking about a truth that would come down to humanity as an overwhelming oracle that is robbing humanity of its freedom. On the contrary: he meant that the search for truth invites us to an attitude of dedication and a spirit of community.

I want to conclude in reading a poem, that is about dedication an community and about the blessing of it. It is a poem of the book of psalms of the bible, very concrete in using bodily images an very outspoken about God having to do with the unity among people. It is a little and joyful song that may lift up one's heart.

Psalm 133

A Song of Ascents. By David.

1 See how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to live together in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil on the head,
That ran down on the beard,
Even Aaron's beard;
That came down on the edge of his robes;

3 Like the dew of Hermon,
That comes down on the hills of Zion:
For there Yahweh gives the blessing,
Even life forevermore.

And now: It is honour to me to offer this piece of art to the owner of this house and to entrust it to his good caring. We do hope you are ready to accept it as a sign of our solidarity, as neighbours and partners in being committed to the welfare of humanity.