

## Text of the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2014 appeal

# What if, for 60 years, we've been right?

**“Our aim is to take action to ensure that every person, society and nation can live, have a place and be fulfilled through communication and sharing in equal dignity.”** (Extract of the Universal Manifesto of Emmaus, 1969)

At the start of the twenty-first century, we're living through a crisis – a political, economic, social and environmental crisis – signalling the end of a system and the loss of our society's core moral values. Its consequences for the most vulnerable are unbearable and unacceptable.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1954, when France was recovering from the war, Abbé Pierre made an appeal – “Help me, friends” – to shelter people on the streets from the icy cold. Although the authorities didn't respond immediately, the public most certainly did. The appeal of 1st February 1954 sparked what was hailed the “uprising of kindness”.

Since losing the founder of our movement, we at Emmaus know we've got to take up the battle he fought throughout his life, with courage and resolve.

We – companions, volunteers and staff at Emmaus – still share Abbé Pierre's indignation at injustice and poverty. Upholding his principles – “Help me help others” – and forever thinking to ourselves, “What about the others?”, we're now making a new appeal. What some may view as a utopia has in fact proven its value throughout the world.

## **At Emmaus we're convinced that a society that's fit to live in is a society that's welcoming and that's accepting of everyone.**

For 60 years, we've been opening our doors, receiving people unconditionally and always with the utmost respect for their freedom and dignity. At Emmaus, someone helps you, then you help others. People who society has rejected and stigmatised are the ones showing they have everything to give.

For 60 years, we've been providing everyone who comes through our doors with comprehensive support – accommodation and work – so they can claim back their dignity, independence and self-esteem.

For 60 years, we've been coming up with economic and social alternatives alongside the poorest, most isolated and disadvantaged people, through a wide range of activities that are adapted to individual needs and abilities – not the other way round.

What if we're right to be putting the focus of our system back on people?

And what if we're right to be making it known that poverty isn't inevitable?

And what if we're right to want to build a society with more solidarity, where the economy is solely a means of serving people?

But there's still a great deal to achieve...

That's why we're calling out to you again.

The more of us there are working together to come up with alternative solutions, the further we'll be able to drive back both the consequences and the causes of poverty.

What if we're right to be calling on you today to fight back too?

## **What if we're right to be asking you to do something?**

Together, for now and for the future, let's focus on people. Let's choose solidarity – nobody wants charity.

Because by being creative and taking action together, we'll manage to fight exclusion. Let's meet this challenge together.

## **And what if, 60 years later, we're right to be counting on you?**