



## CCEE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Rome, September 23<sup>rd</sup> -26<sup>th</sup>, 2021



### *Let us walk forward together*

#### **Final message from the Plenary Assembly of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its Creation**

People and nations of Europe, we, the Bishops of the Catholic Church, together with the Holy Father Pope Francis, open our hearts to you and renew our respect and affection as Fathers and Pastors.

We have gathered in Rome for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of European Bishops' Conference (CEE), an organisation that Saint Paul VI wanted to create following the Second Vatican Council, as an additional sign of ecclesial attention and proximity to this beloved continent.

Next to the venerated tomb of the Apostle Peter, fortified by his living testimony, and confirmed by the words of the Supreme Pontiff Francis, we address you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to tell you that we stand by you and that our mission urges us to walk together towards the future of a continent born from a destiny of beauty and civilisation as well as widespread goodwill also consolidated in all hearts, traditions, languages, basically in shared feelings, in one soul.

As known, European history is a harmonious mix of peculiarities that have found a synthesis and fulfilment in the person of Christ, Redeemer of the World. This is a gift that Providence presented with the arrival of the Apostles Peter and Paul, bearing witness to faith with their lives, and spreading it everywhere, through roads and bridges, exchanges and research, liturgies and a shared faith, almost as if Jerusalem and Athens were to find their own safe harbour in Rome.

The challenges of time – just like problems in establishing dialogues, diffidence when meeting one another, the dominant materialistic culture – pursue both the Christian faith and religion and human civilisation in general. We must not be afraid but remain united, and we – as Pastors and as citizens – walk with you whether individuals, families, populations or nations, to be the servants of your joy. Oh you who listen to us, our voice is not powerful, but it carries the echoes of centuries; it has only one name to announce from rooftops everywhere, Jesus Christ. He is Europe's real hope since He is the truth and only the Truth makes us free.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, does not cease to remind us that one is saved together and Europe has a great need of this message. He has invited us to embark on the synodal

path so as to listen to everyone. We will immediately work on organising a continental reflection and confidently wait to listen to what the European populations will have to say to us.

When one walks together, when one has a shared destination, mutual respect increases, patience develops, those leading the way encourage the others, measure their speed and do not impose themselves. But the destination must be clear, solid and beautiful; hence elevated and capable of enchanting, of overcoming difficulties and tiredness, of releasing the best energies of all other leading players.

Non one fears Jesus' Gospel; it speaks to us of humankind and of God, the guarantor of human dignity, it reminds us that no one is alone nor should they be, that the weakest must have preferential treatment. It reminds us that there is no freedom or progress without others, because each of us is an asset for everyone: people, families and states. The point of synthesis in this walking together exists in each of us as a desire and in God as the Beginning: He is not jealous of human beings, of their desire for joy and the infinite. He is rather the beginning and the destiny.

On this so important anniversary, we invite everyone in Europe to walk together with us. Our words are those of the faith and also those of real reason; they come from the same source, the Word of God, Christ the Lord. There are no forgotten suburbs where He is to be found; there one finds God, believers and people of goodwill.

Together with you we raise our eyes and look forward, far away into the distance so as not to lose our way and not to stop in the meanders of history. Together one sees better and one walks humbly towards horizons of light and peace.

Rome, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021