

# DOCUMENTS

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Paolo Orlando - XXI cent.

**The Saints Patrons of Europe**  
St. Benedict,  
Sts. Cyril and Methodius,  
St. Catherine of Siena,  
St. Bridget of Sweden,  
St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

## IV European-Mediterranean Continental Meeting

**WHERE IS EUROPE GOING?**  
Christians, the wealth and hope of the future

Madrid, 1-4 March 2007



# Where is EUROPE going?

# CHRISTIANS the wealth and hope of the future



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## PRESENTATION

In presenting the *Documents* of IV European-Mediterranean Meeting, we are aware our responsibility as lay Christians living in this continent and in the Mediterranean during this period in history; a responsibility to share together and to pass on to younger generations. We have asked ourselves the questions “Where is Europe going?” and as Christians how can we be “the wealth and hope of the future?”. When trying to answer these questions we should keep in mind the encouraging words of John Paul II: *Europe, be sure! The Gospel of hope does not disappoint! Throughout the vicissitudes of your history, yesterday and today, it is a light which illumines and directs your way; it is the strength which sustains you in trials; it is the prophecy of a new world; it is the sign of a new beginning; it is the invitation to everyone, believers and non-believers alike, to blaze new trails leading to a “Europe of the spirit”, in order to make the continent a true “common home” filled with the joy of life (Ecclesia in Europa, 121).*

We have identified three areas where we should be involved. We have already referred to these during our meeting in Sarajevo in 2003: FORMATION - the PARISH - YOUTH. We know very well that the “new evangelizing process” is calling for a renewed and courageous commitment from lay Christians, with special attention to the first announcement of the Gospel and to new ways of announcing it. There is a need of Christian witnessing which helps all men of good will to foster a spirit of reconciliation and dialogue through involvement in these spheres: a) cultural b) formative c) ecumenical and interreligious. Today the political integration process is moving at a slow pace. Immigration is considered as a problem and not as a resource. Relations between east and west have still to be established... The Church’s contribution in these areas, especially at parochial level, could be very beneficial. New horizons should be opened to parochial communities by offering them adequate formation itineraries, providing information services and organizing meetings.

In Europe and in the Mediterranean IFCA could help by building bridges of unity and peace. This is precisely the aim of the World CA Youth Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008, the pilgrims will be celebrating the World Day of Peace in Jerusalem with the theme; “*The human family: a community of peace*”. Witnessing the unity in the human family is providential at this time in history because of the crisis which international organizations are facing and because of the grave unrest in the international community. Every man and every nation is called to live and to feel part of the human family conceived by God as a community of peace!

**III EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL ASSEMBLY  
SIBIU, RUMANIA, 4-9 SEPTEMBER 2007**

**From the final Message  
Saturday, 8 September 2007**

**The light of Christ shines upon all!**

We, Christian pilgrims from all over Europe and beyond, witness to the transforming power of this light, which is stronger than darkness, and we proclaim it as all-embracing hope for our Churches, for all of Europe and for the entire world.

(...)

We are not alone on this pilgrimage. Christ is with us and within the cloud of witnesses (*Heb 12:1*), the contemporary martyrs accompany us: the witness of their life and death inspires us individually and corporately. In communion with them, we commit ourselves to let the light of the transfigured Christ shine through our own witness deeply rooted in prayer and love. This is our humble response to the sacrifice of their lives.

(...)

*O Christ, the True Light, which illumines and sanctifies every human being coming into this world, shine on us the light of your presence, that in it we may behold the unapproachable light, and guide our paths for the work of your commandments. Save us and lead us into your eternal kingdom. For you are our Creator, Provider and Giver of all that is good. Our hope is in you and to you we give glory, now and forever. Amen.*

Full text and material of the Assembly  
<http://www.eea3.org>

## Telegram from the Holy Father

On the occasion of the European Mediterranean Continental Meeting, organized by IFCA in Madrid on the theme: “*Where is Europe going? Christians the wealth and hope of the future*”, the Supreme Pontiff sends His heartfelt greetings to the organizers, speakers and participants and shows His appreciation for this meaningful manifestation aimed at reflecting on Europe’s common roots.

His Holiness hopes that this Symposium will help to promote constructive discussions about the fundamental relations between Christian faith and unity in the European continent.

He reaffirms the importance of the spiritual values which have moulded European art and culture and have incessantly helped in promoting solidarity and respect towards human dignity.

With these wishes, the Holy Father implores abundant heavenly blessings for the success of this assembly and imparts His apostolic blessing.

*Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone*  
Secretary of State

**1 March 2007**

# LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

Welcoming address

*H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo  
ACE Ecclesiastical Assistant*

I would like to start this meeting by conveying to you the most cordial greetings of the Bishops, members of the Episcopal Commission for the Lay Apostolate. The President of the said commission had planned to attend this meeting, but he had to be unavoidably absent due to the fact that he is still recovering from a recent illness. It has thus fallen on me to address you, in the name of the Spanish Catholic Action and in my name, in order to welcome you to our country and to wish you a happy stay amongst us, as well as to wish you every success in your meeting.

During these few days, we will be sharing our present, as well as, our future worries, hopes, preoccupations and projects related to CA. It is not an easy time for apostolic movements to grow when one considers the present cultural trends of individualism, subjectivism and “the dictatorship of relativism” which are influencing not only the behaviour of Christians but also the attitude and public manifestations of those who declare themselves as followers of Christ. As our Spanish Bishops have declared in our recent pastoral plans, the major problem for evangelization today, is secularization within the Church itself. The number of baptized Christians is still great, a considerable number of people declare themselves Catholics but very few are really converted towards Christ.



This sociological analysis of the actual reality could easily lead us to despair and to admit defeat if we only focus on difficulties. Nevertheless, as believers and followers of Christ, we should view all this with his eyes, in the light of his words and with the certainty of his promises. He, who lays his hands on the plough and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God. In working for the kingdom of God, we should always look ahead, with our eyes fixed on Christ. All the decisions which we will be taking these days and all our resolutions should be accompanied by contemplation and confident prayer. We should not fall into the trap of “activism” in doing for the sake of doing. Rather, we should “be”, be in Christ, with Christ and for Christ. This is the foundation of our faith and the reason for our hope.

On the other hand, we must keep in mind that today’s man, just like the man in all times, even if he does not show it, feels the need to meet Christ, in order to find a convincing answer to his ultimate questions, to discover the fullness of love and to look with hope at life after death. These are difficult times for announcing the Gospel, but, when one looks at them with God’s eyes and believes in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one discovers that there are many possibilities. First of all we should work for a deep interior renewal of all members in our Christian movements.

As Pope John Paul II has insistently said, we have to find new methods, new plans and new ways of expression for a new evangelisation. We should find these ways together. Nevertheless, above all, we should re-ignite the missionary zeal in evangelizers. In order to meet Christ, today’s men need not only words but they need the witnessing of women and men who, through their way of life, show the true face of the Risen Christ. Thus, prayer and meditation are very important as these help us to discover the glorious face of Christ. We should also let ourselves be guided by divine grace.

In any case, we should live and act with a deep conviction that the Holy Spirit and the Risen Christ are constantly working in the Church, in the heart of every man and in the world. “The Holy Spirit blows where he wants and as he wants”. He instils peace and joy in us even amidst difficulties and he opens new ways in front of us in order that we may sow the seed of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit gives us the fervour, the *parresia* and the necessary urge to irradiate in our faces God’s

unconditional love for every human being and to let him know that God loves him. Once we are open to the Holy Spirit we discover that evangelization, forgiveness and the salvation of humanity do not depend so much on our personal efforts but on the constant and lasting action of divine grace in the heart of every human being.

At the beginning of this meeting, in communion with all the Church, let us ask the Lord to help us so that we may not be scandalized by His cross. Let us not be tied down with all the present day difficulties but to look towards the future with hope and enthusiasm. Only thus can we be witnesses of the Risen Lord, irradiating the joy of the Resurrection.

*The Lord does not look so much  
at the magnitude of anything we do  
as at the love with which we do it.  
If we accomplish what we can,  
His Majesty will see to it  
that we become able to do more each day.  
We must not begin by growing weary;  
but during the whole of this short life,  
which for any one of you may be shorter  
than you think, we must offer the Lord  
whatever interior and exterior sacrifice  
we are able to give Him, and His Majesty  
will unite it with that which He offered  
to the Father for us upon the Cross,  
so that it may have the value  
won for it by our will,  
even though our actions  
in themselves may be trivial.*

St. Teresa of Avila  
VII Mansions 4,15



# ACE'S WELCOME AND PRESENTATION

*Lourdes Azorín Ortega*  
*ACE General Secretary*

Catholic Action of Spain (Acción Católica Española-ACE) was founded at the end of the XIX century following the wish of the popes and bishops. When it started, it was made up only of general movements. In the beginning, Catholic Action, like the Church in Spain, appeared to be closed in itself and its attitude was purely defensive. Up to 1936 it spread with great rapidity and strength in all the dioceses. During the civil war, many CA members died praising Christ the King. It was a time of suffering and pain. After the war, Catholic Action started reorganizing itself and assumed the triumphalistic attitude of the time, characterized by national catholicism. It established itself in the parishes without however giving enough attention to the formation of its members. When the CA specialized Movements were set up, they helped organized groups of men and women to be present and give witness to Jesus Christ through their words and deeds in the different social environments.

During the sixties, ACE experienced the so called “CA crisis” due to the mistrust which arose among the different movements, to certain reserves in the relationships with the hierarchy, to the political situation and to the interpretations of the teachings of Vatican II. This resulted in the explosion of a crisis which had been dormant in the Spanish Church for years. During the eighties, the crisis was overcome after a constructive dialogue between the Bishops and some CA members. In 1993, the Spanish Bishops issued the new CA Guidelines and the Statutes of the Federation of Movements.

At this time, when Europe is going through a great religious crisis due to secularization, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are trying to launch a new Catholic Action, which is well founded and which has a clear identity. CA has to continue being indispensable for the new evangelization and for answering to the needs of the Church and of the Spanish society.

**General CA:** Lay CA members who are committed in the *General Pastoral Work of the Church* in the parishes. They involve themselves in the life of the parish by going to the different parts of the territory and by bringing back the experiences of these parts to the parish.

**Specialized CA:** Lay CA members who are committed in the Specialized Pastoral Work of the Church in the different *socio-cultural environments*.

The members live the dynamics of their socio-cultural environment. Through them, the Church is present in these situations and they can bring back to the Church the experiences encountered in these areas.

The Movements of the Federation of the Spanish Catholic Action

*General Catholic Action:*

- \* JUNIOR: CA Children Movement
- \* MJAC: CA Youth Movement
- \* AGCA: Adult General CA.

*Specialized Catholic Action:*

- \* JOC: Christian Young Workers
- \* HOAC: CA Workers' Association
- \* MTC: Christian Female Workers
- \* JEC: Christian Young Students
- \* PX: Christian Professionals
- \* MRC: Christian Rural Movement
- \* MJRC: Movement of Christian Young Rurals
- \* FRATER: Christian Fraternity of the Sick and the Disabled.

