

THE KING IS NAKED

An introduction to the theme study of the C.G.L.E.M.

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“The Path of the Light”

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Once upon a time there was a very vain king whose only interest in life were his clothes. He kept changing them and enjoyed showing the clothes so that people could admire him. Once two frauds, knowing his passion, told the king that they were very fine tailors and could sew a lovely new suit for him. It would be so light and fine that it would seem invisible and it would also be magical. Only those who were stupid could not see it. The king was very excited and ordered the new tailors to begin weaving this cloth and to make him a new suit that he would wear at the annual celebration of the reign.

So begins one of the most peculiar and allegorical fables by Hans Christian Andersen. Do you remember the continuation?

The two frauds started working on the loom but obviously there was no cloth. They never stopped praising the beauty and quality of the nothing that they were weaving. One day, the king asked the prime minister to go and see how much work the two tailors had done. He saw the two men moving scissors in the air but he could see no cloth! He kept quiet for fear of being called stupid and ignorant. Instead, he praised the fabric and said it was marvelous.

*Finally, the king's new dress was ready. He could see nothing but he too did not want to appear stupid. He admired the dress and thanked the tailors. He wore the suit for the parade down the street so that all could see the new clothes. The people could only see a naked king but no one admitted it for fear of being thought stupid. The king was very happy because they all foolishly praised the invisible fabric and the colors. Nobody except a little child who cried out, **“The King is naked!”***

Soon everyone began to murmur the same thing and the king shivered, because up till that moment they had considered as true only what was convenient for them.

The study topic proposed by the Confederation of Grand Lodges of Europe and the Mediterranean involves many aspects of the relational dynamics between the peoples of the so-called Western bloc on one side and those of the Islamic Arabic-African area on the other, with the Mediterranean as a crossroads and a keystone where those dynamics are enacted. Of course these relations bear complex and differentiated problems, from mass emigration to war and poverty created by the latter; from the attempt of some Islamic people to emancipate from theocratic governments, to the opposition carried out by the religious fundamentalists; from the birth of the Islamic State of Isis and the terrorist attacks in places that are symbols of the Western wealth, to the answers of the European governments that highlight all the internal divisions and the different views of what defines itself as a Union of States. However, all these themes have a common substrate that has many similarities with Anderson's tale, because the majority of people prefer an approach based on a convenient reality to which to obey and believe in, rather than investigate and deal with what reason and intellectual honesty would show us as true. We will see that our main enemy is represented by ignorance and hypocrisy, by the mantle of respectability with which the so-called public opinion covers its positions, defending them to the bitter end even in the face of opposing evidence. We have the obligation to unmask them, not

only for the sake of truth, but above all because we are aware that laying the foundation of an effective solution for these problems is impossible if they are not dealt with in their real nature and substance.

Today we will try today to follow this route; well aware however, that under these circumstances we cannot help but make generalizations and omit other elements of equal value and importance regarding this topic. Our aim, however, is not to be comprehensive and conclusive, but rather to raise doubts and provide food for thought. In fact it is impossible to believe that one can have the complete and definitive picture about so many complex and intertwined situations. It is impossible to think that we can make final and unequivocal judgments, without being caught by the emotions induced by the most dramatic events, whether they are feelings of pity for the tragedy of migrants or anger for the terrorist attacks. It is also impossible not to give rise even to fierce criticism, whichever is the subject being asserted. After all, what each one can perceive of reality is his own ***perspective***, a point of view, which, starting from certain assumptions analyzes the facts on the basis of these assumptions and forms an opinion. But they are perspectives nonetheless or, to continue with our metaphor, clothes in which we chose to coat reality while trying to convince others (and ourselves) that they are the most beautiful possible, not realizing how they might appear invisible to others. So we have those who parade the dress of goodness, compassion, solidarity and hospitality always and no matter what, and those who use the mantle of intolerance, racism, nationalism and xenophobia. Beyond these perspectives, these attitudes, these coatings, as Freemasons we should instead have the strength and the ability to expose the nudity of the King, to present and approach the problems of our time for what they really are, proposing possible actions and solutions that do not pursue other interest than the ***good of mankind***. Not the good of individual nations, of individual states, or of our own social group, class, personal advantage; action must be taken not favouring our own fears or desires, but to pursue the good of mankind. The first thing to do is to abandon all forms of prejudice and bias, convince ourselves that a murderer is such regardless of his nationality or his religion, that a thief is such everywhere he steals, that a hungry or needy person deserves the same solidarity regardless of the colour of his skin, because we are all children of the human race. As Freemasons, we cannot and we must not abdicate our responsibility in the quest for truth, aware that it is our duty to investigate the reality behind appearances, beyond the clichés, beyond the conformism and the self-righteousness of any kind.

