

Dear friends

While we meet here in Malta, the 6-day Rotary International Assembly in San Diego is about to be concluded. These are 6 days in which one really appreciates the greatness, the international dimension and the ability of Rotary to unite the world.

Paul Harris had declared that “Rotary is the microcosm of a World at Peace, a model which nations would do well to follow”. San Diego is a clear example of this - no prejudice, no frontiers, no tension in the desire to work together for the community of men.

Two images come to my mind when I think of my time at the San Diego meeting: The new vision of Rotary as being ready to act and The Proclamation of the new Theme for the year.

The new Rotarian campaign **Ready to Act** aims at giving a vision of a Rotary made up of people who are ready to act, to inspire, to transform, to connect and to celebrate together. As Barry Rassin stresses “*We believe in a world where all people together promote positive and lasting changes in close and far communities*”.

We must **inspire** members and the future generations, awakening the desire for a better world with the awareness that they can make it;

We must **unite** because we are stronger when acting together

We must **act** because we are not dreamers in Rotary but doers

We must be **Makers of Change**, lasting change in our communities and in the world even reaching those who we shall never personally meet. The best change, as Mother Theresa said, starts within ourselves: ‘*If you wish to see change in the world, go home and love your own family*’.

Theme of the Year

BE THE ISPIRATION. Is a simple and efficient theme but it is highly committal. It ties us down to our responsibilities and obliges us to the strict and punctual respect of our non-negotiable values: **Friendship, Service, Diversity, Integrity, Leadership.**

Barry Rassin was born and lives in the Bahamas. The sea is fundamental to him, “*I sit on the shore of my island and thousands of miles away somebody is on a distant shore. Our nations, our lands our languages are different but the sea is one and the same*”. The sea to him is a unifying factor and in fact this year’s logo represents the sea and the sunset.

The sea is both distance and connection, movement and action. In Rotary action is incessant through the Rotary Foundation, the multiple humanitarian and service projects, the ongoing action of Rotarians in being inspirational and in Rotary's commitment in being actively present through service in society.

The sunset, on the other hand, represents serenity; the serenity that comes from having voluntarily chosen a task, the serenity that comes from honestly serving above self.

Barry Rassin's message is a clear call to fundamental values but also a call to change. Three things a sure in life: Death, Taxes and change.

We can do nothing about the first two, but with regards to change we must depend on our sense of leadership to choose the right road and accept the challenge made by Paul Harris: *'If Rotary is to determine its own destiny it must be ready for evolution and, at times, be revolutionary'*. We cannot face the 21st century with the mentality of the 20th. We need innovation and must not limit ourselves to managing the *status quo*.

We must show love and empathy for Rotarians, for our clubs and for the communities that we serve. We must be empathic and enthusiastic for Rotary in order to change the world and our enthusiasm must be contagious. We must be agents of change with the courage of doing more and of guiding by example. This is a Rotarian maxim which stems from Albert Schweitzer's declaration that example is not the best way to influence others, it is the **ONLY** way to do so! We cannot give good example if we are not inspirational and cannot be inspirational if we do not give example!

Still, Rotarian action cannot be limited only to humanitarian commitment but it must also look into commitment to civic work, otherwise we risk being seen just as 'another of the many humanitarian' associations. Rotary's role is not this. We must keep up with the times as stressed by Paul Harris. The Rotary of today and, especially the Rotary of the future, cannot live in the past. Service to society means, when necessary, defending the fair running of the rule of law, guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of all. Service to society means civic commitment and attention to politics that is apolitical having to heart the *Res publica*, that is politics in the wider sense of the word and not looking to petty or selfish party politics. Whilst not taking sides in politics, Rotary must defend human rights and dignity to avoid a guilty neutrality. As an association that does not stand for any

particular economic interests or class distinction of any sort, as an association that does not take political sides between parties, as an association that does not aspire to power, **Rotary and Rotarians have the right and duty to feel actively responsible within their society.**

In its inspirational role, Rotary should act as a prod to institutions but also work alongside them and, when possible, act as a link because, being '*super partes*', Rotary can bring together different parties to make pressure at local, national and international level in order to move economic, social and political conditions for a better future. For this, we can activate the professional abilities of members within our clubs. Rotary would be given higher value if alongside its 'charities' work, its 'civic work' were strengthened.

