



CCEE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Rome, 23-26 September 2021



26 September 2021
Holy Mass in the Basilica of St John Lateran

Homily
of H. E. Msgr Gintaras Grušas
CCEE President

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Dear brothers in Christ's priesthood,
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This morning, we gather here in St. John Lateran, the mother of all Churches, to conclude our celebrations for the 50th year anniversary of the CCEE, the Council of the European Bishops' Conferences. It was a celebration that began with Mass presided by the Holy Father in St. Peter's Basilica on Thursday evening, whose words have guided our thoughts and discussions during these days. In his homily to us, the Holy Father focused on the words to reflect and to reconstruct.

As we reflected on the situation in Europe over the past 50 years, we thanked the Lord for his guidance, giving thanks for those who guided the Church and the peoples of Europe over the last half century, seeking to build foundations for peace. We noted God's faithfulness even in the trials and human tragedies that have taken place here and throughout the world. We have seen 50 years of great changes in Europe - political, social, cultural, demographic, economic, as well as changes in the Church. We have also noted the many challenges that face the peoples of Europe today. The analysis of many of these troubles and the way to the solution was summed up beautifully in Pope Francis' homily: *la mancanza di carità causa infelicità. Solo l'amore sazia il cuore. (E lui ha ripetuto) Solo l'amore sazia il cuore.*

This Sunday's readings invite us to return to the Holy Father's words again: to reflect and to reconstruct. We are called to see what needs reform and are called to action. The Gospel describes how this is done - "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off... If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off....if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out." This is not a call for massive physical self-

mutilation, but a call for reflection of what keeps us from walking the path of holiness and a call to act in this regard. It is a call for change to transform ourselves to be God's holy people once more. It is important to note that the call is to the individual – to cut off one's own hand, not one's neighbours' hand. Reform starts from oneself, from one's family, from one's own parish and diocese.

And here again we see Pope Francis' invitation to walk the path of discernment together. This path, the way of the Church, the synodal way, means starting from oneself and listening to God's guidance on where and how we are travelling together.

Speaking to the faithful of his diocese, that of the diocese of Rome, less than two weeks ago, the Holy Father invited you to walk this synodal path together. He said *"Sono venuto qui per incoraggiarvi a prendere sul serio questo processo sinodale e a dirvi che lo Spirito Santo ha bisogno di voi. E questo è vero: lo Spirito Santo ha bisogno di noi. **Ascoltatelo ascoltandovi**. Non lasciate fuori o indietro nessuno. Farà bene alla Diocesi di Roma e a tutta la Chiesa, che non si rafforza solo riformando le strutture – questo è il grande inganno! –, dando istruzioni, offrendo ritiri e conferenze, o a forza di direttive e programmi – questo è buono, ma come parte di altro – ma se riscoprirà di essere popolo che vuole camminare insieme, tra di noi e con l'umanità"*.

In today's first reading we are reminded that everyone has been given a share in God's Spirit and that we must be attentive to His voice speaking through each and every member of the Church. There is no room for jealousy or pride in the discernment process. God can speak through everyone. That is why Pope Francis said, *"the Holy Spirit has need of you / the Holy Spirit has need of us"*.

We bishops take to heart the Holy Father's words spoken about our role – to walk together: *"noi pastori camminiamo con il popolo, a volte davanti, a volte in mezzo, a volte dietro. Il buon pastore deve muoversi così: davanti per guidare, in mezzo per incoraggiare e non dimenticare l'odore del gregge, dietro perché il popolo ha anche "fiuto". Ha fiuto nel trovare nuove vie per il cammino, o per ritrovare la strada smarrita"*.

We return to our countries and our dioceses today with a renewed commitment to walk this path into the future together, guided by the Spirit of God and listening to God speaking through His Holy People. We walk whilst listening for the Spirit's movement in the heart, first at the most local level, then at a diocesan level, a national level, and with this listening to the

guidance of the Holy Spirit we look to where God is leading us as the people of God in Europe today. But we cannot stop there. The Church is universal and neither national nor continental borders limit the people of God. We walk together as one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, to a future that God has prepared for us, brothers and sisters all in Christ.