



February 2018 · #037

## Dear praying friends in Europe –

John Chrysostom (d. 407) wrote that ‘the most perfect Christianity was the seeking of the common good... *for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbours.*’

Jesus did not teach us to look after our own sort in the first place, but to love our neighbour *as ourselves.* In the story of the Good Samaritan, he deliberately chose as the hero someone whom the Jews saw as ‘the other’.

Robert Schuman wrote: ‘Loving your neighbour as yourself’ was a democratic principle which, applied to nations, meant being prepared to serve and love neighbouring peoples.

The European spirit, he argued, is ‘to have a willingness to serve that community in the spirit of total mutuality’. That is, to seek the common good.



Jeff Fountain

## Interdependence Day?

**Europe Day, May 9**, is a well-kept secret in some of the older EU member states. Yet in nations aspiring to become members – even in Turkey – awareness of Europe Day has been widespread.

Few Dutch, for example, have ever heard of the day, pushed aside by national and religious holidays. Many Dutch simply shrug and say, “Europe? that’s too far from my bed!” To which we could answer, ‘but didn’t you buy your bed from... **IKEA?**’

When we stop to think about it, we benefit hugely from belonging to the European family of peoples in countless ways.

We love Italian pizzas, German cars, French cuisine, Swiss chocolate, Belgian beers, Dutch cheeses, Greek yoghurt...

We enjoy watching European football, the Tour de France and Giro d’Italia... We admire Europe’s cathedrals and museums, Europe’s art and music, Europe’s mountains and valleys, Europe’s castles and palaces... We benefit from Europe’s spiritual heritage, European democracy, European values of equality, freedom, dignity, rule of law and human rights...

We travel faster with Europe’s highspeed trains, motorways and open borders... We are enriched by Europe’s diversity... Yet too often we take this all for granted.

Sometimes we are tempted to choose for ‘me first’, ‘my country first’. But *we are better people when we consider others first, and better nations when we pursue the common good.*

So why not a day to celebrate our connectedness, to reflect gratefully about belonging to the European family of peoples?

Actually, there is such a day: **Europe Day, May 9**.

## Please also pray

- For the relationship between Israel and Poland after the passing of the Holocaust complicity bill by the Polish Senate.
- For the Canopy team as we face challenges while seeking to develop the Canopy ministry.

For on that day in 1950, a Frenchman named Robert Schuman proposed that Europe would be a better place if nations worked together for the good of the whole. He called this ‘the spirit of Europe’. He envisioned Europe as a community of peoples united in values of equality, freedom, solidarity and peace. His proposal kicked off the EU as we know it today. But the family of European peoples embraces all of Europe. Today our lives are connected across borders in 1001 different ways, despite our national distinctions and even today’s nationalistic movements. The new website, [www.may9.eu](http://www.may9.eu), offers ideas for celebrating our interdependence and connectedness: like a progressive dinner with friends, flash mob events, film evenings, symposia, music events, a day trip across the border, ecumenical vespers... Let’s together create a grass-roots, non-political, people’s movement for the common good ! How will you celebrate May 9 – *Interdependence Day* – this year?

## Let us pray for

- the broader Body of Christ to be awakened to the insights of Catholic social teaching which has long stressed that the pursuit of the common good and solidarity of the human community follows from the biblical teaching that we are all made in God’s image and are called to love our neighbours as ourselves.
- a grass-roots, non-political, people’s movement for the common good to take root across Europe with an open spirit opposite to the ‘me-first, my country-first’ nationalism all too prevalent today.
- the Christian community to recognise opportunities to stir consciences and awaken imaginations about the kind of Europe we want to see, (see [www.may9.eu](http://www.may9.eu) for ideas).