Membership

Membership is Rotary's most important asset and it requires our closest attention. Reaching out to the generation of 30 to 45 year olds is a great opportunity to rejuvenate stagnating clubs. New members are to be made to feel welcome, to be listened to and are not to be placed on the back burner. They can make interesting and needed suggestions bringing important innovative contributions.

Hedonistic drift, personal interest, egoism, the desire for overtaking one's neighbour, the hunger for power are, unfortunately, present also in Rotary and are the cause for an increase of conflict within some clubs causing members to resign. Too frequently one finds members who are consumed by envy and bitterness. This is not the Rotary that the majority of us desires, not the Rotary we wish to offer to the young and to the people who wish to join our association. Which may be the remedy? The remedy is only one - **SERVICE**.

Service means being useful at local level and in the world through commitment and solidarity. It is not an abstract, rhetoric concept but the means to contribute for the bettering of society. Service can also be a remedy for situations of conflict.

We must involve club members if we want them to remain interested and feel needed. Members of council must not only be a list of names on paper. They are to work for the good of the club and if they do not do so they must be changed. Those clubs in which the larger number of members are in some way or other involved in projects, are the clubs which show most enthusiasm and which register the lowest amount of

resignations. Members who contribute with their professional experience and their abilities do not have time for gossip and arguments.

Rotary Foundation

I have given my word that our District will contribute at least 100 dollars per member to the **Programs Fund**. Supporting Our Foundation is a moral duty.

Reaching the sum of 150 million dollars is amongst the Foundations' objectives this 2018-19 year. Of these, 50 million should be collected by Rotary while the other 100 million will be the matching funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

We must continue in our effort for the eradication of Polio, if we interrupt our work in Polioplus, if we lower the number of inoculations, we risk losing all.

Another priority is reaching the sum of 2 billion dollars within 2025. In order to reach this sum, it is necessary to increase membership and donations. As Rotarians we should consider our Foundation as our preferred beneficiary, or at least make sure it is one of our preferred beneficiaries. Charity Navigator, USA's largest independent charity association valuator has once more, in 2017, given our association top marks for our financial integrity, commitment and transparency.

Let us make use of the RF programs as well as RI programs with particular attention to Youth Exchange programs.

The Rotary Image

If we want people to know who we are and what we do, we must speak about Rotary to non-Rotarians. We must appear in the media, social media and television. It is not good enough to be active, we must let others know what Rotary is and what the Foundation does. Our projects need visibility. Let us leave the restoration and saving of cultural and environmental heritage to organizations which by statute are obliged to take care of them and let us concentrate on projects useful to single needs, consequently useful to society, i.e. service projects of use within the territory and inhabitants of our areas.

My dream

I have a dream and wish to share it with you! I would like our clubs to become laboratories of ideas and solutions where problems are examined

and winning ideas and solutions are found. We cannot solve all the problems of society, but we can supply solutions. We are called to a simple but concrete action to be carried out in various sectors singly or collectively. Our clubs must pay attention to the needs of their territories, intercept emerging problems and prospect possible interventions. We must place out service and abilities to the service of the community by making the necessary suggestions. It will then be up to the respective authorities to be efficient and get down to work.

Rotary's future is tied to its ability to remain active in the defence of Society. In Arch Klumph's words, '*Nobody can tell us what will become of Rotary in the future, but one thing is certain: Rotary's future depends on what Rotarians do today*'.

This is a particular time in Rotarian life. Representing Rotary every day is a gratifying challenge which stimulates us to look ahead with courage and optimism, creativity and a strong ethical sense.

Can we make it? I am optimistic and I believe we can make it so long as we are capable of being inspirational.

I wish you all a good Rotarian Year of service in which each one of us is personally involved, by physically participating heart and soul, with enthusiasm. Definitely the best results are reached by the concerted effort of heart, mind and hands working together in perfect coordination.

I wish you a year of serenity, sharing and harmony, a sombre and yet happy year.

Enjoy Rotary and BE INSPIRATIONAL, Thanks.