

"Called to unity - Towards an ecology of relationships".

Greeting by Gerhard Proß, moderator of *Together for Europe*

Dear Friends of *Together for Europe*

I would like to welcome you to our Ecology Seminar.

In 2007, in front of 10,000 participants at our Congress in Stuttgart, we formulated the theme of Ecology as one of our 7 YESes, which has been with us ever since. Here is how we formulated it:

"We say yes to creation. We stand for the protection of nature and the environment. We have received them as a gift from God and we want to preserve them for future generations" - this is our pledge and our yes.

Today's seminar is one of the concrete realisations of our YES to creation.

In many of our communities, today's topic has a high priority. I personally have been involved in it for 45 years, as my brother encouraged me to weld a solar hot water system and install it in his house. It was the beginning of my theological thinking in this dimension and the start of many ecological projects.

With our seminar, we address one of the most important issues of our time. Yet our seminar is different from many others. You can tell this from the unusual title:

"Called to unity - Towards an ecology of relationships".

We are linking the theme of creation - to put it succinctly as we called it in our 7 times YES from a Christian perspective - **with our charism of *Togetherness, the charism of unity and relationships.***

At the same time, we are making the bigger picture clear.

A quick look at the definition on Wikipedia underlines this. It reads in fact: "According to its original definition, ecology (from the ancient Greek οἶκος oikos 'house' and λόγος logos 'teaching'; i.e. "teaching the house") is a scientific subdiscipline of biology that studies the relationships of living things to each other and to their inanimate environment".

So, it is not just about the environment, but about **our relationship with the world**, with God's creation.

Oikos - home. It is about our common home. It is about a holistic view.

That is why my friend and bestselling author Johannes Hartl chose '**Ecology of the Heart**' as the subtitle of his book 'Eden Culture'.

We look not only at physical space, but also at social space. **Social space needs an ecology as much as water, air, forests and oceans.**

What does this ecology of the heart look like? According to Johannes Hartl, it combines commitment, meaning and beauty.

I look forward to attending our seminar and finding out what we can learn about the ecology of the heart, the ecology of relationships.

Gerhard Proß