

# *Hoping in Season and out of Season*

*A message for 2021*

Humanity is able to move forward because of the multitudes of women and men who give themselves without counting the cost, even in times of upheaval and uncertainty.

Over these last few months, many young people have shared with us their worries about the future: what hope can give us direction; what things can we trust and rely on when everything is so unstable? And still more deeply: what goal is worth living for? Other voices rise up and say: we must resist becoming disenchanted and pay attention to signs of hope.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As a way of responding to this message for 2021, we invite young people aged 15 to 35 to illustrate it with concrete examples. What initiatives or people are a sign of hope for me? Over the next few months, these responses will be published in various formats: texts, videos, podcasts.... Write to us at [solidarity@taize.fr](mailto:solidarity@taize.fr).

## *Attentive to signs of hope*

In the current situation marked by the pandemic, we are witnessing a growing precariousness in vast regions of the world. Bold political decisions are needed, but the solidarity and social friendship we can all undertake are just as indispensable. Many people are ready and willing to serve others. Their generosity reminds us that **mutual aid** opens a road for the future.

And so many young people are devoting their energies to **save our common home**, the planet! Initiatives are springing up everywhere: without providing all the answers to the climate emergency, they allow us already now to head towards ways of life which are more respectful of the environment.<sup>2</sup> For those who are believers, the earth is a gift that God has entrusted to us so that we may take care of it.

People have become more aware of structures of injustice, sometimes inherited from the past. And unfortunately, power has not always been exercised to serve the good of all. In the face of such abuses, frustration and anger are comprehensible. Who will be daring enough to be **creators of justice and peace** beyond the divisions that are splitting our societies apart?

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<sup>2</sup> In the fight against climate change and to reduce carbon emissions, will we be able to call our practices into question in order to change what can be changed? Christian communities are taking part in this effort: ecumenical initiatives, such as the network of "Green Churches," exist in different countries around the world.

Already in 1989, the Churches of Europe meeting in Basel called upon everyone to "adopt a lifestyle that is as environmentally friendly as possible: this means, among other things, reducing energy consumption, using public transport and limiting waste."

At Taizé, we are continuing our efforts towards the ecological transition. To help us in this, all proposals are welcome ([www.taize.fr/eco](http://www.taize.fr/eco)).

## ***Living as brothers and sisters***

Yes, in the midst of the difficult realities of the present, we can glimpse reasons to hope, and even at times to hope against all hope. For this, we need to come together with others who have made different choices—with Christians from other denominations, with believers of other religions, and with people who are agnostic or atheist and who are also committed to solidarity and sharing.

Joy is renewed when we live as brothers and sisters, when we remain alongside the most deprived: the homeless, men and women who are elderly, ill or lonely, children in difficulty, people living with disabilities, migrants.... Life's circumstances can make us all vulnerable. And the pandemic is exposing the weak spots of our humanity.

We need one another more than ever. Pope Francis reminds us forcefully of this in his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*: "No one is saved alone." And he adds that we do not find our true identity "without being sincerely open to the universal, without feeling challenged by what is happening in other places, without openness to enrichment by other cultures, and without solidarity and concern for the tragedies affecting other peoples" (§32 and §146).

In relationships between individuals as well as between peoples, let us do all we can to move from competition to cooperation. Let us support the agencies or associations that promote cooperation and solidarity, whether it be locally, nationally or internationally.

## ***Believing – trusting in a presence***

At Taizé, we notice that young people are reflecting in a new way about faith in God in order to stay on track. What does it mean to believe? And if God exists, is this God active in history, in our lives?

In the face of these questions, it is important to avoid reducing God to our concepts. God is infinitely greater than all we can imagine. We are seekers thirsting for love and truth. Wherever we may be on our inner pilgrimage, all

of us are often just feeling our way forward. But, as “pilgrims of trust”, we can walk together, sharing our search—our questions as much as our convictions.

“Faith is a simple trust in God, a surge of trusting repeated a thousand times during our lifetime... even if in each one of us there can be doubts as well,” said Brother Roger.

Does believing not mean first of all trusting in a presence which is both in the depths of our being and in the entire universe, a presence which is elusive and yet so real? A presence that does not impose itself, but one we can welcome anew at every moment, in silence, as a kind of respiration. A caring presence which is always there, regardless of our doubts and even when we have the impression that we understand very little who God is.

## ***Discerning a new horizon***

A caring presence: what light does the Gospel shed on this mystery?

