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## **Building bridges for peace and freedom**

Distinguished Excellencies, dear friends, brothers and sisters,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organizer for this extraordinary honor to address you at the 2. Swiss Federal Luncheon.

Switzerland offers an inspiring environment for those who wish to build bridges for peace and freedom. For a long time peace in Switzerland has not been a political slogan but an encouraging reality, the basis for national cohesion, stability and prosperity.

In 1991 we had war in Slovenia, the first one in Yugoslavia and in Europe after WW2. The entire world was shocked. The war happened in the country known by slogans - “brotherhood and unity” and “socialism with human face”.

It happened despite the fact that right of self-determination was assured by the then Federal Constitution.

Why I'm mentioning this sad historical point? - because it is so closely related to today's subject. Totalitarian Yugoslavia did not disappear because of nationalists or democrats. It failed because of lack of respect for human dignity and lack of respect for the identities of its peoples.

Each society or community has to answer the question: How do we live together in diversity? As history has been teaching us, the answers are not self-evident and can be very different.

There are societies which don't like too much diversity, especially in political and religious terms. They may be very tough with those who are too different. In such societies a person can face problems because of the color of their skin, of their religion or political ideas. Those societies tend towards simplifications and produce ideological monocultures. They use means to marginalize or eliminate those who are different.

Another way to deal with diversity is - to respect it. I'm pleased that founding fathers of the EU followed this way. Before the Treaty establishing European Coal and Steel Community was signed, Schuman, Adenauer, De Gasperi and others decided to build cultural or spiritual foundation of the new Community - and that was respect for dignity of each human person. Thus, the Union began with the concept of man.

What does it mean to respect the dignity of the other?  
I think this is a very good moment to meet Jesus, because he gave the best answer. He said: "Love each other as you love

yourself.” In my opinion, this was also the most political statement he ever gave.

Why political?

Because everything in human societies is based on relations between many “you’s” and many “me’s”. (Do you remember Martin Buber’s “Ich und du.”?). The same goes for relations between states and other collective identities.

We are all different, but we are equal as far as dignity is concerned. Nobody has longer or higher or better dignity. You and me, everybody in relation to somebody else - we are in a 1:1 relationship with the Creator. No theory was able to establish closer relation between two human beings, between you and me, between me and my neighbor, than Jesus words and His example. And - when “you”, the “neighbor”, has the same value, the same dignity as “I”, then this means much more than tolerance.

This is the foundation for dialogue, for coexistence, for bridges, politically speaking - for compromises.

The more asymmetric we are in this regard, the more political problems we face. Let’s remember the consequences of the concept of better race, better class, higher culture, better tribe, etc. They all led to violations of human rights, to humiliations and discrimination, to second class citizens and to wars as well.

The only way to build lasting bridges to peace and freedom is fundamental respect for human dignity. It sounds so simple and self-evident, but it was not so when Jacques Maritain and his

team were trying to include the concept of dignity and brotherhood into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seventy years ago.

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

And Roman Herzog, former President of Germany, succeeded only in his sixth attempt with his proposal to have respect for human dignity as the very first article of the European Charter on Fundamental Rights which says:

“Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.”

It sounds good, it has been a great achievement, but do we share the same understanding on human dignity in the rapidly changing world? I don't think that we speak terms with regard to the 2. article of the same Charter:

“Everyone has the right to life.”

Who is everyone?

In my opinion a constant mindfulness is needed as far as dignity is concerned. What does respect for human dignity mean in the new technological, ideologic and geopolitical, let us say globalized context?

Can we build bridges globally with different ideas on dignity and freedom?

Let's join Jesus again and be attentive to his question: “Who is your neighbor?” It seems that globalization has helped us to find a proper answer. The answer is - everybody is my neighbor.

We are not only better informed and connected, we are more and more interdependent. This is why we can also do more. Those who know more and are able to do more also share more responsibility. One tweet or one instagram post can change the word.

There is one more serious issue to mention in this regard.

What is happening with the truth? Robots managed by artificial intelligence produce more and more fake news, which can be instrumental for political purposes.

Can we respect human dignity without respecting the truth?

Is there any space for freedom without space for truth?

Can lasting peace be based on fake news?

Let conclude by the thesis, that both, dignity and truth, are closely related to the concept of power.

There are two main concepts: the power of dominating and the power of serving. The first one has been known by the idea that goal devotes means. It is exclusive by its nature and it is not dignity-driven. It tends to dominate somebody or something.

The other one is quite different. It is inclusive, because it is based on respect for dignity. It is man- not goal-centered.

Here we have the chance to meet Jesus for the third time. He was very clear about serving.

He followed His Father's will, He accepted human nature, He didn't use His divine power to escape painful humiliation, He gave total freedom to mankind, who used it and crucified Him. His death was the highest act of His serving, of His love.

Two different concepts of power met at that time in Jerusalem, two different kingdoms. Followers of Jesus are fortunate because they know how the kingdom of God works. The majority of us gathering here are considered by the world as powerful, influential and responsible.

Globalization and new technologies are bringing new opportunities but also new gaps. I believe we have the power to build bridges. We can contribute in such a way that globalization and new technologies help to humanize our societies and our relationships. I wish you strong “you and me” today and afterwards.

God bless your endeavors for more peace and more freedom in the world.

God bless Switzerland, its people and its leaders!