

Council of the European Bishop's Conferences PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Final Message of the Bishops

At the end of the Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CEE) address a word to the Catholic Church living on the Continent, to the Christians of the various confessions, to the believers of every Religion, and to all European citizens.

We do this with humility, knowing that we have no wisdom of our own to bring, but only the Word that God spoke to the world in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again so that humanity might have eternal life.

We do this out of a sense of responsibility as Shepherds of the communities, knowing that our priests and our faithful are united with us and aware that the Church must be, by the Lord's indication, salt and leaven in history.

During this time our Assembly prayed and reflected not only on what is happening regarding the pandemic and its repercussions on the life of each individual, on work, on society, on families, on relations between States and Continents, on ecclesial life, but also on the future.

We have no practical solutions in this regard, as these are the remit of policy makers, but it is part of our pastoral duty to call to personal and collective conscience certain attitudes of a spiritual and ethical nature. In fact, the building of modern civilisation must stand on spiritual principles, capable not only of supporting it, but also of enlightening it and bringing it to life.

First and foremost, *a rediscovered trust*. Without this way of being it is not possible to look to tomorrow. The reason for our trust as believers is Christ who assumed the human condition and, through death, redeemed life. Every day Christ is present in our midst in the Eucharist, the source of trust and apostolic and missionary zeal that invites us to go out, to go out to all. The lack of the Eucharist in the recent past is a call to return to full communion in the liturgical assembly of today. For all people, the reason to trust lies in the heart – deep inside lives a basic desire; it knows that one cannot live in suspicion and distrust, but in trusting others and life itself.

Secondly, a *renewed solidarity* between individuals, peoples and nations even through the serious employment crisis. The Lord Jesus is God's solidarity. Universal experience shows that every human being needs others, that no one is self-sufficient: that an invisible virus is enough to bend the illusion of our being "invincible". Our heartfelt gratitude goes to doctors, health workers, law enforcement agencies, and volunteers who, following Christ's example, have supported people in need, especially the weakest. If relationships are part of our nature, then any closure to others in order to defend ourselves, any individual interests, to the point of profiting from misfortune, is against personal dignity, against the community: ultimately, it is against

human rights. No one must be excluded, even in the distribution of a vaccine. In the face of the tragedy of so many refugees and migrants, it is necessary to work together and continue to dialogue with leaders to defend the life and dignity of each person. We make this appeal on the eve of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

The search for ways to deal with difficulties in solidarity, as well as to maintain and restore the normality of life, expresses the awareness of being close to one another in a shared purpose. It demands concrete forms of expression, also towards creation, for which we are called to have a renewed care because it is the work of God given to us as our common home.

We know that our Continent is on this path and we Bishops encourage every effort to be motivated for this undertaking, remembering the responsibility to the world that springs from the Christian humanism at the origin of its history. The Church is present and has put in place every form of support and initiative. She will always be there, faithful to the mandate of the Lord. In this regard we hope for a peaceful solution in Belarus via the path of dialogue and reconciliation. We are also close to the people of Lebanon, who have been deeply wounded by recent events.

We want to express to our communities our admiration and affection for their urgent response during this crisis situation, and we urge them to take heart. They have often worked together with other Christian denominations and other religions. The resumption of the lives of believers will also require patience and perseverance. The Lord Jesus works in hearts, he melts fears and draws in with His Love. If there are still new situations to be faced, perhaps unexpected future difficulties, we must not be afraid. It is up to us to be faithful disciples of the Lord.

To you all, and to the beloved Europe of Nations, we send our warm greetings abundant in nearness, affection and prayer.

26 September 2020