### **Formation: Catholic Action's major task**

The main goal of CA Movements is “the Church’s apostolic aim, that is, the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience so that they can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into the different communities and spheres of life” (AA 20, a).

*“The accelerated and great changes taking place in modern culture, in general, and in the Spanish society in particular, present a great challenge to the evangelizing mission of the Church”<sup>1</sup>.*

In fact, the Spanish people in general, have a rich Christian heredity. *The Christian roots of our culture and of our history are tangible.* However, like all the other nations with which it shares the European culture, Spain is going through *a socio-cultural change of a secular and neo-pagan nature, never experienced before*<sup>2</sup>.

According to some analysts “it is a new type of paganism: the living God is left out of everyday life, while a number of different idols take over”<sup>3</sup>. This paradoxical situation challenges our Christian conscience and urges us to react in a creative way to these situations which are posing a great challenge to our faith and to the Church.

This paradox is very provocative. Today, in Spain, while traditions, religious experiences and Christian customs are still popular, Christianity is very often considered as an anachronism. Christianity should be quelled as it provokes the fears and the suspicions typical of the criticism against religion prevalent in the nineteenth century which are quite widespread in our days.

The numerous and increasing traditionally religious and popular manifestations, which have their roots and are an expression of the Christianity which runs in people’s veins, and the active involvement in ecclesial realities (parishes, associations, sanctuaries etc.) coexist with the apparently dominant influence of today’s culture and lifestyles, which on the one hand appear to be neo-pagan and on the other seem to indicate a society which has gone “besides” Christianity and thinks that it has “superseded” it.

A great majority of Spanish people are baptized. However, *the faith of a good number of them is immature faith.* Without a strong personal and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. GMFL pg. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Bueno, *España, entre el Cristianismo y el Paganismo* (Spain between Christianity and Paganism). San Pablo, Madrid, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> CEE, Pastoral Plan 2002-2005. *Une Iglesia esperanzada.* (A Church full of hope). ¡*Mar adentro!* (Lc 5,4), 8.

adult conviction, they find it very difficult to face the new challenges of our times<sup>4</sup>. Many have, so to say, made the riches of this world their gods and have adopted a “pick and choose type of Christianity”.

This prevailing crisis cannot be attributed only to the hostility of those who are adverse to the Church. As the French Bishops rightly say: “the crisis, which the Church is experiencing, is, to a great extent, due to the repercussions within the Church itself and in the life of its members. It is due to *a number of rapid and profound social and cultural changes which are of world dimension*”<sup>5</sup>.

Formation in the Spanish Catholic Action is meant to be a dynamics which leads to a way of living. It thus has a main aim: to live and consolidate the Christian identity. It means “being” a Christian, living all the time “as a Christian”. It means also leading a life as a Christian in its totality, in all its dimensions: in the way of thinking, feeling and acting. Thus:

*Formation is an ongoing process of conversion to Jesus Christ.* In order to arrive at this Christian conformity, all the formation process and all the formation aids should help members to plan their own way of conforming their life, in all its dimensions, with Christ and to have an ongoing wish to gradually build up a Christian way of living.

*Formation is an ongoing process of apostolic involvement in the world.* It is an ongoing process of incarnating Christian existence in the concrete realities of the world. Conversion to Christ and being Christ’s witness are two inseparable realities. Christ consistently directs us to God the Father and to our brethren. The formation process helps members to involve themselves, be protagonists and assume responsibility for the building of a more fraternal world which conforms to God’s will. This means loving the world, putting oneself at the service of others and training oneself to discern in the world what God wants from us.

*Formation is holistic,* it touches the human being in all his totality, in all the dimensions of his life including the integrality of his Christian

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<sup>4</sup> Ib pg. 51-56.

<sup>5</sup> CEF, “*Proponer la fe en la sociedad actual*” (Proposing the faith in today’s society), Ecclesia 2835-36 (5 and 12 April 1997) p 514.

faith. It means a gradual configuration of our whole existence to Jesus Christ and his Church. Basically formation is not only the acquisition of knowledge of Christian beliefs but the formation of the whole person and not only of his intelligence. Formation gives a Christian outlook to the way one thinks, interprets life, feels, responds, reacts, faces reality and above all his general habitual behaviour. Besides, formation is holistic because it helps members to know and live the integral Christian message and to establish a strong dialogue between the person and his way of life and the faith of the Church.

*Formation is an ecclesial process* and thus it is personal and communitarian at the same time. So it actually means living the Church's faith. It is also ecclesial because it is the essence of this Christian and ecclesial existence which step by step builds up the community.

## **The objectives of formation**

The main objective of formation is to *live and consolidate one's Christian identity* in an ongoing holistic process which leads one to think, feel and act as a Christian. Formation helps members to listen to the Holy Spirit in all circumstances of life.

More concretely formation aims at:

- *Developing an attitude of meeting God through Jesus Christ.* Formation helps one to understand and live this meeting with Jesus Christ in all its aspects. It means meeting God, who manifests himself in Jesus Christ, and meeting the Church, the poor, the oppressed, oneself, nature and history.
- *Developing a way of life which is totally guided by faith.* In ACE, formation aims at developing a mature, conscious and committed faith.
- *Developing a Christian coherence in all spheres of one's personal, communitarian and social life.*
- *Achieving full development of the whole person as such.*
- *Developing a sense of belonging to the Church and a sense of ecclesial commitment coherent to one's faith.*

- *Developing a social and political commitment of liberation coherent to faith.*
- *Promoting attitudes which support one's Christian commitment.*

The methodology and the whole process to attain this Christian formation is of great importance. There are three very important aspects in the methodology outlined in ACE Formation Project:

*Formation as a gift and as a duty.* ACE's formative methodology is based on a strong conviction which aims at helping members to "live life fully". The formation process leads one to understand that life is a gift from God and is our task at the same time. The methodology itself tends to help members to open themselves up to the loving and free action of God, to acknowledge and accept him and to an equally free and loving attitude towards our brethren.

*Experiencing the project "New Life" as a mean of formation.* The formative methodology adopted by ACE means a dynamic life, a formation which is only possible if one experiences the "New Life" which Christ gives us. It is not only knowing what it means to be a Christian but above all to live as a Christian and experience what it means.

*Ongoing dialogue in the Church between faith and daily living.* The two fundamental methods of formation in ACE are "Reviewing the way of living" and "Systematic Inquiry". Here, the methodology is based on constant dialogue between faith and life. This dialogue materializes through the traditional ongoing exercise known as "See-Judge-Act".

The dynamics of a life, which is built on this dialogue between faith and daily living, gradually helps to conform one's conscience to Christ.

# THE INFLUENCE OF SANTIAGO PILGRIMAGE ON EUROPE'S LIFE CULTURE AND FAITH

H.E. Msgr. Julián Barrio Barrio  
Archbishop of Santiago of Compostela

In the light of this Catholic Action International Meeting and considering the subject which you will be treating, I thought that an intervention about the influence of Santiago on the life, faith and culture of Europe's pilgrimage in history is very relevant.

Santiago of Compostela can only be understood if seen within the context of a tradition which covers thousands of years. It was the final goal of the pilgrims who walked *ad limina beati Jacobi*. Its origins can be traced as far back as the Roman period. The place, called *Lovio*, was located between the rivers Sar and Sarela, where apparently a building for sacred cult was located. In the first century A.D. a Roman garrison was established there and thus the place assumed great importance and was eventually fortified. During the IV century the Roman influence started declining. With the fall of the Empire the place was in fact abandoned. Soon after, the old Roman foundation, abandoned and in ruins, was transformed into a wood: the wood of *Libredón*. The inhabitants considered this a sacred place - "locus sanctus" - because of the sacred remains which lay there. At the beginning of the IX century, Teodomiro, Bishop of Iria, discovered the tomb of James the apostle in this wood and this discovery was confirmed by King Alphonse II, the Chaste (791-842), who during his pilgrimage restored "the church in honour of this great Apostle and changed the residence of the Bishop of Iria with that which was called Compostela"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Historia Compostelana* (Compostela History) ed. de M. SUÁREZ y J. CAMPELO, Santiago 1950, 21s



In short, these are the humble origins of a destination which was open to pilgrimages and which at a certain point in history was compared and even became more important than the other two destinations: Jerusalem and Rome. Up to that time, Compostela was nothing special. It was a place, lost on the border of Galicia, an old abandoned necropolis where the tomb of James the Apostle was to be found. As time passed, a sanctuary of exceptional beauty was built on the site. “Compostela was founded: a spiritual city chosen by the Apostle as his burial place; a historic and earthly city in which Alphonse the Chaste built the first basilica. Both these were in God’s plans right from the beginning. Year after year, amidst sorrow and joy, men realized God’s plans in stone and spiritual graces”<sup>2</sup>. A small city, notoriously filthy, as we know from the pilgrims’ stories, grew in its vicinity. One might ask, what actually could have attracted so forcefully those pilgrims and those travellers? The “Jacobean” phenomenon (the pilgrimage to the tomb of James the apostle in Compostela) surprises all those who try to study it objectively. Eventually, an episcopal seat rose from nothing in Galicia. At the time this was nearly empty however it soon became more important than that which already existed in Iria. In 1095, at the height of Medieval times, it even replaced it. Also, a medieval city, complete with all its classic components - the *civitas* - with an exceptionally new plan and a *villa burgensis*, which soon became a *municipium*, grew up.

From the IX century, with the passing of time, a special structure, which made foreigners, tourists and pilgrims feel welcome, was set up. Institutions were set up to represent, promote or manage the city. A cult grew up around the Apostle’s tomb. Generations of people worked hard in order to build the city and to make it distinct for its beautiful stonework and for the spiritual privileges bestowed on its church. “It is not science but the Spirit which can say exactly what this city is”. It is a community. It is the guardian of one of the most precious treasures of the *Orbis Christianus*. It became a pilgrims’ destination, a crossroad of spiritual currents, of artistic, economic and social tendencies. The place could be reached through a well woven network of pilgrimages coming from so many different starting points. Definitely, “the pilgrimage to

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<sup>2</sup> GONZALO TORRENTE BALLESTER, *Compostela y su ángel* (Compostela and its angel), Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1998, 55.

Santiago” was one of the strong factors which helped to foster reciprocal understanding among European peoples which were so different, such as Latins, Germans, Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Slavs. The pilgrimage brought people nearer, strengthened their relations and united all those, who century after century, convinced by the preaching of Christ’s witnesses, welcomed the Gospel. It is a fact, that within a short time, these developed into nations”<sup>3</sup>. One wonders as to how the fabric of this city was woven and comes to the conclusion that one can rather contemplate it than describe it or read about it.

## 1. Life as a pilgrimage

While on a pilgrimage, man is true to himself and realizes that divine grace does not mean earthly happiness but union with Christ. The pilgrim sets out on his journey only because of his trust in God. It is not impossible - though perhaps hard - to ascertain the unusual relevance of the pilgrimage to Santiago right from its very beginning, during the IX century, in the Middle Ages and down to long periods of the Modern Age and to understand its decline with the French Revolution and in years to follow which were marked by wars and revolutions. During the XIX this unrest had a negative effect on the people and they were dissuaded from undertaking the pilgrimage.

