



III EUROPEAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL DAYS BRATISLAVA, 17-20 March 2022

Clsing Remarks

**H.E. Msgr Archbishop Gintaras Grušas
Archbishop of Vilnius, CCEE President**

At these Third European Catholic Social Days in Bratislava, on the theme: "Europe beyond the pandemic: a new beginning", we addressed the significance of the transition taking place throughout European societies, seeking above all to express the value of solidarity and social justice as a specific Christian contribution.

This meeting has taken place as the whole Church walks the path of synodality, as a way of rediscovering our sense of being Church and of living and professing our faith with joy and courage, committing ourselves to become neighbours of the brothers and sisters we find on the road of our lives. These days have been a form of synodal work for us, which we will joyfully share with our respective ecclesial communities.

Not only has the health emergency caused by the ongoing pandemic posed a serious challenge in organising this meeting, but in recent weeks the war in Ukraine has deeply stirred our consciences. However, these experiences spur us on to renew our commitment and our Christian witness, all the while remembering the words of St Paul VI, when he said that the difficulties and distortions of the times we live in call for a greater and clearer witness of Christian life, a greater holiness.

When considering the demographic trends and the various changes taking place in our European societies, we understand that they pose a considerable challenge to the daily life of families and our communities. This spurs us on to vigorously renew our proclamation of the value of Christian marriage and the family that arises from it, supporting civil and political demands that promote laws favourable to improving the quality of life of families, not only from the economic point of view, but also and above all from the human point of view and the quality of family relationships. In concrete terms, this concerns the areas and conditions of work, education, and participation in the various instances of social life, etc. The presentations on the issue of digital and technological transition reminded us that the measure of this development is precisely our humanity, since this considerable advancement must seek the good of every man and, therefore, must be confronted with an ethical measure that safeguards justice, solidarity and the common good.

The ecological transition affects various aspects of our daily lives, and requires a change in lifestyle, which is difficult to achieve without a sincere conversion of heart. The concrete effort is to reduce the environmental impact of our daily living, and thus a spiritual vision of this work leads to caring for others, recognising that we are "mutually dependent", as Pope Francis summarised in the expression "We are all in the same boat".

We cannot simply adopt other people's agendas, become just another NGO working for family, economic and digital equality or a self-sustaining environment. We cannot let ourselves become merely an instrument of governmental programs seeking to accomplish albeit virtuous goals. The moment that we lose our own identity as Church, the People of God, on its journey to the Heavenly Kingdom, we have lost everything - even if we manage to save humanity and the planet, we now

call our home. The problems that we affront at a merely human level may attempt to steal our hope, which must always be rooted in Jesus Christ and not in our human successes or failures in any given area. All these issues must be addressed together, since they all arise from our relationship to God, and it is from this perspective that we must work for justice, peace, solidarity and fraternity with our brothers and sisters in the family of humanity.

Above all, may our Christian charity, especially at this time when our efforts are directed towards welcoming our Ukrainian brothers and sisters fleeing war and destruction and supporting those who remain in their homeland with the anguish of imminent danger, give us the strength to speak words of peace to an often divided Europe, and to make many daily gestures of peace so that in the effort to understand others we may exercise the Christian commitment to forgive those who attack and offend.

Thank you all for your participation.