We will start with the most important issue of the substrate of our topic, which is the pivot on which all other issues appear to rotate, that is the **religious** one, because we cannot deny the importance that religion plays in characterizing the identity of Muslim peoples above all, as well as their relations with the Western countries. Islam in fact is not simply seen as an expression of an individual religious sphere, like today's Christianity is to Westerners, but it fully and completely permeates every aspect of the personal, social, legal and economic of life Muslims. There is no situation that is not regulated by the Qur'an or the Sunnah, which is the collection of anecdotes of what the Prophet said or did. Before being a theology, Islam is law and a legal system to which the individual must submit, and *Shari'a* ("law") is the term that more than any other characterizes its essence.

Though they are very different, since all are aware that the religious aspect has been and still is the main factor that hinders a dialogue between peoples, many have tried to find elements that can connect the religion of Muhammad with the other two great religions of the Mediterranean area, the Jewish and the Christian ones, in the hope that relying on these elements the continuous connection to religious differences to justify any form of conflict may fade. These are the premises on which, a process of inter-religious dialogue

was started in search of theological foundations in support of possible contact points. In particular, it has been emphasized how they all are monotheistic religions, how they share a common patriarch, Abraham, and how all three are based on the revelation of God recorded in a holy book, for which reason they are also called "Religions of the Book". But at a closer inspection, none of these elements can be truly defined as common to the three religions; or rather, none of these elements is interpreted in the same way or with the same meaning.

The affinity ascribed to the common Abrahamite lineage does not really go beyond the figure of Abraham himself, and differences clearly emerge from his immediate descendants. In the Bible we find that the covenant between *YHWH* and the patriarch, based on God's promise to grant him many descendants through which all peoples of the earth would be blessed, is realized by the birth of Isaac and through him it reaches Jesus Christ, through whom the covenant between man and God the Father is fulfilled. In the Qur'an, Abraham is the first of the prophets, the "friend of God" whose line is carried on by the first-born son Ishmael, generated with the Egyptian slave Hagar, and fulfilled by Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets and final messenger of God's will. Abraham and Ishmael, inspired by God, founded the holy city of Mecca and build the *Ka'ba*, the holiest place of Islam. In the Qur'an there are some of the biblical figures, including Jesus, but all with a very different connotation than the Judeo-Christian tradition. Islam claims to have the correct interpretation, being the last in chronological order to receive the divine revelation through Muhammad. The differences would then to be attributed to misunderstandings and mistakes made by Jews and Christians in interpreting the divine will.

Also the alleged link based on monotheism is to be evaluated in light of these considerations: it is not enough to support the existence of one God to be considered convergent, one needs to examine the nature of this God and in the case of Judaism, Christianity and Islam this divine nature is very different. On the one hand we have the liberating God of the Jews, the judge and legislator God who chose to be bound with his own people, even by offering himself through the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, theological cornerstones of Christianity. On the other, the absolutely transcendent, arbitrary, unpredictable and unknowable God of Islam, for whom there can never be any possibility of a "meeting" between Himself and mankind, even for the righteous after death. Beyond that, Islam does not consider Christianity to be truly monotheistic, but "tri-theistic", because of the difficulty in understanding the nature of the Trinitarian dogma.

Let us finally talk about the "Book", that is the possible affinity of the three religions due to the fact that they are based on the revelation contained in the holy book. We are actually facing perhaps the most incompatible difference. It is not enough that each religion is based on what is revealed by the deity, and that this revelation was recorded in a text, if what has been revealed and the ways in which these revelations were preached differ considerably from one another. The Bible is a text inspired, not dictated, by God, and has been formed over more than 10 centuries, with various layers and subsequent revisions with which many writers have interpreted the divine thought transmitting it in many ways and not without some contradictions. The Qur'an was instead written in a relatively short period of time, in the years immediately following Muhammad's death, and reports only what Allah revealed to the Prophet, without comments or interpretations of his prophet. But it is especially in the very idea of God and his relationship with humanity that the biggest differences come out. The Bible is basically a series of stories, about the unfolding and evolution of the relationship of God with mankind, of God interventions in human history, in