The end of the Old Regime and the expropriation of ecclesiastical property contributed towards a decrease in the flow of pilgrims. In order to get to Santiago, pilgrims needed lodging, food and at times even medical assistance. Under the Old Regime the Church played a fundamental role in assisting the poor, the sick and pilgrims. The expropriation of ecclesiastical property eroded the economic basis of the Church and many monasteries and hospitals had to be abandoned. Without shelter and food, gratis or at moderate prices, the pilgrimage was no longer feasible for ordinary people. This explains more or less the decadence of the pilgrimage during the XIX century.

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<sup>3</sup> Cfr. E. MORENO BAEZ, *Los cimientos de Europa* (Europe’s foundations), Santiago de Compostela, 1996,7-8.

It is difficult for modern man to understand as to how this pilgrimage could have gained such great and lasting importance. Given that the motive of this journey was primarily religious, it might be opportune to consider what travelling meant to man in olden times and the relation that existed between journeys and religion.

One can get an idea as to what travelling involved in ancient times from the etymology of the proper noun *peregrinus* (*pilgrim*), or more precisely its first phonema: *per*. A number of significant words such as peril (in Latin *per-iculum*), *perito*, *expert* and *experience* are all derived from the very old root *per* which in Latin means “through”. It is worth saying that words which mean *to travel* are derived from the common root *per*. This is the case in the word “pilgrim” as well as in the words “peril” and “experience”. This etymological relation in the case of journeys, peril and experience is not exclusive to the Latin language. In German, the phonema for *per* is *fahr*. The words *fahren* (to travel), *Gefahr* (peril) and *Erfahrung* (experience) are all derived from it. Both *per* as well as *fahr* are probably derived from a very old Indo-European word which originally meant “travelling around the world where roads were nonexistent, meaning that the route of the whole journey was more or less unknown”<sup>4</sup>.

We can say that these two elements - peril and experience - which share the same etymology, are part and parcel of every pilgrimage. Considering that travelling meant peril and sometimes even the danger of death, one is not surprised to find such a strong relation between death and journeys, pilgrimages and travels. Nor can one be surprised that cults of gods, protectors of travellers and pilgrims, started developing and thus journeys started having a religious component. On the other hand, as etymology indicates, journeys and pilgrimages developed skills and experience and so one could only gain experience by setting out on a journey.

In all cultures, there is a strong association between travelling and knowledge. In fact, Julius Ceasar says that the Welsh believed that the

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<sup>4</sup> Cfr. J. ORTEGA Y GASSET, *La idea de principio en Leibniz y la evolución de la teoría deductiva*, (Concept of beginning in Leibniz and evolution of the deductive theory), Buenos Aires 1958, 190-194.

god, protector of travellers was the “inventor of all the arts”<sup>5</sup>. This association between intelligence and knowledge on the one hand and journeys on the other may be found even in highly developed cultures such as the Greek culture. The Greek god of travellers, Hermes, was also the god of knowledge and deceit. Deceit was considered as one of the aspects of knowledge because only those who know the truth well can deceive.

During the Renaissance, there were some, like Cristobál of Villalón, who, in his work *Viaje de Turquía*, maintained that “the insatiable and uncontrollable desire in all men’s hearts to know and understand nature... cannot be expressed better than through a pilgrimage, through travelling and seeing other countries”<sup>6</sup>. This idea of deepening knowledge through pilgrimages, travelling and seeing things at first hand was also maintained by the Renaissance medical doctor Paracelso who said that “nature is a code which should be read while travelling and wandering in it”<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, even if, in the past, the urge to know could have been one of the motivations for travelling - and pilgrimages were one of the reasons for travelling - it is far from being the only key which could help us to understand the phenomenon of the pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostela. Strictly speaking, going on a pilgrimage and travelling towards a rather distant sanctuary or moving far for a religious motive, does not rule out that there could have been other motives which have already been indicated above such as adventure, business, politics or for social, psychological or military reasons.

When considering the intrinsic value of pilgrimages, one must remember that these were not just a special phenomenon of the Christian religion but they seemed to answer to a need which was felt in different religions and in many places before and after Christ. The Jews went to the temple in Jerusalem; Islam imposes on all Muslims that, possibly, they should go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life time.

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<sup>5</sup> *Guerra de las Galicias* (The war in Galicia) Book. VI, 17.

<sup>6</sup> C. de VILLALÓN, *Viaje de Turquía* (Journey to Turkey), Buenos Aires - Mexico 1946, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. J. ORTEGA Y GASSET, *Op.cit.*, 192 s

It is evident that all these pilgrimages have something in common. In the pilgrimage to Santiago one may find the beginnings, adaptations and evolution of very ancient and primitive forms of cult. The abuses and this religious evolution have, all along history, brought about an important change in the religious outlook of pilgrims. The idea, that the pilgrim undertook a specific physical walk, seems to have come from an old idea: the way which one has to walk symbolizes life. Gradually the material walk started having a meaning, from an external to an internal cult. Thomas Kempis, in the XVI century, said: "Those who know how to 'enter within themselves' and keep exterior things in low esteem, do not wait to go to places nor wait for specific times to involve themselves in devotional practices"<sup>8</sup>. And also, which are the most appropriate ways "to enter into yourself" and which are the journeys which should be undertaken? For centuries, dying, according to an expression which is still used, is often referred to as "to undertake the last journey". This was so taken to the letter that among the Celts and the Hibernians it was customary to put a carriage for this last trip in the grave.

This very ancient concept of death as a journey is still found in our languages. For example, death is still sometimes referred to as "transit" (going beyond) or "passing away" (derived from the Latin verb *obire*, which is itself derived from *ire* which in Latin means to go). Also, on the deathbed, the "viaticum" is administered to Catholics. For the Romans, "viaticum" was the pocket money for a journey and for Catholics it means the Eucharist which is given to those who are at the point of death.

Besides this concept of death as the last journey, Seneca, in his *Consolations to Polibio* (II,2), added a clearer and more definite aspect: "All life is nothing but a journey towards death". This definition is very similar to the Christian concept of life which is very often compared to a journey. Christ Himself said that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (*Jn* 14,6). Paul takes this imagery when he speaks of "a new and living way opened for us by Him (Christ)" (*Heb* 10,20). Saint Peter, on his part, maintains that a Christian should live as a stranger in the world, which, so to say means that he is on a journey (*I Pt* 1,1). Nevertheless, this symbolism of life as a journey was best developed by Augustine of

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<sup>8</sup> TOMAS KEMPIS, *The imitation of Christ*, Book II, chap. 1.

Ippona who insists that one comes to the world not to remain here but only to pass through.

In the Middle Ages, all these concepts become clear with the idea of *Homo viator*, when an allusion is made to the Latin adjective *viator*. Gonzalo of Berceo, in the first half of the XIII century, in the introduction to the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* says so:

*“All of us in our lives,  
whether we go to prison or to sleep,  
we are all pilgrims  
going on a journey.  
Saint Peter says so and we prove it:  
we are living here as strangers  
and are waiting for our eternal dwelling up there,  
our journey will come to an end  
when our souls go to heaven”.*

The author Kempis refers to this same text from Saint Peter when, in various passages he repeats, that Christians should, rather than go on a pilgrimage to a particular sanctuary, behave as strangers and pilgrims on earth” (Book I, Chap. 17 and Book III, Chap. 53).

Death is a journey, life is a journey and that which leads to anything whose aim is of a spiritual nature is also a journey. This is the anthropological and religious-theological presupposition on which the pilgrimage of Santiago in Campostela is based. Right from the beginning, this is the idea of man as a traveller, his *status viatoris* is part of the religious and profane human history. From the biblical perspective, to a great extent, it is clear that the Bible attributes great importance to travelling right from the beginning. Very often we find that the fundamental events of the biblical history took place during a journey. Events, manifestations and the diffusion of Christianity may be considered a result of specific important journeys. As such, one could say that travelling not only symbolizes the roots of that which is sacred but that it is an expression of the historical events in Christianity.

Human conditions and activity depended on travelling. Travelling linked cities, empires, markets, abbeys, hospitals and sanctuaries. It

brought about a steady development and economic progress. The organization of journeys, meetings, pilgrimages, crusades and missions brought about the creation of an indispensable infrastructure: hospitals, hostels, markets, bridges, custom houses, exchange agencies as well as churches and pilgrims' shelters. Pilgrimages, missions and crusades were means of gaining knowledge which was passed on from city to city and from country to country. In short, one can say that in olden times, pilgrimages were an important factor in the transmission and creation of cultural and religious manifestations. But some of these, such as the one to Jerusalem, to Rome and especially the one to Santiago were something extraordinary.

## **2. The manifold ways to Santiago**

The fact that there were a number of ways to Santiago and not only "one", does not mean in any way that these ways were of equal importance. We cannot know exactly the number of ways because some of these were not clearly defined. The pilgrim needed shelter, a bed where to sleep, food, health assistance and these were not found everywhere. So, undoubtedly, in Spain, as far back as the XII century, there was a route which went from Roncisvalle to Santiago. As a result of the various historical factors resulting from the territory's physical characteristics, a number of other ways started leading to it.

Due to the fact that pilgrims came from all over Europe, it is evident that those who came from Italy did not enter Spain from the same Pyrenean way as those who came from Flanders. The Pyrenean gateways to Spain used by the Jacobean pilgrims, from East to West, were various: Junquera (Gerona), Somport (Huesca), Roncisvalle (Navarra) and Irún (Guipúzcoa). Undoubtedly, all scholars agree that the most frequented way, especially as from the XII century, was that of Roncisvalle, because of the efficient health services provided by its famous hospital as well as because of the attraction which Rolando's legend had on European pilgrims.

Pilgrimages increased. The greatest number of pilgrims passed over the Pyrenees, through this principal way which was the arterial road of Christian Spain. The numerous secondary ways through which pilgrims could also arrived, never gained the same importance. The pilgrimage's



hegemonic role is highlighted by the increasing mental identification which it gained as “*iter Sancti Jacobi*”.

It is needless to say that none of these ways was used by exclusive groups. Even in olden times, ways were meant to be public and as such they were open to anyone. All types of people passed through them for so many different motivations. So, journeys were not always pilgrimages.

The principal way to Santiago saw travellers whose motivation was so varied and significant. There were the *rex ambulans*, who travelled untiringly across their territory. There were merchants, pilgrims, outlaws and marginalized persons who posed as pilgrims, and the *clericus vagans*, the jester, the wandering cavalier, the monk or preacher and the vagabond. Very often, we find reference to these in the mystical and disciplinary writings of the Church.

