



FINAL MESSAGE OF THE BISHOPS

From the tomb of the Apostle James, the destination of many pilgrims from every part of our continent, we too, the Bishops of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, renew our profession of faith on the foundation of the Apostles.

During these days, we had the joy of seeing so many young people – and many less young – walking to Santiago, arriving at the *Portico of Glory*.

Aware of our limitations and the many weaknesses that cause suffering to the whole Church, we too have entered the Cathedral to deposit – in the rite of embrace – our afflictions and petitions on the shoulders of the Apostle, to ask forgiveness for our errors and commit ourselves with hope and confidence for the future.

We have come to Santiago de Compostela, a city in the westernmost tip of Europe, where – as Pope Francis – whom we thank for the solicitude with which he tirelessly shows us the ways to take and for the message that he sent us – reminds us, “the centre and the periphery meet. It is therefore a highly symbolic place to rediscover the great richness of Europe, united in its religious and cultural tradition”.

Gathered to reflect on *Europe, time to awaken? The signs of Hope*, we have become more aware of the situations in which our countries live and of the different contradictions that exist therein:

- the desire for God, but at the same time the fragility of the Christian life;
- the desire for lives based on the Gospel, but at the same time ecclesial and human weakness;
- the desire for holiness, but at the same time without witness of life;
- the desire for universal human rights, but at the same time the loss of respect for human dignity;
- the desire for harmony in society and with creation, but also the loss of any sense of objective truth;
- the desire for lasting happiness, but also the loss of a shared sense of the destiny to which humanity is called;
- the desire for inner peace and consistency expressed in a spiritual search, but also the denial of that search in many public discourses.

We focused on the existential questions that lie deep in the human heart and that never disappear, even if sometimes they are obscured by material desires. Every person, in fact, has a secret desire to meet someone who helps their conscience to awaken; to

rekindle the decisive questions of existence, of our future after death, of the evil that wounds us, and of the evils that destroy life and the cosmos.

That is why as morning watchmen, vigilant and ready to point to the new day, we want to give a message of hope to Europe in distress and say forcefully: Wake up, Europe! In the different histories and traditions, in the old and new challenges, there are elements of hope: among these are the Saints and Martyrs of our countries, torches that encourage the present and announce the future. They shine like stars in the sky.

Rediscover your roots, Europe! Contemplate the many examples of this fulfilled hope, beginning with our holy Patrons: Benedict of Nursia, Cyril and Methodius, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. They are signs of a Europe united in diversity. Rediscover the witness of the great European figures closest to us, such as Mother Giuseppina Vannini, Margarita Bays, Cardinal John Henry Newman - who will be proclaimed Saints on Sunday 13 October by the Church - and the countless examples of holiness present along the roads of our time and which we often encounter in our daily lives.

Europe, rejoice in the goodness of your people, of the many hidden saints who every day contribute in silence to the construction of a more just and humane civil society. Look to the many families, the only ones capable of generating our future. Recognize with gratitude their faith in God and their example. Let them shape this beloved continent of ours and, as Pope Francis reminds us, let them work "for a new European humanism, capable of dialogue, integration and generation, while at the same time valuing what is dearest to the continent's tradition: the defence of human life and dignity, the promotion of the family and respect for the fundamental rights of the person. Through this commitment, Europe will be able to grow as a family of peoples, a land of peace and hope".

We believe that the true answer to all questions of meaning is Jesus Christ, the countenance of the Father. We proclaim our faith in His person, the one Saviour of humankind and of the world. Only in Him - the Bread broken for us - do our questions find an answer, for only He is the full revelation of the mystery of God and the response of humanity to this mystery of Love and Mercy. He makes those who welcome Him available to listen, to love and to be near, placing themselves in the name of Christ, at the very service of man, especially of those most in need, offering them the gift of Christ and the necessary help with that charity which "spurs us to recognize ourselves as children of one Father" (Pope Francis, Message to the Plenary).

Santiago de Compostela, 5 October 2019