



December 2020

Dear Women of our Member Organisations and Dear Friends of ANDANTE,

We are experiencing a very special Advent and Christmas season all over the world, in which we can be inspired by the story of the three kings/queens who heard about the birth of Jesus over 2000 years ago.

Each of the three women brought a gift as a special sign of humanity:

I am a white queen and come from a faraway land. I bring for the Son of God the gift of love, home and food - three essentials.

I bring a light to shine for us all. A sign of equality and opportunity for all women and men worldwide - we are all equal before God.

I have found the star that touches my heart. I follow it to pass on the gift of kinship that makes us a great community that helps us grow, support and strengthen each other - together in the light of faith.

In a few weeks, a special year - for all of us in many ways - will come to an end. Andante has been affected and reacted to events, as in April, with great regret, we had to cancel our Study Days about creation and sustainability in Baden-Baden.

However, in order to remain in contact with you, we have been sending our "letters" since May. We would like to express our special thanks to all the organisations that responded to our questionnaire about the work of their associations and their efforts in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. You can find a summary on our homepage www.andante-europa.net.

The international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) at the Council of Europe also met only online this year. Our Andante representatives Sybille Bader Biland and Sabine Slawik were able to be present. The dominant topic here was also the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects. The catastrophic situation in the Moria camp, the new Mediterranean refugee routes and the European Refugee Passport, which enables medical staff to gain a foothold in their new homeland more quickly, were also topics considered.

However, the crisis also shows that the situation of particularly vulnerable groups, namely children and women affected by violence and abuse, has deteriorated further. Here it is important to call on those responsible to take stronger protective measures, such as highlighting the need for the

Istanbul Convention to be implemented. Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are lagging behind in this respect as well as in the recognition and participation of religious groups. You can find the text of the Istanbul Convention here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home>

Andante would like to request: please contact your respective representatives of national governments and municipalities at the Council of Europe, and talk to them about these issues and the implementation of resolutions.

With much anticipation we are preparing the next **Andante Study Days on the theme: "Our Voice, Our Lives, Our Future."**

Please reserve the date: **30th June to 4th July 2021 at Lizari International Convention Center, Mazlauki in Latvia.** We are looking forward to the reunion. You will receive more detailed information after the February meeting of the Coordination Committee (CoCoA). By then, hopefully we will be able to see better how the pandemic situation has developed.

Exciting Advent calendars can be found as a worldwide collaboration of Catholic women, where two of our CoCoA members are also represented: at <https://www.facebook.com/AndanteEurope> or on the Facebook page of *Voices of Faith* <https://de-de.facebook.com/voicesoffaithwomen/>, or as an ecumenical collaboration of several countries at www.wgt.ch/adventskalender-2020.

We wish you and your members and families a reflective Advent season, a peaceful Christmas and good health and God's blessings for the New Year 2021.

The CoCoA



Vroni Peterhans



Sabine Slawik



Noemi Adorjani



Gisela Hoeve



Marleen Peters-V.d.Heyden



Sophie Rudge



Inara Uzolina