Because of its significance and its numerous contributions, the journey to Santiago was from the beginning an important phenomenon which influenced the way of living in the greater part of Europe. The Jacobean pilgrim fulfilled an itinerant vocation which made him “a sacred traveller” and a transmitter of knowledge. His destination was not exactly a city or a place called Compostela; his aim was to get to a saint, an apostle, the tomb of the apostle who, according to tradition, evangelized Spain. This pilgrim, the pilgrim *par excellence*, differed from any other traveller because he did not look forward to meet Santiago at the end of his long journey because Santiago was with him along all the way. In this sense, one can say that behind this pilgrimage there was always a spiritual motive given that it was a journey whose aim was conversion and transfiguration, a sacred journey for the whole of Christianity. The basic motive was devotion to Santiago and the desire to enter into a personal relationship with him.

Faith and devotion towards the saint urged pilgrims to undertake this pilgrimage. However one could not rule out other reasons such as personal sanctification, a desire to pray better, to give thanks for graces received or to keep a vow. One must not forget either the desire to gain indulgences<sup>9</sup>, to pray for a miracle or to express a longing for martyrdom.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1294 Pope Celestino V granted the pilgrims the plenary indulgence for the first time.

One of the most important factors in this pilgrimage is the spirit of penitence. The desire to go to Compostela as “an act of penitence” could be a personal decision. One could also go as a delegate or on behalf of someone who could not go himself. Going all or part of the way on foot was always considered as one of the humble ways of doing penitence. Thus, right from its beginning, the Journey to Santiago and the Jacobean Pilgrimage has always been a question of faith, of Christian witnessing and of fraternal love. It is a story which has moulded Christian Europe.

Although the pilgrimage to Santiago was essentially a holy journey, one must keep in mind that the Jacobean pilgrim was a curious and attentive man. He could admire and take in whatever he came across on the way such as songs, stories, legends and the technical peculiarities of the Arabs who were living in the Spanish territory. This meant that the Jacobean pilgrim picked up ideas, institutions and legends, in short, all the important cultural elements he came across. Thus, one can notice the relation between travelling and the diffusion of the *chansons de geste*. As time passed, literature connected with journeys developed, from *itineraria* to compositions. We find legends and tourist guide books which took different forms as well as chivalrous adventures and travel diaries written by late medieval pilgrims. At times, these diaries were very near to being a mystical treatise or a typical subject for a commercial manual. Neither should we forget the geographical and cartographical literature of the Late Middle Ages which followed the model of Aristotele, Plinio and Solino and which was improved upon by the humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini (the future Pope Pius II), where geography and cartography seemed to get nearer to anthropology. Geography and cartography owe a lot to travelling and especially to journeys and pilgrims connected with the Journey *par excellence* which led to Compostela.

If one had to make an inventory of all the cultural legacies, left by the Jacobean pilgrims, covering all its aspects or simply taking it from the historical and artistic point of view, one would end up with a grand project of a European dimension since this would include a legacy which includes European culture in its totality. The Journey to Santiago and the Jacobean Pilgrimage were an evidence of a dual reality which brought together the religious and profane aspects. These were evident in the facilities provided “for” pilgrims (hospitals, places of worship...) and others brought about “by” pilgrims, such as the construction of other

ways or bridges. The pilgrims brought to the Spanish domains new ways of artistic expressions, symbols, beliefs and different ways of living. These were merged into the customs of the places through which they passed. They also carried with them stones which, at the end of their journey, they contributed towards the building of the basilica in Compostela. They did this also as an act of penance.

### **3. The Journey to Santiago as a journey of faith**

As we have repeatedly said, the Journey to Santiago was from its beginning a journey of faith. At the same time it also had a cultural aspect and was in fact the most important event in the configuration of medieval Europe and western Christianity. This was maintained by Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464) who, in his cartographical work, described this as a type of European religious-cultural unity as opposed to that which he calls the Asiatic barbarity. In his considerations he clearly established an equation between Europe and civilization and between Christianity and civilization. This was precisely the great contribution which the Journey to Santiago and the Jacobean pilgrimages gave.

This is what John Paul II meant when he spoke to young people about the contribution which the Jacobean pilgrimage gave towards the unity and integrity of Europe. “The whole of Europe has come to know itself through the ‘memory of Santiago’ during those same centuries when it was developing as a homogeneous and spiritually united continent. This is why Goethe hints that Europe’s conscience developed through pilgrimages”<sup>10</sup>.

At present, because of the secularized ideologies, we are seeing that “Christianity is going through a crisis, through existential shocks and through a period of lethargy. These have in fact influenced consciences and thrown doubt on the social relevance and public effectiveness of Christianity. Christian influence diminished in institutions and on public behaviour”<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *Peregrinos por gracia* (Pilgrims for grace). *Carta pastoral del Arzobispo de Santiago de Compostela en el Año Santo Compostelano 2004*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, 104.

Christianity originated in the East. Luke, as well as John and all the New Testament trace its origin in Israel: salvation comes from the Jews (*Jn* 4,22). Luke clearly indicates a new way which opens a new door. The way indicated in the *Acts of the Apostles* is a way which goes from Jerusalem to Rome, the way towards pagans. In this way Christianity is the synthesis of the faith of Israel and the Greek spirit<sup>12</sup> reached in Jesus Christ. Europe is based on this synthesis. The idea, which originated during the Renaissance, to distil the pure Greek, even eliminating the Christian, in order to establish the primigenial Greek is as absurd and senseless as the new idea to come to a Christianity with no hellenistic connections. Europe was born from this synthesis and its roots lie there.

#### 4. The Journey to Santiago and Europe

After the European Synod it has become clear that the legacies left by the Jubilees and by the Jacobean pilgrimages are a clear indication that we should go back to our original roots. “The Jacobean Journey can help to throw a light on the Christian future of Europe. The Compostelian jubilee has given an in-depth reflection on the popular religious sense of Christian Europe”. The Europeistic message by John Paul II of the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1982 in the Basilica of Santiago is worth remembering. It is a beautiful speech both as regards content and presentation wherein the Pope gives an accurate diagnosis of the European spiritual crisis which has remained a mile stone in the history of this continent.

Once again the prophetic vision of John Paul II was evident when he highlighted the facts which proved him right. He said: “Europe, return to and be yourself. Discover your origin. Revive your roots. Relieve those authentic values which made your history glorious and your presence in other continents beneficial. Rebuild your spiritual unity in a climate of full respect towards other religions and of genuine freedom”<sup>13</sup>. Europe whose conscience was born during pilgrimages and which has

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<sup>12</sup> To deepen this idea cfr. W. KAMLAH, *Christentum und Geschichtlichkeit* (Christianity and storicity), Stuttgart 1951.

<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address on the occasion of the European meeting in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982.

rediscovered it while reflecting on Santiago is “an inheritance” (Nikolaus Lobkowich) “a memory” (Juilián Marías), “a conscience” (Radim Palous) and “a project” (Jacek Wozniatowski). More than a continent it is a content, as Ortega and Gasset say, and Christianity is the one element which identifies it. “On top of the mosaic of the different languages, traditions and customs there is an identifying element in all the continent which is precisely Christianity”.

Above all Europe is well known for its culture which was inspired by nothing else than its Christian tradition. The Church is the author and the guardian of this common heritage. Within the context of this memory on the history and the spirituality of the Compostelian Jubilee Year and on the pilgrimage, it is worth quoting the reflections about Europe of some of the great catholic thinkers of our century. I am referring to Ozanam, E. Morin, Romano Guardini, J. Ratzinger and Thomas S. Eliot who wrote: “all our European thinking gets its significance from the Christians who came before us. A European is free not to believe the truths of the Christian faith but, all that he says and does stems from the past Christian cultural heritage and takes its meaning only in relation to this heritage. Only a Christian culture could produce a Voltaire or a Nietzsche. (...) The European culture will not be able to survive in a context where the Christian faith disappears completely. Had Christianity to disappear, all our culture would disappear with it”. “The whole of Europe - Paul VI wrote - owes its esteemed juridical customs, its noble humanistic ideas and the valuable principles which distinguish and enliven its civilization to the traditional patrimony of Christ’s religion. As soon as Europe renounces to this fundamental ideological patrimony, it ceases to exist”. Also John Paul II said: “The history of the formation of European nations runs parallel with the spreading of the Gospel. After twenty centuries of history, in spite of the bloody conflicts which the European nations have had to face and the spiritual crisis which the continent has experienced, one must affirm that the European identity is incomprehensible without Christianity. It is precisely in Christianity that one finds those common roots which have helped the continent’s civilization: its culture, its dynamism, its activity, its constructive expansion even in so many other continents, in short, all that which contributes towards its glory”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

At the beginning of the third millennium, we have heard about the preoccupations to rediscover our European cultural identity as the soul of our peoples. The relevance of this objective is quite evident when from a bipolar world and from the cold war we passed on to a new type of multipolar confrontation, with so many conflicts in the world. “With the death of ideologies, the cultural identity is changing into an effort to consolidate human groups, even into a potential factor of destabilization”. The Jacobean pilgrimage shows clearly that Christianity, having a universal dimension, has shaped a Europe which is open and which is able to integrate new elements. Still, this cannot be achieved without due respect to its cultural identity. It is important to say that we have to go back to our memory because a nation without memory is a nation without hope and which is unable to understand its history. Memory is our hope for the future.

Besides its cultural and historical value, the Santiago pilgrimage has a constitutional and constituent value for the common European civilization. Today’s pilgrim to Santiago, with all the geographical, historical and cultural information in hand, cannot imagine up to which extent the profound spiritual experience will change his life and the significant consequences it will have when he returns to his normal life.

I dare give a last suggestion: most probably the greatest problem in Europe today is the lack of unity and the divisions. This indicates clearly the need of a unifying principle which can bring all the differences together. So far, this has been done by Christianity and again by Catholicism. The Jacobean tradition has had a decisive influence on the unity of Europe and of Spain. Abandoning this tradition means putting aside an inspiration which can be a help in overcoming one of the greatest challenges: unity. God’s authority, which guides our consciences, and the saint’s call spur us on to take the important and necessary action. I have been repeatedly saying right from the beginning that the Journey to Santiago is a journey of faith as well as a journey of culture. In short, it is the most important event in the configuration of medieval Europe as the centre of Western Christianity.

Undoubtedly this does not mean creating a new Europe parallel to the existing one. It means, showing to this Europe that its soul and its identity are deeply rooted in Christianity and offering Europe the key to interpret its vocation in the world. Europe’s unity will last and be fruitful

if it is based on human and Christian values which integrate its common soul such as the dignity of the human person, a deep sense of justice and freedom, dedication to work, the spirit of initiative, love of the family, respect for life, tolerance and a desire for cooperation and peace, that is to say a united Europe of the third millennium! The new Europe of the Spirit! This system of values - faith, solidarity, charity, sacrifice, penance and transcendence, which were evident in the Compostelian pilgrimage - has helped the Christian concept regarding the relations between men from different countries and with different customs to mature. This happened because of the fact that they had the same faith and civilization which continues to be a point of reference even to the present day.

Consequently, Europe cannot be considered only as an economic structure based on a common monetary system. European unity should be based on a system of personal and collective values wherein man regards human existence as a gift and as a duty, our neighbour as the person for whom everyone is responsible and each and everyone puts his own life at the service of others. With this outlook, the pilgrimage no longer has a simply and exclusively cultural and historical value but it assumes a constitutional and constituent value in the common European civilization. The pilgrimage has an effective contribution to make to the building of the only possible united Europe. This can be achieved if Europe's moral and social principles, its culture, its arts and its sensitivity have a spiritual reference. These are all rooted in its Christian tradition and are clearly evident in its character.

