

## Editorial

Alwine A. de Vos van Steenwijk

Alwine A. de Vos van Steenwijk President, International Movement A  
TD Fourth World

### People Who United Others

Nelson Mandela said, « Poverty is the new face of apartheid. » Before him, Father Joseph Wresinski had affirmed that « Extreme poverty is the worst scourge ever created by human beings ». These two men who never saw each other face to face, and who lived on different sides of the globe, gave voice to the same cry. Despite their differences, they spoke the same language, that of one who is born knowing what it means to be cast aside as humanity's refuse. When human beings are thus shunted aside, the first step is to deny that their humanity could be equal to one's own. This eventually leads to the negation of all their human rights. They are stripped of the means to assume a citizen's responsibilities toward their own families and toward the world around them. In this manner, a person is made to feel non-existent, or, as Fr. Wresinski said, like the « living-dead »

In order to prevent such injustices, we must beware of any form of discrimination, whatever the pretext, be it is social, ethnic, religious or political. Fr. Wresinski reminded us that discrimination does not begin among countries and groups of people, but rather within each one of us. Therefore, fighting discrimination is not a matter of legislation, but of a conviction that must be strengthened within each one of us, and that we must live out in our communities. This conviction is not simply that apartheid is evil - because who truly believes deep down that it is good ? - but that apartheid is not inevitable.

We risk erring in believing that apartheid is inevitable when we witness what is happening in South Africa, despite legislation which has sought to abolish it. Similarly, we risk making the mistake of believing that discrimination is inevitable when we see what goes on in the world, even though governments have signed an International Bill of Human Rights; even though they established a Commission on Human Rights at the United Nations; even though they established a European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to guarantee the application of the Conventions. Who would dare to say that our nations have not set forth the principles and created tools in order to monitor this application ? Then, if principles continue to be trampled underfoot, is it because « no one can do anything about it ? »

Can no one do anything about discrimination - or do we not believe strongly enough that we can ? Do we not give up too easily, no longer believing that anything can be accomplished if only we all work together ? Giving up is something that this man who came from extreme poverty refused to do. This man was Fr. Joseph Wresinski. He accomplished what very few people believed in: he brought his people out of the apartheid of abject poverty. He returned them to the heart of humanity's history.

Despite this time of scepticism toward politics and mistrust in humanity that causes us to look for salvation in a single economic theory, still, it would take so little to shake our fatalism. One look would suffice, not at what has not yet been accomplished, but at what has been accomplished against all odds.

« The hour of the human being has arrived, » the founder of the International Movement A TD Fourth World informed us. This means the time, not only of great people, but of all people. This will be true if people find among themselves the Nelson Mandelas, the Gandhis, and the Joseph Wresinskis - people who others want to unite around because they are trying, not to mobilise for themselves, but to be of service in order to achieve that to which all humanity deeply aspires.