



From the desk of the CEO
Mario J. Paredes

New Year...New Life!

For time immemorial, the arrival of a NEW YEAR has served as a catalyst for our renewed commitment to fulfill unfulfilled resolutions and to realize our unrealized hopes and dreams. This annual cycle of reflection and optimism is an engine of personal, family, and social history.

The arrival of a NEW YEAR is like a balm, an oasis in the hustle and bustle of personal and social stories. It is an opportunity to pause and evaluate, reconsider, strategize, and redirect the path of one's life with new fervor, insight, and motivation.

Clearly, our view of history is not a fatalistic one predicated on a belief that human history is an inevitable succession of events that are recycled and repeated because nothing changes and everything -- as in a whirlwind, as in a whirlpool -- cyclically and spirally returns to the beginning.

No. Our view of history -- heir to the philosophical conception of Heraclitus of Greece -- is one in which, as the philosopher himself said, "Nobody bathes twice in the same waters of the same river." In other words, we understand history as a succession of events that, linearly, reflect the unforeseeable decisions of human beings who, with their intelligence and freedom, shape and determine their personal history as well as that of their communities, organizations, institutions, and society at large.

The fate of humanity, then, is not determined by hidden forces (the gods or the stars) that manipulate and control the course of events to an irremediable and immutable destiny - fatal and pre-determined. The story of every human being is constructed, freely and intelligently, in our



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daily decisions, in the anonymity and silence of our smallest tasks as well as in the grander narratives of our lives, be they noble or petty, generous or selfish, personal or civic.

Our view of history is neither naively optimistic nor fatally pessimistic. It is true there are many reasons for confusion, sadness, and pessimism in the form of inequalities, inequities, and injustice, in the hunger and misery of so many in stark contrast to the abundance of the few. These shortcomings are evidence of a world in which human beings have not achieved solidarity, equality, trust, compassion, or even developed ways of relating to one other to envision the world as a great fraternal table in which each one of us has a seat.

And yet, it is the hope of a better world that gives us strength, sustains us, and pushes us every day into our daily lives and being. We are men and women who live in the hope of a better tomorrow; it is this hope that marks our present. The belief in a better humanity refuses to die.

Faced with reasons for pessimism and sadness, we need optimism to build a better world, a better society, better families, and better personal stories through our decisions both big and small, with our activities and daily tasks, starting with better values and better ways of interacting with each other.

Inspired by a CELAM Document from the year 2000, *For the Construction of the Civilization of Love*, I propose that we start 2018 by saying NO to individualism, to consumerism, to the absolutizing of pleasure, to intolerance and injustice, to discrimination and marginalization, to corruption, and to all forms of violence.



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Instead, I invite you to say YES, with your words and in your deeds, with your attitudes and behaviors, to all forms of life, to love as a human vocation, to solidarity and to freedom, to truth and to dialogue, to participation and integration, to the permanent construction of peace and to respect for others, for differences, for cultures, and for the environment.

I invite you, at the beginning of this NEW YEAR, to prioritize human life over any other value or interest, to give primacy to the person over material things, to give priority to ethics over technique, to the testimony of life over discourses and doctrines, to service over power, to the worker over the job, the company or the capital, to the transcendent over all attempts to absolutize the here and now of the human being.

I invite you to build a New Year that is NEW for the NOVELTY of our lives. There is much we have done, but much more we need to do to build hope in the midst of the despair that challenges us daily.

HAPPY NEW YEAR - NEW YEAR, NEW LIFE!