



Commemoration of Professor Hans Tietmeyer

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"You will be able to tell them by their fruits" [Mt. 7:16]

On December 27th 2016, Hans Tietmeyer, founding member of this Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, was called to his home by the Lord, at the age of eighty five [born on August 18th in Metelen (Westphalia)]. He led a fruitful life at the service of knowledge, of man, of his country [Germany], of Europe, of the world, ultimately at the service of universal society and, with particular and irrefutable availability, at the service of the Catholic Church.

Thank you Lord for allowing us to know him and live in close proximity to him, for permitting us to follow his example throughout a significant part of his itinerary; years that were distant from pressures and sorrows, with abundant, precious space for reflection, affording him the opportunity to spread the profundity of his thoughts amongst those of us who knew him.

He leaves behind him a rich human, family and professional legacy, which of necessity pales before the dimensions of the man he was. In his memory, we take refuge in the enormity of his heart, the righteousness of his acts, the delicacy of his always respectful words and the kindness so permanently shared and witnessed in the company of his wife Maria-Therese.

In December 2016, those who, when confronted by death, like to enter into the particularities and specific data of a life lived with greater and lesser successes, unleashed an array of eulogies, honours, acknowledgments, gestures and tributes of great importance to recognise his contribution to supranational cooperation, but few, if any, emphasised the man he was over and above his accomplishments.

Few raised their voices to bear testimony to the light that emanated from his behaviour, or to highlight the benefit that his example set for those of us who knew him beyond his *curriculum vitae*.

Personally, when I became aware of his person, of the fineness of his criteria, of his knowledge, of his determination, a determination that resides in one who knows where he is and where he wants to go, and invests effort and wisdom in order to get there, I never realised that one day, a day that would not be so distant, I would feel privileged by the way he welcomed me, his friendship, his participation and cooperation in a common project, his way of being and wisdom, in both the big and the small things in life.

A privilege that was not based on my merits, merits which I lacked, but rather a privilege that was exclusively based on his kindness. So much so, that when communicating his loss for those of us who continue our pilgrimage in this world, as long as God so wills, I tried to characterise what he meant to me as a person, leaning upon this as if it were a way of reinforcing my security.

No words seem insufficient to describe his profile. Today, four months after the sad event, I still see Hans Tietmeyer, both as member of the Academy and friend, as a person in whom resided generosity, kindness, intelligence, honesty and prudence, and all of this within behaviour free of arrogance, and full of humility and respect for all humanity.

Those of us who, for reasons of providence, have devoted our lives to economic studies and the monitoring of economic policies perceived at the beginning of the decade of the 1990s that a person, a German professor who spoke with scientific authority and moral conviction, entered into our work on practically a daily basis.

It was Professor Tietmeyer, at that time President of the Deutsche Bundesbank, who, with the *auctoritas* afforded him by his knowledge and clarity of vision, became, without seeking such a role, and with great naturalness, the monetary confessor of the presidents and governors of central banks in the majority of countries wishing to embark upon the path of convergence that would give rise to the single currency.

At the seminars and scientific meetings on what was known as the European Monetary Union, doubts and controversies were frequently addressed with the recurring question: *What does Tietmeyer say?* His wise opinion dissipated any doubts in those matters and in many other matters, which, at that time, some of us could not even imagine.

Thus, at the outset, with a modesty that would subsequently become evident, the personality of the President of the German central bank would be reduced, albeit it with significant eloquence, to the objectives of Monetary Union, in both academic and political forums, and particularly in those forums in which the focus was on weighing up the pros and cons of a project requiring a deep commitment from countries who opted to form part of it.

His great capacity for the task, which made him one of the most significant architects in the construction of the Euro, and his enthusiasm for the initiative did not prevent him from seeing the difficulties that would arise from the implementation of the Monetary Union.

His warnings were clear and unequivocal and candidates for membership of the Monetary Union were aware, from the very beginning that the path would demand great efforts and sacrifices from those countries wishing to embark upon it. The theoretical and practical advantages of a single currency were hidden to nobody but, thanks to his forecasts, all were aware that the task would not be easy, particularly for a number of economies accustomed to having currencies with very little stability.