At the moment, "Compostela, a spacious hearth with open doors, wishes to become an illuminating source for Christian living, a reserve of apostolic energy for new ways of Evangelization and an impetus towards an ever youthful faith". These are the news of great joy in this third Christian millennium.



## EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

Readings: *Est* 4,17ss. *Mt* 7,7-12

# HOMILY

## *Without me you cannot do anything*

H.E. Mgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez

*Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo*

*ACE Ecclesiastical Assistant*

When concluding the sermon on the mount, the evangelist Matthew gives a summary of the practical suggestions which Christ's followers should pay attention to when carrying out their mission. In these teachings, Jesus tells us that His disciples should not let themselves be overcome by anxiety, worry and discouragement about the future. A Christian cannot be over concerned about food, clothes and other material things as pagans are. A Christian should firmly believe that God is our Father. God knows perfectly what we need and He gives us this continually. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and the rest, and even more, will be given to you.

The Christian, the disciple, trusts entirely in God and not on his own merits. He admits that he has been called and that he is not acting in his own name, nor in the name of society but for a special mission. This is precisely the reason why Christ taught His followers to pray with full trust incessantly to the Father that they may be heard, convinced that, in His goodness, the Father will keep them away from harm.

The problem is that sometimes our prayers seem not to be heard or that, apparently they are not heeded. At times, we do not get what we ask for and what we wish. In this situation we should ask ourselves whether

we are praying well, whether we are showing enough trust in God and whether we are seeking God's will or ours. In our prayers we should seek first and foremost the Kingdom of God and the will of the Father and forget our will.

When trying to answer these questions we should remember that that a father or a mother does not always give their children whatever they ask for. They do not satisfy all their whims and fancies. They do this not because they do not love their children or because they like refusing them what they want. They do it because they know what is best for them and want to help them. So, if a father does this, how much more will God do the same to us.

Still, these questions lead us to examine the way we are praying and to see whether our prayers are really authentic. Very often we notice that many Christians and Christian communities hurry through their prayers, oblivious that they are speaking to God. They follow a routine of repeating prayers which they have learnt as children without even knowing what they are saying. They speak to God but do not listen to God. This type of prayer makes it evident that the person who is praying wants God to do what he or she wants without first trying to find out what God wants or what God is saying.

Pope John Paul II said that in order to progress in holiness, a Christian has to distinguish himself in the art of prayer and that our Christian communities and our groups should be authentic schools of prayer which help Christians to a deep contemplation of the mystery of God, guided by the Holy Spirit (*NMI* 32). If we want to have Christians, who are full of evangelizing zeal and who are not afraid to face difficulties, we have to teach them how to pray and introduce them to *the art of praying*.

Very often we notice that modern society is more inclined towards involvement and action without looking for the reason and motivation behind that involvement. Even Christians and apostolic movements very often fall into this trap. We want to transform the world and to change unjust structures. This is good but what is wrong is that we want to do this alone, through our personal efforts, forgetting the action of the Holy Spirit in us and in the world.

Authentic prayer does not alienate us from getting involved in the transformation of society but it helps us to get our inspirations from

Christ and not from the criteria and the ideologies of the moment. We cannot evangelize with our example if before we are not evangelized ourselves. We cannot be witnesses of the Risen Christ if we are not in intimate union with Him. If we do not want to fall into the rut of activism and to ensure that all our pastoral activity is well-intentioned, we must never forget Christ's words when He said: "Without me you cannot do anything".

During this Eucharistic celebration we are experiencing a moment of deep intimacy with Jesus Christ and strengthening our relationship with Him. He gives us His life, His Body and Blood because we live with Him, for Him and in Him. He invites us to be transformed in Him. With Esther, as we heard in the first reading, let us ask Him to come to our help, to show us Himself, to give us courage to proceed with our pilgrimage and to put well thought-out words on our lips.

*Do you know when people  
really become spiritual?  
It is when they become the slaves  
of God and are branded with His sign,  
which is the sign of the Cross,  
in token that they have given Him  
their freedom. Then He can sell them  
as slaves to the whole world,  
as He Himself was sold,  
and if He does this  
He will be doing them no wrong  
but showing them no slight favour.  
Unless they resolve to do this,  
they need not expect  
to make great progress.*

**2 March 2007**

## LAUDS CELEBRATION

*H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez*

*Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo*

*ACE Ecclesiastical Assistant*

### ***Isaiah* 53, 6-12**

The prophet Isaiah presents the servant of Jahweh, disfigured, despised, without any human semblance and crushed under men's sins. He was counted among the wicked as he took everybody's iniquities upon himself and interceded for sinners. This description of Isaiah's servant fits Jesus perfectly. During his lifetime, Jesus himself said that the Son of man has to go up to Jerusalem, suffer and rise up the third day so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled. Although he never committed sin, he became one of them, showed them his solidarity, invited them to be converted, sat at table with them and showed his mercy and the Father's forgiveness. He maintained: "It is not the healthy who need a physician but sinners". Towards the end of his life, he took their iniquity upon himself and freely accepted the cross thus showing that there is no greater love than giving ones life for those one loves.

Risen from the death, Christ lives for ever with the Father and at the same time accompanies us on our pilgrimage in this world, offering us salvation through his Church. Like a beggar, he continues to knock at the door of every heart. He wishes to enter into the intimacy of our hearts, to be with us in our times of sorrow and joy and to show us the way which leads to eternal life. Although many men and women open up their hearts to let the Lord enter and celebrate this meeting with joy, undoubtedly many others of our brethren prefer to persist in their obstinate ways, and prefer comfort and freedom to carry out their own projects.

Contemporary man has no time for God and wants to live as if God does not exist. Like the Jews and the Romans who lived in Christ's time, many Christians are scandalized by the cross. They run away from

suffering and do not understand that victory, triumph and happiness can only be achieved by accepting the cross and by renouncing oneself. Today's man finds it difficult to understand and to accept that only through dying to himself can he attain life to the full. This inability in today's man to open himself up to that which is transcendent and to accept God's salvation makes the work of evangelization more difficult. Whilst carrying out our mission, we continually come across this difficulty. Undoubtedly, through our faith we know that the Lord is calling us to proclaim, timely and untimely, the infinite love of the Father who did not spare his only Son but gave him up so that, through his cross, we may attain eternal salvation. In this way, the cross, a sign of punishment and humiliation, becomes the tree of life and of salvation because of the freedom, the love and the fulfilment of the will of the Father with which Christ approached his own death.

Nevertheless, the difficulties we encounter when we announce the Good News of the Gospel should not scare us. This is part of our cross. Our Lord had to face this same difficulty during his public life. He came across many people who attached more importance to their own matters and to complying with the law than to the Kingdom of God and to their own salvation brought to us by Christ. We should keep these difficulties, which result from the lack of generosity on the part of those who have to evangelize, always in mind. However the most important thing for us is to examine ourselves, in the light of God and of his Word, to see whether we are really converted to the Lord, ready to die to ourselves and to our sins and how ready we are to carry Christ's cross day after day. Only thus can we share in the joy and triumph of his resurrection.

Pope John Paul II realized today's difficulties related to the announcement of the Good News. Knowing this, he invited all the Church to undertake a new way of evangelizing, new methods of expressing itself and new fervour. We cannot evangelize if we do not let the Lord transform us from within, if we do not give a chance to the Holy Spirit to renew our missionary zeal and if we do not take upon ourselves the small personal crosses and the big crosses of our brethren in communion with Christ.

Let us beg the Blessed Virgin to help us stand with her at the foot of her Son's cross to contemplate his disfigured face. We will thus be better prepared to contemplate his glorious, resurrected face.

# CATHOLIC ACTION IN EUROPE

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Paola Bignardi*  
IFCA Coordinator

Dear friends,

at the beginning of this European Continental Meeting, I would like to extend

my greetings to you all and my regret at not being able to be present for this meeting which I would have liked so much to attend.

During these last few years IFCA has developed these meetings so as to be nearer to the real situations which CA associations are experiencing. In fact they do not live in an abstract world but are down to earth within the true life, culture, history, tensions and opportunities which each country is going through.

This meeting, which is bringing together associations in Europe, is taking place at a very important time. Within a few days, Rome will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, a decisive step in the process of the building of Europe. This treaty made of the old continent of Europe a new reality, a forerunner of peace and cooperation among its peoples and an instrument for the promotion of justice, development and solidarity. This old continent, which seems as exhausted and as having lost its vitality, was once the point of reference for the whole world. Through this unification process, it could become the sign of a new possibility whereby peoples relate to one another, that is of a unity which does not sacrifice the subjectivity of nations and cultures but makes them protagonists of a political, cultural and economic system in which everybody is involved and wherein together everybody is the guardian of that part of truth contained in the other's reasons. This system does not leave room for anyone to abuse his power

or to affirm himself on the others but pulls everybody's ideas and forces together for the benefit of all.

The Church in Europe, through its communal and universal inspiration, could be the soul of this process which, as everybody admits, presents many difficulties. The spirit of the Gospel applies not only to individuals but also to peoples, to the human communities and to nations.

Today the Churches of Europe are faced with some great challenges. If we succeed in facing them together, we will be contributing our share in the global process of building Europe. Some of the challenges are:

1. *dialogue* between cultures and religions which today get closer due to the peoples' migrations. Unfortunately they are still not being prepared to establish constructive, peaceful, positive and fruitful relationships between them;
2. *meaning of faith*, in a situation wherein secularism is being stressed and the religious dimension of life is being declared as insignificant. Faith is being weakened through polemics or is simply considered as a private matter. As a result of this, Catholics are being classified as voluntary workers and the Church as a subject of cult, without any public relevance. This questions the right of Christians to speak out their vision of life and to express themselves on questions related to society and to its projects;
3. *building a model of civilization which is directed towards the future*, through giving special attention to the younger generation, through openness to life and capacity to dream of peace and fraternity;
4. *living Europe's vocation for unity, dialogue, collaboration* and reciprocity between east and west - Europe's two lungs - and a spiritual and ecumenical vocation.
5. *overcoming the interior weariness of so many people*, believers and not, who although possessing so many riches, are getting more and more tired of a type of civilization wherein uncertainty and risk are always on the increase. This situation puts our interior steadiness and our convictions to the test and leads us into the temptation of trying to look for new ways of assurance: superficial myths and ways of escape which make one overcome his internal void.

Faced with these challenges, as Christians and as CA members, we should ask ourselves whether we still feel that we are able to announce the Gospel, whether we feel that we are well prepared for this and whether we are ready and still have the courage and creativity to be its witnesses not only in our communities but in the wider and new spheres of Europe. We cannot forget the *weak faith* even of those who call themselves Christians. In fact, this is a further challenge for us. Our mission has to include also our own community of believers. So, evangelization has to be the main goal of the mission of the Church. In fact, our mission is not only to care for the others but also to ensure that our spiritual journey is leading us to be always more faithful to the Lord.

