

**Speech by H.E. Sylvie Bermann,  
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom  
at the 25th anniversary reception for Emmaus UK  
in the presence of HRH The Duchess of Cornwall,  
Patron of Emmaus UK  
French Residence, Tuesday 17 May 2016**

Your Royal Highness,

Companions of the Emmaus communities,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you all here today on this happy occasion.

On behalf of the French government, and at a personal level too, I am very proud that the Emmaus approach has established itself in the United Kingdom and that we can celebrate the fact that, over twenty-five years, it has become thoroughly embedded in British society.

I am proud because this model of practical, secular humanitarianism was established in France and soon captured the hearts of French people.

And I am so pleased it has also found a firm place in British hearts, reminding us again of the deep-rooted ties of shared understanding and experience between our nations and people.

Your Royal Highness, I know you take an extremely active interest in the work of Emmaus – not least in your first individual royal engagement abroad, when you met Companions at Bougival in France.

In the run-up to our event today, I got an idea of how much your support and encouragement in your role as Royal Patron of Emmaus UK means to the organization and all those involved with it.

I am so impressed with what Emmaus achieves. Hearing and reading about the personal stories of Companions shows only too well how precarious life in this complex modern society can be, and how fundamentally difficult life is for men and women who have become homeless.

But these stories also show how, with Emmaus, Companions have been able to rebuild their lives and find purpose and happiness. That is a gift beyond measure.

The French will be French, so I see this, partly, as a success for the French language: it was Selwyn Image's wish to improve his knowledge of French which led to his first encounter with Emmaus and Abbé Pierre.

This celebration provides an opportunity to record our deep appreciation of the good that Emmaus has done over the years for thousands of homeless people in our two countries and across the world.

And we should also celebrate the opportunities it has given to volunteers to realize and express their social ideals, and the message of human concern and solidarity it spreads in the wider community.

But this occasion is also a time to reaffirm the importance of Emmaus for the future, and to tell the world again that the vision of Abbé Pierre and of Selwyn Image here in the UK is a vital, active legacy that should be supported and encouraged in every way.

Your Royal Highness, through you as Royal Patron, I wish Emmaus UK continued success and vigour in helping make the world a better place for all.