All of this was very clear and well known to both, theorists and practitioners of monetary policy. Abundant information was available and numerous studies addressed the issue, which was an attractive project in itself, as well as a further step in the itinerary that has existed in Europe since the Treaty of Rome to create a stronger union that might one day culminate in full political union.

The work of Professor Tietmeyer, the result of magnanimous thought and limitless generosity, was a project to which a good number of countries would commit to, in full knowledge of the foreseeable constraints and difficulties. A project for Economic and Monetary Union in which the fraternity and solidarity amongst the people and nations committed to it shone through from the very beginning.

My great surprise and source of personal and permanent admiration would occur when, years later – in 2001– within the framework of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, I would meet Professor Tietmeyer in person, who generously offered his sincere friendship. The differences between the two of us in terms of science, experience and know-how were abysmal. However, this in no way affected our personal relationship and was even less significant when the occasion of working together came about.

I learned, from his person, that what was decisive in human life – in whichever of its aspects – is precisely that: the person in all his integrity. It is in the person as such where all remaining facets and activities converge but, more than ever, it is in the person where the parable “*You will be able to tell them by their fruits*”, becomes a reality.

Hans Tietmeyer was an implacable model of coherency of works and thoughts. His life, I would dare to say, was supported by a tripod which, as a geometric figure, enjoys the greatest of stability. The three points of support of this tripod, the confluence of so many other internal and external aspects of the human figure, were, in the case of Tietmeyer: humanity, humanism and science.

And let us add to these dimensions others, such as the capacity to love, loyalty to principles, people and institutions, unconditional commitment, introspection and reflection, the shaping of a life of greatness in the eyes of God and men.

That tripod could not produce anything but fascination. I would be so bold as to say that those determined to see in Tietmeyer a great economist, or even more, a prophet in the intricacies of monetary policy, are missing the most significant part of his personality. A rich personality, more than anything else: rich in thought and in commitment to the transcendental dimension of the human person.

He always aspired more to the reward of the spirit, of the soul, than to any reward he could have obtained in the material world, for which he was more than well endowed with knowledge and capacities. He was, ultimately, a Catholic living in the world of today and a shining example to those of us who knew him.

His great Catholic faith, his knowledge of and commitment to the Church was not sporadic but rather was immersed within his doctrine and in the practice of the virtues consecrated within the messages of the Sacred Scriptures. Nobody could be surprised, or I at least was not surprised, to learn that his first university studies were not in the field of economic science but in the field of Catholic Theology.

Could we possibly imagine a firmer foundation on which to build a human life project than Theology? Reminding ourselves of and paraphrasing the parable of Our Lord Jesus Christ [*Mt 7:24-25, Lk 6:48*], we might say that he who builds his life in this way is like he who builds his house on rock, which is solid and cannot be destroyed by winds, rains or the onslaughts of storms.

Rain, wind and multiple storms often fall upon men in their personal, family, professional and social lives, above all on those who, because of their capacities and knowledge, are more in demand for the undertaking of tasks, and public and private activities that entail a risk of collapse.

Only those who build their house on rock, who nurture their knowledge and conscience with solid principles, differentiating at all times between what is permanent and what is transitory and forging their will accordingly, feel secure and show us by their example, their works, their testimony, their confession, the opportunities that the world itself can offer for an itinerary of perfection: the practice of Christian virtues.

Those of us who had the fortune to know and share with Hans his attitudes could only marvel at his way of being, his humanity, his modesty; and we saw in a person of flesh and blood the reality of what it is to lead a dignified life, which is not merely a life with rights but also one with responsibilities.

May the Lord God hold him in his Glory and may He give us the strength, the consistency of principles and coherency of action to guide us towards his Glory. And, meanwhile, the moment has arrived to demonstrate through prayer our gratitude for the many lessons received from one who also did so much for our Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, which was certainly his Academy; our brother Hans.