such a way as to determine its development, until we reach the very embodiment of the divine Word in a man. God reveals himself and becomes a man among men; he takes upon himself their destiny to redeem their existence. There is a continuous exchange between God and his creatures, until the advent of the Christ which is the fulfilment of Revelation and the beginning of a new era for humanity. In Islam there is no form of participation of Allah in the life of mankind, He remains an absolutely transcendent and arbitrary entity, unknowable and incomprehensible, to which men can only obey hoping for his mercy. The Qur'an is in itself the revelation of God, for this reason the Sunnis say that it is uncreated and kept within Allah himself, therefore considering it immutable and not subject to changes and/or interpretations over time. The Christian God immersed in the history of mankind makes himself participate in human suffering to redeem it, and his action in history serves to emancipate mankind from suffering. The God of Islam, absent and transcendent, is insensitive to the suffering of the human beings, so that mankind itself sometimes seems to be numb to its own suffering (and that of the others). A God who does not act in history creates no history, in the sense of striving towards progress and emancipation. The Islamic world seems suspended between a past that no longer exists and a future that will never be, thereby depriving the present time of any meaning, except the one of perpetuating itself in a fatalistic abandonment to the will of God.

All the arguments brought in favour of a possible convergence have been proven deceptive and illusory. They are nothing else than clothes made of a flimsy cloth, and only our obstinacy in trying to look for compromises at all costs, for similarities, for relationships where there are none, leads us to consider them as real. Instead, we must take note that the King is naked!

It is not necessary to force an agreement on flimsy elements. Interreligious dialogue should be based on elements foreign to theology and interpretation of the Scriptures, referring explicitly to the natural right of every man to see his essence respected. Only a secular context can guarantee this, where we intend secularism instead of laicism, that is its degeneration in the rejection of all forms of religion as the only guarantee for a peaceful coexistence, but rather we understand it as the only framework that can and should guarantee everyone the free expression of their religious beliefs.

Not a form of denial, but rather an acceptance by all, so the freedom offered to anyone to freely express their religious beliefs without fear of being judged, or worse, disowned by others, should ensure the elimination of any possible friction.

The religious plurality should be considered wealth, given the multiple perspectives of the Divine provided, and a secular State should be the natural environment within which these perspectives can be explored by choice, allowing effective adherence to the metaphysical dimension dictated by the intimate conviction and not by tradition or culture or by State law.

Such a process has already largely taken place in the Western world, especially since the Enlightenment, which imposed the use of reason and good will as tools to understand the existence and being. Since then a continuous evolution in every field of human knowledge has taken place, and the clear supremacy obtained in technological and economic spheres has meant that the Western model gained the upper hand and was conveyed everywhere. There was a period in which such dominance was also the form of a real territorial occupation of the most backward Countries. Today, at least formally, almost all the countries are organized in independent States, free of political and military interference of others; but the world economy, which in the meantime has become a purely financial economy, is still managed by a very small group of Countries. Even the latest technological revolution, the one linked to the forms of communication and control of information, through the Internet and social networks, has become a global medium

through which all values or pseudo-values of the West, have been revamped worldwide. In consequence of all this, the faith of us Westerners has changed profoundly. Perhaps today we can see ourselves more as children of the Enlightenment than the Christianity, but that does not mean that scientific progress has cancelled the religious sentiment of the people, rather, it has gradually purified from superstitious elements, shifting the focus from effects to causes. The West is realizing the nakedness of the king, thereby awakening a little at a time individual consciences to the advent of a new religious spirit, more human scale, not because we are moving away from God, but rather because its presence is now felt and lived basically like intimate inner experience.

In this respect there is no doubt that Islam has still a long way to go and many problems to solve. The conquest of secularism is therefore a great challenge for Muslim peoples, torn between the conviction of following the unique and perfect religion, of wanting to keep intact the customs and Islamic law on the one hand, and the desire of making available the material benefits connected to the western model of life on the other, thereby giving rise to deep contradictions and strong tensions that cause conflicts within them but also to the outside. I wonder until when the Arab upper classes, those who hold the economic and politic levers of their respective Countries, will continue to pretend to wear the dress of the perfect conformity to the traditions of Islam, and at the same time enjoy all the material benefits that the western model of development has produced. From my point of view, there are already many voices crying out that the King is naked, because it is precisely in this key that I believe we should interpret the movement known as the **Arab Spring**: the attempt to remove politics, the economy and social relations from the interference of the religious sphere, which sees any deviation from the Shari 'a as a danger and an enemy. We know how the attempt was unsuccessful, but in the meantime the voices were raised, and they were those of the younger generations, more sensitive and ready to receive new instances. The Islamic States repress all dissent, but history teaches us that prevent the internal dialogue, considering it a threat rather than an asset, it is an index of decadence, an implicit admission of weakness that in the long run can only lead to a renewal of institutions.

