

**Message from Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, director general of ATD Fourth World,
on the World Day for Overcoming Poverty, 17 October 2017**

What does life mean if people around us are dying, unnoticed?

What does life mean if children deny themselves the right to dream, even saying, "I never dream. What's the point? My dreams won't come true anyway"?

What does life mean when mothers are forced to ask themselves, "If I let social workers take my unborn child into care, as they want to, will they still let me raise my older child? Or will they take him away from me as well?"

What does life mean when young people are excluded from social and educational programs because they make other people afraid, or because everybody has given up on them and their families?

What does life mean when advocates speak up for justice in the name of people living in poverty, but without a real encounter with them?

And what did life mean for Joseph Wresinski, the boy living in deep poverty who grew up to bring everyone together on 17 October thirty years ago today?

On that day, he bore witness to "millions of children, women, and fathers who have died from misery and hunger", to "the poor of all times, still poor today, forever on the road, fleeing from place to place, despised and disgraced", and to "the millions of young people who have no reason to believe or even to exist, and who vainly search for a future in this senseless world."

This world in which the frantic quest for security by those who have a lot deepens the insecurity of those who have nothing!

Following his lead, men and women, children and young people all around the world, like us today, have refused to accept guilt, have rejected the notion that extreme poverty is inevitable, and have refused to let their minds go to waste.

They dare to reach out to people from another world, who were educated and raised differently.

They have shown that, when hearts, hands, and minds are open, bridging gaps is possible after all: gaps between neighbourhoods where people are scared and those where people live over-protected in ivory towers,

gaps between people feeling desperately useless without work and people who are constantly overworked, gaps between the least powerful and the most powerful people in the world.

Together, people from all walks of life meet to defend the rights of those who have nowhere to go except to places where no one would want to raise their children.

By coming together in this unique way, all these people discover how to take pride in recognising one another as part of the same human race, all capable of changing in ways they never before imagined.

They are igniting hope that the world can be freed from poverty, and hope of finding still more ways to come together.

In this way, they have responded to Wresinski's questions at the gathering of defenders of human rights on 17 October 1987, questions they invite each of us to respond to again today:

"What about you? Are you going to pave the way for a new world where justice will prevail over profit and exploitation, where peace will prevail over war, where justice and love can finally be reconciled?"

Yes, it is for us to continue daring to meet together like this, on the 17 October and every day.