Catholic Action is continually questioning itself about all this. During these last years, through IFCA and its activities, it has been giving more importance to this exercise.

IFCA first Ordinary Assembly (after the 1991 Constitutional Assembly held in Rome) was held in Vienna in 1994. The venue for this meeting had a special significance as this was held soon after the fall of the Berlin wall. The meeting called together all IFCA members so that CA could work in the Churches of eastern and western Europe particularly with the Churches and the CA groups which had just gained their freedom.

On that occasion, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, presented IFCA with this specific task. "In all humility and with a strong missionary conviction, without any proselytism but with great courage and love, try to propose to the Churches in the Central and Eastern Europe's countries to choose Catholic Action. They are actually considering the setting up of organizations for adult and young Christian lay people. The holding of this Forum in Vienna is really providential".

At the same time, right from its beginning, IFCA Secretariat thought of defining the continent as "Europe-Mediterranean Region" so as to focus attention to the Middle East and Africa which definitely should not be left out. The venues for our continental meetings have in fact been Malta (1997), Iasi in Rumania (1998) and Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2003).

Our meeting with the Churches of the East have helped us to realize the importance of working with the younger generation. We have thus



organized meetings for European Youth in the East so as to share with them an experience of faith in the very same places where faith was trampled upon even to the point of martyrdom but is now being reborn. The meetings for Youth Formation have in fact been held in Iasi (1998), in Rumania (1998), in Oradea (1999) and Bulgaria (2001).

I would also like to point out that the CA Promotional Group, set up by the Secretariat after the 2004 Congress, is now working in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Ukraine through the Italian and Rumanian CA. Contacts have been established with countries in Eastern and Western Europe including Germany, France, England and Ireland. We would like to establish this contact so as to start a discussion on the different ways of participation of lay people and on the formation of co-responsible lay Christians in society, in Europe and in the Church.

CA in Europe is the CA of the third millennium, the CA which has been renewed by the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, by *Christifideles Laici*: a gift of the Holy Spirit to the universal Church and to the Church in Europe.

(PPT projection prepared by CA Promotion Group)

**CA as a vocation:** the Catholic Action, has been encouraged by Pope John Paul II, in the memorable meeting at Loreto, to review itself and to translate its founding gift into a triple mandate: “the three duties”.

I would also like to draw your attention to the three commitments, which we proposed in the final document of the III Continental Meeting in Sarajevo. I think we should keep these in mind when we come to the final suggestions at the end of this meeting. The three commitments were:

### **Formation**

This is the basic element which helps us laypeople to link up our faith with a life centred around Christ. We thus need animators and priest assistants ready to accompany us through the different stages and spheres of life, as children, youth and adults.

### **Parish**

The place which is the foundation of our communitarian life as CA. The parish should regain that beautiful imagery given to it by Blessed

John XXIII who defined it as the “village fountain”. A parish should be a missionary community open to the needs of the people, the territory, the diocese and the world.

## **Youth**

Young people have the right and the duty to be protagonists in what is happening in history and in the decisions that are being taken. Young people should be given due importance. They need people who listen to them and support them and who share their lives with them.

I would like to conclude with some recent reflections by Br. Alois of Taizè, after the XXIX European Meeting for Youth in Zagabria: *If we are trying to open new ways of hope for Europe, it is because we all know that this past century has seen so much violence. The century which has just started, needs women and men who have the courage to express, by their way of living, the call of the Gospel: “Let yourselves be reconciled!”... Thanks to the determination of a small number of people in Europe, we are now experiencing a period of peace. So, what does the Gospel of reconciliation today lead us to? Is it not towards the sharing of the benefits of the successful economy of our society? So many people, in all the European countries, are left out on the threshold of abundance. They can but touch with a finger what they cannot own”.*

These considerations might help you in the work which you have just started. The contributions by the speakers, by the young participants and the reflections on the basic document by the different countries, which will possibly be reflected in the final document, will help IFCA to work in Europe and in the Mediterranean region, giving special attention to the Holy Land. It can also work for a CA which is always more dynamic, which has more members and with members who are full of zeal for the Church and ready to serve the Lord at this time in history.

Our being together as CA and our fraternal and fruitful work during these few days augurs well for a new season for the whole of Europe. I am also sure that it will help us to be the subjects and protagonists in this new Europe.

# THE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY IN EUROPE

Carlos Maria Bru Puron  
President of the European Movement in Spain

## Introduction

We all know that the great contribution which Christianity made to the whole of Europe is unquestionable. One of the benefits was freedom which was codified by the French Revolution and later by the American Revolution which, after all, was only a copy of what was happening in Europe. At the time, most North Americans were of European descent which is no longer the case today.

We cannot forget either the contribution made by the encyclicals, especially *Quadragesimo Anno*. This came out with the idea of “*subsidiarity*” which makes us free to participate. It also gave the true meaning of “*solidarity*” (a word which at times is misconstrued), that is “*fraternity*”.

All this serves is an incentive for us to ensure that Europe goes on to contribute towards freedom in justice, which ensures equality, equal opportunities and a search for excellence. Whilst doing this, we should try to preserve and enjoy our small planet. There is no other twin planet. There is only one and thus we should try to preserve it.

## The socio-cultural reality of Europe and of the European Union

This title provokes some questions.

1. The first one concerns the reality of the European Union: is it indeed already a European Union? Does this reality exist? Just remember what Schumann, a great politician, said about Europe. He said that it could not be built at one go but it had to develop step by step until the aim is reached. He used a very significant phrase: “*towards a de facto solidarity*”.

A person like me, involved for a number of years in legal spheres, can state that the *right for solidarity* does not mean anything if there is no *de facto solidarity*. Schumann wanted this *de facto solidarity* to draft European laws, a European Constitution and a European legal framework. *De facto solidarity* is in fact being developed. Yet, the European Union has not attained it so far. This *de facto solidarity* is not yet a reality.

2. Step by step, a lot has been achieved, but the world changes fast and if we analyze the situation, we end up asking ourselves whether we are going fast enough in building Europe. Today's world is very demanding and its maxim is "history is all challenges and answers". Faced with the challenges which our globalized world is creating, with all its ups and downs, with its inadmissible and odious discrepancies between the rich and the poor, with the dangers resulting from climatic change... is Europe reacting to these realities fast and resolutely enough?

I dare say, looking at what has been done during the XX century; we are not reacting fast enough. For example, the decolonization which came about after the II World War, was only apparent because we all know that neocolonialism still exists and juridically it has not taken more than 20 years to develop.

If we had to look at the solution - or the supposed socialist, dictatorial solution presented by communism - we realize that this was achieved and reached a third of the world population in just a few years. Its collapse, after the famous "*War of the Galaxies*" was even faster. If one had to look, for example, at the extraordinary phenomenon of the acknowledgement of civil rights in European countries, which has taken five or six years and the end of the *apartheid* in South Africa, which took about seven years, one can see clearly how quickly these XX century phenomena happened.

3. And the phenomenon of the European Construction? We boast about it, but it is taking too long. If it had to be seen from the point of view of *social transformation* and not from the point of view of *political phenomena*, can we really say that Europe is moving fast? I dare say, not so much.

A. We are proud to say that "*We are the top commercial power in the world*". When we say so we refer to *tangible* goods, to the

exportation of shoes and cars and to the number of cars bought. However we know, that, compared with the circulation of *tangible goods*, that is *material* goods, in the case of intangible goods, that is *finances*, the circulation is three hundred times faster; and that the amount of movement made in one year in the case of material goods is the same as the amount of financial movement made in three or four days. But this financial movement is not regulated or linked to any laws or morals. There are fiscal paradises who are in command more than the European Union... so we realize that we are not in control of whatever is happening in the world.

- B. We note that a lot is being said about the fact that we are top at helping countries to develop and this is true. However, as a result of this development, we have to fight the discrepancies which are widening. Before, 40 multinationals could own a capital which was equivalent to the purchasing power of 200 million persons. Today, the profits per year of 40 big companies are equivalent to the amount which 400 million people have to live on.

Considering this, Europe is not resolving much. According to the *Lisbon Declaration* we are building the most competitive society in the world and we are aiming all our efforts towards I+D+I (Investigation+Development+Innovation). Even, this is not so impressive. At present, China is producing 78% of the photocopiers in the world and India is exporting informatics. One can easily notice that, when it comes to “*hard power*” on the part of the EEUU and other world powers, and in the case of “*soft power*” and *cultural infiltration*, we are not winning the game either. Today, this cultural infiltration is being carried out through networks, an area in which we do not excel. We are not masters when it comes to informatics networks. Even to chat, to communicate in this small world wherein we can all speak all at once, we are all controlled by a few EEUU companies.

The life expectancy, of people of our race and of our cultural context, is 80 years for men and 82 years for women. That for African people is 40 years. What are we doing about this? Are we acting fast enough? I dare say: “No”. We are not keeping pace with the challenges and with the progress and the divergences which are being created. Europe must do more.

C. Now let us look at world politics. If Europe had to defend and propose the part it can play in multilateralism towards a possible world democracy - not a perfect democracy or a democracy full of faults such as ours - the European Union can offer its share. We cannot propose to the United Nations and to certain world political parties that the rule of the game should be that each country should have one vote. This cannot be, at least for the moment. If each of the 112 countries members of the United Nations Assembly had to be allotted one minute to make its short presentation, there would be nothing. The real leader in the world is the Security Council, where the five countries, which have won the II World War, are in command. During all *the millennium discussions*, Kofi Annan insisted on the need for greater democratic justice in the Security Council and we presume that now, Ban Ki-moon will do the same. But what have we achieved?

A formula has been suggested in order to eliminate the veto: that of group A and group B. This means that an enforced majority has to be established. Thus, the 5 states will become 24, and with this enforced two-thirds majority, if there is no veto, there should be at least a high consensus when world measures are taken. However, up to now all came to nothing.

We are going towards a “planetary democracy” which will turn the world into a single region. Europe has been the first to create a *European Union*, which is a political organization which overrides national organizations. Maybe after this, we will have the Arabic League, all Latin America and South East Asia. Nothing, impossible, the *five countries* have used their veto and have not given their consent. They do whatever they like or rather that which the others do not object to or of which they are afraid. This is the reality today and therefore Europe has not succeeded even here.

We should expand Europe’s socio-cultural, and therefore political, reality. We have to work harder because I believe, we should all give our share and we can give it.

4. History shows that Europe has not given such a good example. It has seen class hatred, conflicts among nations, religions and within nations. It seems that at last we have convinced ourselves of the

importance of multilateralism, dialogue, justice and mutual understanding. The Catalan theologian José Ignacio González Faus, says that we should understand that “I” is found in “we”. I am an authentic and unique “I” when I imbue myself with what the “other” is. I believe that - after all the mistakes, scandals and crimes - Europe has discovered that this is the way.

## **The prospects we have to follow: which are the steps which have to be taken?**

First we have to solve our own problems.