I believe that the Western part can contribute to the process by not systematically condemning and stigmatizing whole populations for their way of life because it differs from ours, but rather by stimulating their own young people's reflection on whether to maintain or change outdated social and political models, without thereby having to compromise their religious faith. There will be difficulties, and resistance on the part of the most reactionary and fundamentalist guardians of orthodoxy, but as far as Islam's efforts to keep the historical evolution outside of its scope, this cannot but occur sooner or later.

Faced with such pressure, the resistance proponents do not hesitate to raise the spectre of jihad, or holy war, as the top threat to the increasingly intrusive Western world which is disrespectful of the traditions of the Arab world. Indeed, it is the duty of every good Muslim to fight the infidels and convert them to the true religion, or let them perish in their error. But the threat of the holy war is the most evoked bogeyman conjured by Western activists, as the main argument to justify the need for a defensive strategy and the rejection of all forms of cooperation with the Islamic world whose sole purpose seems to be to destroy anyone who is not Muslim.

Now, beyond the fact that even among Jews and Christians there is no lack of fundamentalists, ill-disposed to accept any expression of beliefs that are different from their own, however, it is out of the question that there is an upsurge of Islamic terrorism.

Despite of the strongest condemnation of all forms of violence, whatever its matrices and motives, I can hardly impute to one billion Muslims the unanimous and unequivocal will to kill innocent people just because they profess a different faith. I'm much more inclined to believe that the jihad is yet another dress with which both on one side as on the other, it suits to dress the terrorist actions that cause bloodshed now not only the West. Once again we should have the strength to cry out that the King is naked, and that terrorism cannot simply be dismissed as the action of Islamic extremists who intend to punish the blasphemer and infidel West. It has complex roots, which lie in the swamps of the economic and financial affairs, in the interests related to the control of the most strategically important regions of the world for the exploitation of natural resources. From Al Qaeda to the Islamic State of Isis, I feel it more likely that the strong religious fundamentalism which characterizes them as the cohesive force, the common feeling on which they rely to bind under one banner, the consent of people driven by heterogeneous motivations of revenge against Western interference in the Muslim world. The Isis, in particular, proclaimed itself as a sovereign state, with the declared intention of uniting the Muslim world under its government and restore the supremacy and the power that Islam held in the distant era of the sheiks, giving all Muslims, eager to reaffirm their identity, an opportunity of redemption affecting the interests of Western imperialism; by what methods and with what consequences it is obvious to all.

The philosopher and Muslim doctor, Ibn-Sina, one of the most well-known of the ancient age, known to us by his Latin name of Avicenna, used to say that in the treatment of pernicious diseases, it was necessary to deal first with the symptoms they presented, because of their debilitating effects on the organism, but it was then necessary to move to the identification and elimination of the causes of the disease, in order to avoid the risk that it reappear with the same negative symptoms. The West is now engaged in a tough battle to eliminate the threat Isis, but this will not be sufficient to the extent that we believe that it is only a symptom of a more general malaise which affects that part of the world. Once we eradicate the contingent threat will need to tackle the causes, if we do not want to face the risk that it will rise in another form but with the same devastating effects. You can react to evil by isolating it, by making it sterile, with no other consequences that can amplify the already damaging initial effect. We must isolate the Isis by eliminating the source of its livelihood, the support it enjoys among the poor populations easily influenced by the anti-Western propaganda, thereby removing the reasons for this support; in other words, action is needed to change the living conditions of the people still left on the margins of development. Throughout history the domination of a few over many has always prevailed, wars and conquests were intended to dominate the most vulnerable populations in order to exploit their territorial assets. Even after the Second World War and the end of colonial regimes, things have not changed substantially: the military occupation has been replaced, as already mentioned, by supremacy of an economic-financial kind, which sees as much as 50% of the world's wealth controlled by less than 100 multinational companies. The reins of political power are dependent on the financial ones, which together aim to keep the social and economic structures unchanged, presenting them as the most suitable to ensure our well-being, even if it is the cause of the imbalances that keep a great part of the world in poverty. That being the case, and in light of the reactions it is creating, can we still say that the economic model prevailing today will be able to guarantee our well-being for the future?

