

A MEETING WITH BRIGITTE AND MICHEL CAMDESSUS



Mari Carmen and I were fortunate to spend two days in Bayonne (France) with our friends Brigitte and Michel Camdessus. We met them more than 35 years ago, at a conference with Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, at that time.

Throughout Michel's career, in which his actions as Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund and Honorary Governor of the Bank of France stand out, Michel has always conducted himself as a man who puts his faith in practice through concrete actions. He has deep convictions and a great motivation to promote the social economy, prioritizing people and their development over the creation of wealth perse. That is why there has been a natural synergy between Michel and UNIAPAC (the international ecumenical federation of Christian businesspeople) to inspire the community of business leaders to put values first.

Our conversations were profound. Although we went back to Michel's origins, such as the years in his childhood and adolescence in which he lived in a religious boarding school in Fuenterrabía in Spain, our talks focused on the present and on current challenges, such as the need to practice an inclusive faith, which allows the participation of all and especially of the youngest.



At the Camdessus' home, we also had the opportunity to spend time with Monsignor Bruno Marie Duffé, who was undersecretary of the Vatican's Department for Human Development and now, among other activities, works so that a disadvantaged community in Colombia has drinking water.

Michel contributed a lot to this issue when he served as a member of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and as a member of the Progress Panel for Africa.

We can see Michel's practical and intellectual contributions to historical events such as the peace process between ETA and the French Basque Country in 2006. Another example was his intervention so that Mexico could receive a loan from the International Monetary Fund while facing an economic crisis in 1994. At that point, Europe opposed it. Fortunately, Michel helped in the negotiations, emphasizing that we are all members of a global village that must seek the common good. Finally, the case of Mexico was successful and helped the IMF grant credits to the Asian countries in the crises that would come a few years later.

Michel says that everything he has achieved has been thanks to the inspiration and support of Brigitte, his wife. She is a psychologist with a systemic approach. At this stage, Brigitte and Michel are dedicating most of their energy to reflect spiritually and thank God for all the good things in their lives. They enjoy the satisfaction of an existence well-lived, where friends are paramount. As we said goodbye, I took with me the example of Michel's and Brigitte's simplicity, vision, hospitality, independence, and zest for life.