



**2014 – Report from the
President**

President's Annual Report 2014

Dear Caritas Friend,

In my last report as your President of Caritas Europa, I wanted to address you by letter and thank you for making Caritas possible and giving it shape. God's love, which has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) urges us over and over again to turn to people and attend to their needs. There is no old and cold love. Bygone love and former love serve as reminders of the distance travelled and the steps to active love. Many educational institutions, hospitals, homeless shelters, refugee camps, counselling centres and community centres stand



Fr. Erny Gillen

in our towns and villages as reminders. They stand concurrently for the withdrawal and replacement of love. They serve as reminders of broken families and bonds of solidarity, of wounds, which cannot be cared for and healed without outside help and professional co-workers. But they also stand for the many committed people who, on a professional or voluntary basis, bestow their love and humanity, their skills and time to unknown and often anonymous people in need of help. In these new encounters between contemporary good Samaritans and the people left behind by the roadside of love, relations for a new love emerge, often through the required empathy, that go beyond need. During the last eight years I have come across people in need and people who provide help time and again: their input for a better life and their hope in the power of all-changing love have moved me deeply again and again and even motivated me not to give up the work of Caritas as an unknown companion and storyteller, particularly in the last three years as vicar general in Luxembourg.

Pope Francis too has in his own person contributed significantly towards not losing faith in a Caritas organised along the lines of human need. He is not afraid to look over the Mediterranean. He does not want it to turn into the biggest cemetery between Africa and Europe. He can conceive it as a route which people take not as refugees or criminals but as guests and workers. He has held up a mirror for us in Europe and spoke in the European Council and Parliament of the heroic achievements from our history, which we are concurrently in the process of disowning and giving up. There is only one world. There are only human beings. God himself has created everyone and everything. And this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacobs is still among people today in the thorn bushes and deserts of life. In the museums or temples of past religiosity, on the other hand, tourists are shivering and wondering about the backward looking way of coping with the present, without any prospects for the future. Many churches lying empty could be turned into a warm place of Caritas. Mother Church is also Caritas. Her face and care are used and indeed asked for more than ever before in a society that is floating on the sea of consumerism, without a harbour in sight, and without being able to hope for wind.

Since the last regional conference in the Netherlands, everything has been prepared for the transition to a new life cycle of Caritas Europa. The general secretariat is well equipped to assume more responsibility in the fields of advocacy and support for members. The succession from the current to the new board went smoothly. Caritas Europe can count on Jorge Nuño Mayer as a reliable and purpose-oriented general secretary at its organisational nerve centre in Brussels. All my respect and recognition are due to him and all the staff for the work done and the will, which is by no means self-evident, to capitalise on the change in organisation in a positive manner. In Luc Van

Looy, Caritas has again a bishop in Europe who will use his experience and intelligence to solidify and strengthen further the legitimate autonomy of the church in society.

This year's regional conference will take place in Rome, right before the general meeting of Caritas Internationalis. It has been convened precisely at a time when Pope Francis is on hand, to reform the Curia, assisted by the C9 Council, which is coordinated by our international president, Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiga. Since the latest alteration of the articles of association, Caritas has officially become part of the Curia, and at the same time the international instrument of its members. Thanks to the skills of our international general secretary Michel Roy, peace and tranquillity could be established in the new relationship between Caritas and the Curia. The reform of the church and the Curia will proceed further thanks to Pope Francis. He should know that Caritas is prepared for its own reform in line with its missions. It sees that people are in need and is taking action. Like the good Samaritan, it does not shy away from cooperating with the unknown innkeeper, in order to make sure that the injured person is not left on his own. In a world that is erecting borders and walls, puts religions against religions, societies against societies, culture against culture, in particular, much in the future will depend on living the all-embracing Catholic dimension of Christianity openly and without fear of contact. In the maelstrom of the world and in the confusion of confrontations, Christ himself emerges unexpectedly in the faces of sufferers and the oppressed.

Dear Caritas friends, a great deal has happened in the last four years. Our world and our church have changed dramatically and we have changed along with them. Caritas is church and advocates a Caritas church, a "God among his people church." Caritas is and will remain multi-coloured and colourful, because needs and situations are different. Caritas is a professional organisation which stands for certain values and cooperates with European institutions at the European level. Caritas is more than the sum of its members at the national level, so long as it provides democratic leadership and competent staff, who bring the views of the base along in Brussels. Caritas is a brand name, which we should cherish, so that it can stand further for active solidarity and reliable partnership. Caritas is on the go and on the move, as long as it enjoys the trust of the church leadership, and is not misused by it for its purposes. Caritas is a bridge for people and by people.

Let us continue the work and build further, since God's love knows no bounds. Our goal can only be "zero poverty," since every poor person is a scandal for love. And daily reality serves as only too concrete a reminder of our incapacity and the enormous need for action. That is precisely why we simply cannot give up, but must do everything in our power, while at the same time putting everything in God's hand. In his kingdom, no one will go hungry or thirsty; there will be no prisoners or patients, no mourners or poor, in any event. And this kingdom has effectively commenced in Jesus Christ, in his resurrection and our salvation. We must not lose sight of this "zero poverty" goal; otherwise we will become intermediaries of poverty. Poverty is not negotiable. It must be eliminated. And all means and resources, that are used out of Love and in Love, are right! We must not fear a world in which the former poor sit at the same table with the former rich. For we know, there are only humans and they are all equal.

The history of Caritas will now go forward with new people with managerial responsibility. Support them, if they assume responsibility and ask more from us than cooperation. Together, we are not only strong, but we are also Caritas, love that sees and acts.



Rue de Pascale, 4
1040 Brussels - Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 280 02 80
info@caritas-europa.org
www.caritas-europa.org

Caritas Europa, the network of Caritas organisations in Europe, has a heartfelt commitment to analyse and fight poverty and social exclusion; and to promote true integral human development, social justice and sustainable social systems in Europe and throughout the world.

Caritas Europa, le réseau des organisations Caritas en Europe, a, au fond du cœur, l'engagement d'analyser et de lutter contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale et de promouvoir un développement humain vrai et intégral, la justice sociale et des systèmes sociaux durables en Europe et à travers le monde.

Mit Zuwendung des Herzens, engagiert sich Caritas Europa, das Netzwerk der Caritas Organisationen in Europa, für die Analyse und Bekämpfung von Armut und sozialer Ausgrenzung und für die Förderung einer wahren und ganzheitlichen, menschlichen Entwicklung sowie sozialer Gerechtigkeit und nachhaltiger Sozialsysteme in Europa und auf der ganzen Welt.