### **1. Low birth rate, immigration**

One is very clear. We have the lowest birth rate in the world: 1,4 per person. This is unacceptable and I think that it cannot be reversed so easily. However we have to try to remedy this and to intervene in the internal problems of all the countries with an advanced economy, such as Spain, France, Germany, Italy etc. We have to see how a system of pensions and of social benefits, when one stops working, can be guaranteed. If the birth rate is low, the number of working-age persons will decrease and so it will be difficult to sustain pensions and other social benefits and to keep up a good standard of living. Even if it is simply for material and egoistic and not for moral reasons, some measures need to be taken. How can this problem be resolved? There is a plausible solution: immigration, which should however not be inhuman.

When I was in the European Parliament I always spoke about an experience which really impressed me. I was asked to go to Bari in Italy. One morning the number of Albanians who arrived was 20,000. What could a city with 300,000 inhabitants do with 20,000 Albanians? This is a terrible situation. We have had the same thing happening in Melilla, in the Canary Islands, in the Island of Lampedusa, in Malta and in Sicily. This cannot be. We should formulate a European policy on immigration. Something has already been done. There is now vigilance on the frontiers with African countries in order to guard against any type of mafia and any attempts of human exploitation. These steps cannot be taken by single countries, such as Spain or Italy alone. There should be a European policy on immigration.

## 2. Energy

About 66% depend on foreign energy. This energy, derived from combustible solids is destroying us and the suppliers use it to their advantage once we depend on them. Our *American friend* seems to use it to disorientate us. We do not know his motive behind the invasion of countries. Is it an eagerness for justice and freedom? Or is an anxiety to control the circuits and circulation of oil?

In order to get our oil, we should look for new suppliers such as Russia or other emerging countries, which are rich in oil, like Turkmenistan. We should try to find also alternative energy. We have to establish a communitarian policy, which does not depend on unanimity. In fact if the 27 countries have to be in agreement on everything, we go nowhere. It should be a democratic policy based on the majority criterion of all the States and also of the citizens.

## 3. Climatic change

We pretend to be far advanced as regards the impositions of the protocol of Kyoto. However, we have to realize that under this protocol, development is “bought”. Developed countries buy *quotas of combustible fossils* from poor countries which sell these because they have to buy food. And what are they selling? Their own development.

We go on using these combustible fossils and continue to poison ourselves thereby effecting the development of the poor, who are ready to sell whatever they can, to survive. This is unjust and immoral. We are doing something about this situation but we are taking it very easy. We need an authentic European policy approved by a majority vote.

## 4. Foreign policy and security

For security, we cannot depend on measures which are apparently *positive*, like the interventions headed by the United Nations, on the frontier between Israel and Lebanon; or in an *unclear* situation like Bosnia and in an even more *unclear* situation like Kosovo. We can do very little if a decision to intervene needs the approval of all the 27 countries. We need a Security Foreign Policy. We cannot have Solana phoning one country after the other to see what the *English, Spanish or*



*German Minister* has to say and to verify whether they are all in agreement. Nothing can be done unless there is an authentic Foreign Minister who can take the initiative on a majority vote.

What are we doing as regards a policy which safeguards freedom, security and justice? How can we fight terrorism, trafficking of white women and of children? How can we fight the trafficking of weapons if we do not have a common policy about freedom, security and justice? I come from the legal profession and it is unconceivable to me how there are countries in the European Union which refuse to hand over delinquents to the country where they have committed the crime. Some countries still apply the *exequatur*, which is a very complicated procedure. Governments are sometimes extra benevolent and say, “*Yes, he is a delinquent but here he is OK, he has asked for asylum and you cannot claim him*”.

We should proceed against a culprit in the place where he has committed the crime; otherwise there is no common policy for justice.

Or, for example, a German notary signs a contract for a house situated in Mallorca and Spain does not accept the validity of that contract. Why should this happen? If that document is valid in Germany, why should it not be so also in Spain, Portugal or Italy? If these countries all have the same juridical level, why should there be this mistrust? We have to ensure equivalence at criminal, civil and mercantile juridical level. The German Christian Democrats had passed a *law about conjoint management* which gave workers the right to be listened to and to participate in the decision making process. Besides the Administrative Council they have also a Vigilance Board. If a German Company wants to apply the idea of *conjoint management* in another country, why should this be stopped from doing it? Germany, which is a great power, which has a well-developed idea of participation and which is very dynamic on the entrepreneurial level cannot expand its activity to other countries because the idea of *conjoint management*, which is so beneficial, is not accepted.

Here we are falling behind and we realize that we are not doing as well as we think.

## The European Convention

I do not wish to tire you out, but during these last three years, I have been like the “Don Quixote” of a lost battle. There were many attempts. I, for example, as President of the *European Movement in Spain*, have the satisfaction of having presented the International Movement with 4,200 amendments to the European Convention.

The Convention has been superb and has presented its project, signed by the then 25 member countries, to its governments. The time for its ratification arrived. Spain ratified it by consulting the people. The response from the people was not so strong but 70% of the people voted “Yes” in agreement. A considerable number of States approved it by a vote in Parliament. But then there were France and Holland which said “No”. This is unbelievable.

Some Parties, for example the Socialist Party, made the mistake of trying to advance more on the social level. They voted “No” and so we have gone back to the Nizza Treaty, which is less social than it looks. Madness! The position of France and Holland, with their “No” is incomprehensible.

Holland, preoccupied by the immigration phenomenon, has come up with a very positive multicultural policy. Unfortunately it went through the troubles we know very well and voted “No” in order to stop the influx of immigrants. And so we are back to Nizza, where the possibility of a common European policy is out. The same with France, with the so-called “*Polish plumber*”. It says: “*No, I have my own specialized workers. With the Constitution, there will be free movement. Polish plumbers will come over and take over all the contracts for repairs and works*”. Well, what happened is that movement is now not regulated and Poland, Bulgaria and Rumania are already in.

To my great satisfaction, a few days later, Luxembourg held a referendum and the majority of the population voted “Yes”. Other countries followed. In fact, 18 countries out of the 27 have said “Yes”. Those who have said “yes”, either through a popular referendum or through Parliament, represent about 4/5 of the population in Europe.

We are thus faced with a problem. What can we do? Can we go against the opinion of the majority of the European population? Can we ignore

the wish of the great majority of the Europeans? Can we go against what ask the majority and two-thirds of the countries or States? Can Great Britain say “*I will postpone the holding of a referendum to ratify and to pronounce myself on the Constitution sine die?*”

There is a phrase which we find in the Roman law “*Agreements should be honoured*”. There is also a World Convention on the Law on Treatises - the 1969 Convention of Vienna - which literally says “*pacta sunt servanda*”. A country which has signed the November 2004 Rome Agreement has subjected itself to ratify the European Constitution and it can say “yes” or “no”, but it is in duty bound to pronounce itself about it. This is what Portugal, the United Kingdom and Ireland should do. Do not laugh at me. They are free to say what they want, but they have to say it. But they have not done so yet. And I insist, what can we do about it?

Some time ago, the Spanish Foreign Minister called together the so-called “*Friends of the Constitution*”. Out of the 27, there were 18 who responded together with some who have not voted as yet. These 20 have declared: “*We want the Constitution*”. Some time later, Sarkozy started speaking about “*a mini-treaty*”. After this, Mrs Merkel, who at the time is the President of the European Union said: “*Listen, I wish to do such a lot, but do not ask too much of me because my term of office is too short*”. (The President holds office for six months, but what can one achieve in six months?). The Constitution suggests that the President’s term of office should be of two years and a half. Mrs Merkel has invited all Europeans to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome towards the end of March and to show that they wish to see Europe moving on. Merkel, with a great effort, promised “*I will do what I can*”.

I will tell you “*what I mean by that which I can do*”. We have a *vision*, we are a bit *utopian* but we are *realistic*. If the European Constitution, which comprises 448 articles, does not proceed we will have to *prune it*. However we should establish some values. These values are written in the Constitution project and moreover they are binding and apply to tribunals. *Freedom, equality, non discrimination on the bases of sex or on any other grounds, respect towards minors and human dignity* - which is a Christian concept - *the dignity of all persons* are found in article 6 of the European Constitution project.

*Representative democracy*, which has given rise to European *political parties*, says that those political parties, which go beyond national interests, should go to the European Parliament. *Participative democracy*, with a million signatures, can impel the European Commission, which is the European Government, to undertake a legal initiative. It is not difficult to get a million signatures when there are 500 million inhabitants in the European Union. With the signatures of one million persons, the initiative is then submitted to governments and to the European Parliament.

This is all envisaged in the Constitution's project: a *stable presidency*, which I have referred to before, and the extraordinary *clause of solidarity*. Remember the "Three Musketeers" of Dumas, "*one for all, all for one*". This is what the *solidarity clause* establishes. Whenever there is any unexpected *external aggression* on any part of the territory of member countries or any *internal aggression* (such as terrorism or organized crime) and one of the 27 States asks for the help of the other States, these should intervene. This is something which has not been written or concluded. We all know well enough about the phenomenon of terrorism and the difficulty which some countries had to face in order to get help from the other countries, who turned a closed eye. With the *solidarity clause* this help will come automatically.

There has to be *co-decision* between the council of Ministers and the European Parliament; *co-decision* in everything. The European Parliament cannot ignore the realities in Member States. However the States cannot fool their citizens who are actually represented in the European Parliament.

Taking decisions by an *enforced majority* means that this is not unanimous. The enforced majority, as regulated in the Constitutional project, must represent the majority of the States and 60% of the citizens. The decision will then be reflected upon but will then be imposed.

This is what the Constitution is aiming at. I think that it is worth striving for it, for human dignity, freedom, human rights; for a Europe which, as far as possible, brings some justice, equality and ecological sensitivity into the world. We should involve ourselves in all this so that this world might survive for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

# PRESENTATION OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT

*Prof. Luigi Alici*  
*ICA national President*

My task is to present a brief introduction to the final document availing myself of my experience as a member of the Italian Catholic Action. I do not mean to analyse the text. This will be done during our group sessions. Rather I would like to pass some comments and indications which might help you to see it in the light of today's Europe and in perspective of the situations which we are lucky, or rather blessed, to be experiencing in our everyday lives.

The subject that we will be discussing is the same as that which is being treated by the Bishops from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> March, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The COMECE (Episcopal Commission of the European Community) will be organizing a congress with the theme: "Values and Perspectives for Europe of the future". The Bishops wish to invite Christians - and particularly the laity - to carry out together a discerning exercise on the past and future of Europe. Hopefully this would lead us to discover the opportune action we could take to revive a spirit of contemplation, communion and mission.

## **1. Relaunching "an idea of Europe": from a Europe of countries to a Europe of peoples**

The debates which developed when the European Convention was discussed and approved were many. These indicated that Europe should find common factors which go beyond political and economic interests. It has also become evident that it is very difficult for Europe to keep going at the right pace towards a full political integration if it does not have a soul.