Jesus drew life from this caring presence to the very end; he was constantly attentive to it. It was an inner light for him, the breath of God, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

From the depths of suffering and absolute solitude, when he was dying on the cross, when everything seemed meaningless, he let his feelings of abandonment burst out in a cry, but in words still addressed to God: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Betrayed, tortured, condemned to death, Jesus brought love into the deepest darkness. And that love was shown to be stronger than evil. Mary Magdalene and then the apostles communicated this unexpected, unbelievable news: he is alive. God’s love has conquered hatred and death.

Gripped by this news, the first Christians were overwhelmed and they bore witness to it: Christ is henceforth alive with God. Christ fills the universe by the Holy Spirit and is also present in every human being. Christ is in solidarity with

the poor and will bring them justice; he is the fulfillment of history and creation; he will welcome us after death in the fullness of joy.

Beyond human violence, beyond environmental disasters and diseases, a new horizon is open. Will we be able to discern it?

## ***Changing our way of seeing***

From this horizon revealed by the resurrection of Christ, a light enters our existence. Again and again it dispels the shadow of fear and makes a spring of living water well up; because of it the joy of praise bursts forth.

As a result we can sense that secretly, by a kind of mysterious attraction. Christ continues until the end of time to gather together into God's love all humankind and the entire universe. And he makes us partners in his mission.

Christ makes us partners together, as the Church. That requires us to be ready to widen our friendship to include everybody. Christ asks us to love even our enemies; his peace reconciles even opposing nations.<sup>3</sup>

Let Christ change our way of seeing: through him we recognize more clearly

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<sup>3</sup> In these trying times of the pandemic, the Church can continue to promote fraternity in the human family. Here are three suggestions among many others:

- To make our societies more human, we need to listen to one another in a way that alleviates antagonisms and teaches us to walk together in our differences. The Church is called to seek dialogue, to go out to meet everyone. Would those who live without reference to any Christian community also be ready to enter into dialogue with it?
- Faced with the arrival of so many migrants and refugees, welcoming an exiled person or family can give a boost to our parishes or communities. People who are not churchgoers are often ready to participate in such a welcome. This is the experience we have had in Taizé in recent years, as we have welcomed migrants from several countries together with people from our immediate region.
- Being a welcoming community means listening to those who are most vulnerable. In many places, the Churches need to make progress to protect the integrity of all. Sometimes power structures have developed within them that have resulted in physical, psychological and spiritual suffering. In Taizé, too, we are continuing our work of truth in this regard ([www.taize.fr/protection](http://www.taize.fr/protection)).

the dignity of every human being and the beauty of creation. Far from being a naive trust, hope springs up again and again, because it is rooted in Christ. A serene joy fills us and, with it, the courage to take on the responsibilities that God entrusts to us on this earth.

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With each of you who want to reflect on this message, I am in communion through prayer.

*f. Abis*

*Christ Jesus, we praise you for your goodness and your simplicity. Through your humility the light of God shone your whole life long. This light shines today in our hearts. It can heal our wounds and even transform our frailties and our uncertainties into wellsprings of life, into creative energy, into the gift of trust. By shining this light of God on us, you make us able to hope in season and out of season.*

## *Some Bible texts to go further with the reflection*

*Mary sang with these words: "God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. [...] He has sent the rich away empty." (Read Luke 1:46-56)*

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was able to unite love and tenderness with the ardent hope of radical change.

*Jesus said: "The Helper, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I said to you." (Read John 14:15-31)*

Jesus did not leave us all alone. Before his death, he assured his disciples of his presence for all time, through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives in us, comforts us, sustains us and inspires us to live as followers of Christ Jesus, day after day.

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes; he comes to bring justice to the earth. (Read Psalm 96)*

Many psalms invite us to praise God. Human beings are not the only ones to sing God's praises; all creation takes part. We do not only want to protect creation because we need it so we can exist, but because we are a part of it and because God's beautiful designs extend to all that lives.

## *The pilgrimage of trust in 2021*

The pilgrimage of trust on earth will continue. The current context of uncertainty is prompting us to find new forms for it, such as online initiatives: the period of lockdown has shown how precious it is to remain in communion with one another through the means of communication.

As the pandemic continues, it is not clear whether all the meetings can take place as planned, but we hope to organize the following stages of the pilgrimage of trust in 2021:

- Weekly meetings in Taizé, throughout the year, if and when the health situation permits it.
- Online continental meetings from Taizé and from different places around the world where brothers live.
- Weekend of friendship between young Muslims and Christians, from July 14 to 18, 2021.
- Week of reflection for 18-35 year olds, from August 22 to 29, 2021.
- European Meeting in Turin, from December 28, 2021 to January 1, 2022.

And finally, in 2022 we hope to undertake the stage of the pilgrimage of trust in the Holy Land that had been announced for 2021. The dates will be published soon.