Again, we should have the strength to say that the King is naked!

I believe that in asking ourselves what politics and what development model will better to ensure not only our, but also the well being of others in the future, beyond the current interest of the individual subjects involved, is the only constructive approach to be taken.

Supporting such a thesis does not mean yielding to idealism, it is not an easy conspiracy, but it is pure pragmatism, which surpasses the mere problem related to the defeat of Isis and of international terrorism. The world population is going to reach nearly 9 billion people, most of which will be concentrated in Asian and African countries, mainly of Islamic faith. Can we handle the pressure of their legitimate expectations, paying the price of the inevitable tensions that the growth of inequality will necessarily bring with it?

I believe that our future well-being cannot be thought of as against the rest of the world, but together with it. "Sharing" must be the watchword, and not "appropriation"!

We must be based on a principle of justice that takes into account the needs of an entire planet, and ensure that this principle can be shared by all the peoples who inhabit it. This requires assessing the problem as a whole; it requires the rethinking of the access to productive resources and to the world's wealth. In times of globalization of economics and information it is no longer conceivable to keep the vast majority of the population within the margins of poverty, it is no longer tenable that few countries can consume 90% of resources and hope that others will keep calm and watch, without consequences of any kind. Will we be able to develop a new socio-economic paradigm that sees the control and exploitation of wealth by a few replaced by solidarity and cooperation, without there being the clash of civilizations that many already are afraid of? It is a vision that only a few truly farseeing statesmen have the capacity to enact, maybe within the already existing International Organizations. But in the international political arena we rather see the prevalence of short-sighted interests, aimed at maximizing the short-term results of the individual States represented, either for electoral reasons or of personal gain.

Meanwhile, the consequences of this short-sightedness are visible to everyone and are generating a drama with few precedents, exacerbated by the reactions induced in European countries, absolutely lacking that foresight we have just advocated: of course I am referring to **the dramatic exodus towards Europe**.

A part of this flow is caused by contingent situations, such as the ongoing war in Syria and the territories occupied by ISIS, which we hope will end with the cessation of hostilities. But most of the migrants leave their countries mainly because of poverty and lack of prospects. Among the many challenges it poses, there is also widespread concern that mass immigration will lead to the disintegration of the social fabric and the ethical and moral values that so far have characterized the European countries, eventually causing the decline and the potential disappearance of their own culture. Some say that an uncontrolled migratory flow could lead to a real genocide in the countries of destination, such as the one in the Americas regarding the pre-Columbian and American Indian peoples, thus justifying the various physical, legal and psychological barriers hoisted to block this flow. But maybe the short-sightedness of the Western world is in itself the cause of its own problems. Those same technological advances underlying our well-being, through the worldwide spread of mass media, Internet and social networks, has shown in all its brutality the huge gap between the "north and south" of the world, making the poorest societies aware of their actual situation and creating a legitimate wish to improve it. Can we condemn the aspiration for a better life? And where can it be nurtured if not in those countries that show the images of a rich and happy society? Our culture and well-being are not at risk because of the migrants, but they come because we jeopardized our identity by giving up justice, and the understanding that our heritage is to safeguard all mankind, not just our own prosperity.

The exodus must be stopped not because of the problems it might cause to our society, but because the event itself is inherently inhumane, because of the reasons causing it.

A change of perspective of this magnitude cannot be completed within a generation: it passes through the education of mankind, so as to retrieve the awareness of the real human dimension and the meaning of the presence of this plan. What I wish for is a mankind on a journey of evolution, which can and must read transformations not as signs of decline or of giving up its identity, but rather as a clear desire to adapt to what is best for the real needs of all individuals, defined on the basis of the natural rights of existence itself, of being part of a cosmic order that we must preserve and protect. Reality is not objective, immutable, and independent from our will. By working on individual consciences and then on the consequent will, we can change reality. This requires a real revolution of the mental process. In fact, people usually judge and relate to others on the basis of their thought patterns, habits, traditions and laws, in one word on the basis of their culture, which has been forming and stratifying over many years. The meeting with the new, the unknown, generates tensions, fears and doubts, to which the greater part of people react by isolating themselves and invoking a return to the past, trying in every way to keep the problem away by refusing to deal with it, to search for the causes of failures and to explore possible solutions; and, in the name of security and tranquillity, they are willing to give up some of their freedom (hard-earned over the years).

