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Greetings to the Members of the CCEE
Santiago de Compostela
3 October 2019

Most Reverend Eminence, President of the CCEE, Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Mons. Michael F. Crotty, Chargé d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Spain, Monsignors. Councillor for Culture, Mayor of the City, Members of Authority. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome! Welcome to the Home of the Apostle James! I greet you with affection! I am very grateful that you are here, pilgrims to Santiago, and want to reflect on the reality of Europe, discovering in its awakening the signs of hope. We offer you our hospitality.

Thirty-seven years ago, in the Cathedral of Compostela, Pope John Paul II left us a prophetic message about Europe, which still has all its relevance today. In the "new Europe of the Spirit" it is necessary to revive the Christian roots, to proclaim the Gospel to those who have forgotten it and to transmit it to those who no longer know it. Collegiality and synodality help us in this task.

Returning to the fundamental Christian event, which is the person and history of Jesus, means testifying that Christianity is the most fascinating way of living human existence. The commitment to serve the Gospel of hope to man today does not hide the fact that we are faced with a complex cultural and religious plurality. Europe, in my view, has not lost its spiritual heritage, but perhaps it has forgotten it. We know that religious sentiment will never disappear because the search for meaning in life and questions about this mystery cannot be removed from the human heart. This translates into a religious attitude with a link between religion and the people, which is now failing in Europe.

At this moment I echo the prayer that the poet Dante put in Beatrice's mouth addressing the Apostle James: "Make hope resound from above", knowing that Christ is hope: "Surrexit Christus spes mea". "Man cannot live without hope: his life condemned to insignificance would become unbearable"¹. We Christians must always enter into dialogue with those who are waiting, aware of the legitimacy of hope, rationally founded and not merely magical or only political². In our condition as *homo viator* we perceive that "hope is not eradicated while we live. To question ourselves on hope is another way

¹ O. GONZALEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la esperanza*, Salamanca 1995, 10.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 12.

of questioning ourselves on the person, on his sacred value, on his certain, reliable and loving condition; on his personal resistance; on his future inexorably linked to moral responsibility in the present"³.

Of course, it is not a question of creating a Europe that is parallel to the existing one, but rather of showing this Europe, that its soul and its identity are deeply rooted in Christianity so as to be able to offer the key to interpreting its vocation in the world.

Looking to the Holy Year of Compostela 2021, the Jacobean pilgrimage discovers that Christianity, being open to the universal, has shaped an open Europe capable of integrating new elements. Christianity offers the following principles as a necessary foundation: "Existence is a gift and a task for man. Reality cannot be destroyed or exhausted. Man is a sacred and inviolable reality. One's neighbor is the one for whom each one is responsible and one cannot think of oneself without taking care of the other. The other, who is a call, cannot be transformed into a danger. One does not earn life if one does not put it at the service of others. One cannot legislate without morals or rights, nor can one violate the law and common law".

"The new Europe must be the result of the encounter, acceptance and creative challenges between all the values and countries that make it up. Faith and theology must find their rightful place within it and make their specific contribution at this time when we must confer a renewed soul, mission and responsibility on our continent" (O. Gonzalez de Cardedal).

The Jacobean pilgrim, "traveller of the sacred and transmitter of knowledge", continues to contribute to the reconstruction of Europe, which has its roots in the Christian tradition. The Way of St James is the spiritual intelligence to give meaning to it. I wish you a pleasant stay. Thank you very much!

+ Julián Barrio Barrio Barrio,
Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela.

³ *Ibid.*