This is exactly what is happening in Europe in response to the incoming exodus. The European Union has not been able to give a clear and courageous response to this event. The proposal to divide the burden of receiving immigrants among all countries was opposed by many, walls have been erected and checks at the borders have been reintroduced. Neighbouring countries not belonging to the Union are being financed to prevent refugees from continuing their migration. Britain threatens to exit from the assembly and receives concessions, in spite of the presumed equality of all Member States. The truth is that nationalism and the special interests of the individual countries are still prevalent, and during emergency situations they generally prevail over common understandings. The clothes with which the European Union covers itself are now worn and not credible. We should see that King is again naked. Why don't we do it? We can't we do it (or don't we want to do it?), in fear of the consequences we could deduce from this? In fact, taking note of it could represent the singularity, the asymmetry that would inevitably and necessarily push us to make an evolutionary act that would result in the abandonment of the "comfortable" world we have occupied so far and would put us in the position of needing to discover, of the creation of a new world, of using the creative freedom so feared by the masses and their hierarchies.

At this point, we can conclude the story of Anderson. What happens after the child declares the nakedness of the King? Well, absolutely nothing:

The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, "This procession has got to go on." So he walked more proudly than ever, while his noblemen held the train that wasn't there at all high.

It is unlikely that power renounces, rethinks and modifies itself, even if faced with obvious failures. And it will always find a bevy of sycophants ready to follow it, because they are the source of its being and sustenance. Unless a subversive event, not necessarily of a violent nature, comes about: even a different and shared awareness of reality, as long as one draws the conclusions and acts in accordance.

Where can Freemasonry place itself in all this? What role can it play in a picture that is so complex and deteriorated? Certainly the first task is to form consciences according to its own perspective, which is one based on apparent reality that is not conditioned by prejudice, preconceptions, a dominant culture, by the interests of this or that faction into play, so as to draw a picture responding as much possible to the real needs of humanity as a whole. But this is not enough. *It must assume a "subversive" role.* Throughout its centenary history, I believe that Freemasonry has given the best of itself not only when correctly interpreting the nature of the problems, but when, thanks to this correct interpretation, it strove to spread strong ideas, guidelines capable of transforming and defining an era. Beyond the potential contingent actions, in which each adept may still engage on a personal basis by collaborating with one of the many existing associations, such as the assistance to refugees, I find that *as a thought-form Freemasonry can manifest itself fully in meeting the epochal challenges that require a cultural paradigm shift.* I think of the contribution it gave, for example, to the formation and diffusion of Enlightenment thought, from which modern liberal countries originated, to the drafting of the Charter of Human Rights, to the creations of organizations like the League of Nations before and the UN after, the Italian Risorgimento and so on. Milestones in the history of mankind, which required the commitment of generations of men. Even now that we are facing a generational challenge, and the best resource we have available to deal with it, one that in the long term could give the greater guarantees of success, goes through the education of young people, because they are the most suitable to accept new ideas.

The great scientist Niels Bohr, one of the fathers of quantum mechanics, said that new ideas are not imposed because scientists unanimously recognize their validity, but because the new generations absorb them while they grow up.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, ratified in 2000 by 186 heads of State and Government during the Special Session of the UN General Assembly, indicates the eight main objectives to pursue, the Millennium Goals; and the second point, after the one of halving poverty and hunger, is providing for a universal basic education.

Here is a goal worthy of the Freemasonry: support the development of homogeneous study programs that give priority to the sense of coexistence, cooperation and cultural exchange, to the equal dignity of the people, the interaction between people, so that future generations can grow up feeling involved with the broader human assembly rather than as citizens of a single state, and may also reconsider the ways of socio-economic coexistence in order to eliminate the imbalances prevailing today.

In order that everything does not remain a mere intention, a first important step that we could take at European level is to use a popular legislative initiative: by using a signature collecting campaign in the EU countries to support a draft law that the European Parliament will then have the obligation to analyze and place on the floor.

This draft law could be called the "**Montebelli Charter**", with which not only to promote the standardization of study programs to create common cultural foundations for the future generations, but also envisage a compulsory attendance period at schools of other EU countries for high school students, to encourage the growth of true European citizens.

It would be just a first step, certainly not definitive nor conclusive, but significant for the prospects that it would open. I realize the enormity of the commitment, but what is at stake is extremely important too, because it could become an important source for the future of peaceful coexistence and widespread well-being that we hope for. A commitment and a challenge that Freemasonry can not only accept but also win, as long as it really wants to.