In the first half of the 90's, the Christian thought, which was traditionally personalistic, was at the basis of outlining an idea of a Europe. Even before the birth of a political Europe, everyone knew how problematic it was to build a political reality without an adequate cultural working plan. During the years between the I and II world wars, the

Christian personalistic thought - particularly that of E. Mounier - was one of the few “beacons” which presented Europe as “a city of peace”, an invitation to pass from a “Europe of countries” to a “Europe of peoples”.

Another author who upheld this personalistic belief and who very often spoke in favour of the idea of federalism was Denis de Rougemont who later steered the way towards the birth of Europe. In his works, he stresses some aspects which seem of great importance even today. “Europe’s unity” he writes, “is the unity of our pluralistic culture. It is a community of antinomic values of very different origins. It is the dialectician game of some dominant principles, of religious intuition and of basic options which effect not only the evolution of the arts, of sciences, of political regimes and of moral judgements but of all the economy and all the material life of the peoples”. In another of his works entitled *Unity and Diversity*, De Rougemont goes deeper and comes up with a suggestion which I recommend you to reflect upon together. Recalling the metaphor of Athens, Rome and Jerusalem, he invites believers, who wishes to work for Europe, to rediscover the roots for the equilibrium between unity and diversity in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity which is the originating figure in which the two paradigms - the one and the other - find their originating point of fusion. At the same time, he urges us to look also at the mystery of the Incarnation, which presents a clear possibility of the coexistence of the opposites.

## **2. Challenges and questions in Europe**

The text of the final document on which our workshops are going to be based, presents a series of passages which speak about the need for CA members to get involved in the re-motivating process of an idea of Europe in an intelligent and constructive way. Without entering into the merit of the document, I would like to present some reflections which result from the experience which I have gained in the Italian Catholic Action.

At the moment we are coming across a number of challenges which present themselves differently in the respective countries. These situations could come about as a result of some legislation which has a negative effect on the family or could be a question of an economic nature. Faced with these situations we have to broaden our outlook without getting involved in the “political agenda”. Above all, we should try to see these single episodes within a wider and more complex process which raises a number of questions.

## 2.1 - The cultural challenges

The first challenge is definitely one of a cultural nature. The Europe which we are living in today, is passing very rapidly from a pluralistic culture to a new form of multiculturalism which means the coexistence - not always peaceful - of different cultures *within* the same political society. The more the presence and the pressure of these cultures increase, the more the “foundations” of civil and moral order on which society is based, starts facing a crisis.

This phenomenon could be tackled in two possible ways. The first is to re-discuss the fundamental value of the public sphere and rediscover the “non negotiable values” leaving within these an open space for new cultures. The second, which seems to be the most commonly practised, pretends to absorb multiculturalism and tries to neutralize the public sphere, thinking that this would help to diminish conflicts. However, conflicts cannot be solved at the expense of the public sphere but through the ability of the political community to acknowledge the basic values and from here start negotiating the historical conditions for coexistence.

The Italian Catholic Action has undertaken to treat non-negotiable values, a subject which is so dear to Pope Benedict and which has come up in some of his authoritative interventions (cfr his speeches in Regensburg, at the IV Ecclesial Convention and in his Encyclical *Deus caritas est*). We have highlighted the fact that we have to distinguish between values which stem from faith, from a religion which has been revealed. One should be able to give witness of these values in a context where reciprocal recognition should prevail. However there are other values which are of a natural order and which concern the original layer of our common humanity.

Our two-thousand year old civilization in which we live, starting from Antigone, is repeatedly referring to them as the “unwritten law”. These should be rationally discussed. The fact that they are not negotiable does not mean that they have to be recalled dogmatically.

In cultural terms, probably it is important, also at European level, to open a public debate on the values which are considered inalienable and which offer a space for diversity.

## *2.2 - The political challenge*

A second challenge is of a political nature. In view of this, I think, that the suggestion made this morning, that the basic document should be revised to include an appeal for the building of a Europe which rediscovers the reasons for an authentic political integration, is very important.

Undoubtedly, we must realize that we are faced with a paradox. Europe has in fact been born as a political, cultural and religious community of cities, as a territory of small free States, directed by popular rules which progressively became more and more democratic, against the one-party and despotic type of governments found in the Asiatic continent. Europe has in fact developed a system wherein civil co-existence developed into the idea of a national State. Today, according to some experts and men of culture, the idea of a national State is progressively entering into a crisis. It would be a paradox had Europe, which up to a certain extent, has “invented” the national State, to react passively in front of this crisis, without succeeding to develop new institutional forms for a future *civitas* and to remain nostalgically stuck to a model which is dying out and which is being kept alive artificially for economic reasons.

## *2.3 - The challenge of Christian witnessing*

The third challenge concerns the witnessing given by Christians within this situation. Historically, during the period when civilization was going through a painful and traumatic passage, there were times when Catholics encountered great difficulties to be accepted in public spheres. During the first centuries, the church went through a very dramatic period and the martyrdom it has been through cannot be forgotten. One has to discover the fundamental reason behind the coherent attitude of the first Christians, who never accepted to place their own religion in the politeistic pantheon wherein their God was assigned a space with a dignity at par with that of the pagan gods. This means that they refused to downgrade their faith to a simple cult and to limit it to a territory and to a particular group of people, different from that of the others only because of historical or geographical reasons, resigning themselves to a type of politeism.



Today, Christians are faced with the same difficulties when they ask that their faith be recognized publicly. The situation is analogous even if expressed in different terms. The tensions which the Church has had with the world throughout history, starting with the struggle for investitures during the Middle Ages, were very often a struggle for power. Now these seem to concern mainly the *ethos*, values and natural law. The price which a Christian has to pay to enter the politeistic pantheon is an ethical price, that of relativism. That is, he has to accept that his idea of life, of the human person, of the family, of education does not have a universal value, but can simply coexist with the others.

These are some of the challenges which will confront us in future in Europe. It is important for us to be cautious as to how we articulate the diversities within a unitary framework. Without this, the differences will become uncontrollable and will degenerate into conflicts. However we should keep in mind that without these differences, the framework becomes restricted. It is not by chance that, during the golden age, Europe was the product of this exemplary equilibrium, wherein, thanks also to Christian witnessing, it was possible to articulate diversities in a unitary context.

### **3. The articulation of the document**

I hope that these points will help you to reflect beyond the short text which you will be studying. The text consists of six parts.

In the first three parts, after the quotation from Schumann, it speaks about the importance of Christian citizens for Europe of the future. It then invites us to ask ourselves why, after half a century from its integration, Europe still has no dream. At the end of this part, we are asked to rethink of the future *civitas*, which is referred to as the cultural and spiritual identity of the New Testament, in new terms.

Points 4 and 5 concern the Social Teaching of the Church and stress the importance of keeping this in mind in this text and in our future studies. We are also referred to the Postsynodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* and the teachings of Benedict XVI. In the basic document for the COMECE Bishops, there is an interesting passage by the Pope which includes a significant phrase about Europe which is worth considering.

The sixth paragraph tries to suggest areas wherein we can be involved, identifying the cultural, political and ecumenical fields. Paola Bignardi suggested that we should also remember the commitments we made in Sarajevo. The last point can thus be integrated, considering the ecumenical commitment as part of a wider task of being spiritual witnesses.

Undoubtedly, faithful to our vocation, we should involve ourselves so that Europe may rediscover its spiritual convictions as well as the links between the peoples, besides thinking of the economic aspect. During the previous intervention, I liked the comment about the relation between the “I” and the “we”. From the Christian point of view, we know that faith continually reminds us that for a Christian, the “we” always comes before the “I”. When we keep this order, we can never adopt a paternalistic attitude about solidarity. We should also remember those shared values which we normally refer to as *ethos*. This is the fundamental code which believers offer as a common reflection and therefore the basis for dialogue so that Europe may find a soul again.

The search for a convergence on these unrenouncable values comes before legitimate political differences and presents us - as an association of lay people such as ours - with a particular responsibility: first of all as baptized Christians, who freely and coherently give witness of our faith. There is also another reason clearly expressed in the teachings of Benedict XVI. His passionate calls to natural law, in fact, touch our lay identity directly. As lay people, it is our duty to present and work out the reasons and values which “pave” an ethical way which everyone, including political forces, can follow.

For a Christian who knows the conciliar teachings, besides being a witness to his faith, this common element makes him commit himself to use his rational faculties to draw the value of the common good from the acknowledgement of the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities. Between the confession of our faith and the responsibility to pass a historical personal judgement, that brings us to a specific political option, *tertium datur*. There is the possibility of involving ourselves - individually and as an association - to work in favour of a moral law, a public reason and a common good which can offer Europe that “soul” which it needs so badly.

# ROUND TABLE

## ***Christian youth apostles and builders of the world***

- Moderator:** Oana Tuduce - Rumanian Catholic Action, charged with IFCA Youth Coordination Group
- Participants:** Leaders of CA Youth of:
- Spain:** *Virginia Burgos Venero*  
national President of ACE Youth Movement (MJAC).
- Italy:** *Simone Esposito*, Vicepresident of ICA Youth Sector
- Rumania:** *Anca Lucaci*, Vicepresident of the Rumanian CA Youth Sector
- Ukraine:** *Volodymir Malchyn*, representative of the Ukrainian Youth for Christ
- Holy Land:** *Shadi Abu Khadra*, representative of the Latin rite Bishop of Nazareth (H.E. Mgr. Boutros Marcuzzo).

After a short presentation of the participants, the theme was introduced keeping in mind the three priorities established in Sarajevo in 2003, during IFCA Continental Meeting. These were: a *holistic formation* (faith and daily living), *the parish* (“the village’s fountain”, the basis of the initiative of every CA member and of missionary communion), in relation to *youths* as protagonists of their history.

First question: *Who are the youths in your country?*

**Spain:** Virginia presented a profile of today’s youths in Spain. In the context of a world where it is difficult to understand man, where education is lacking, youths quickly become independent, are indifferent to other people’s problems and fight only for their own interests. In today’s social context, extreme individualism seems to be the basis of all personal and communal social relationships. This applies also to the spiritual aspect. The Youths do not know God and the Church and do not attach importance to spiritual values.

**Italy:** Simone saw Italian youth in a social context characterized by “a lack of trust” which is evident in their personal relationships with friends and in their family. Today’s youths have less trust in institutional values: State, School, Church.

Another dimension of today’s society is “insecurity”. Youths settle down in life at a much later stage. Temporary work makes it impossible for them to plan their future life and to start thinking about building a family. They look for emotional occasions which fill them with enthusiasm, take part in non-organized manifestations and do not commit themselves in long lasting projects.

**Rumania:** Anca presented a different reality which many youths are experiencing in her country. Many youths in Rumania grow up away from their parents as these have had to emigrate to other countries to look for work. They have to learn to take important decisions about their future without the guidance of their parents.

Youths are living in a social context where money is the most important value and it is worth more than the family, than education and than any public institution.

In a situation where values are missing, youths become indifferent and care only about their own interests. However, there are still some who hope for a better future and are ready to play their part in the building of a better society. In fact, there are young people who still respect their family’s traditions and who involve themselves in associations and are active within the Church.

**Ukraine:** Volodymir presented a postmodern social context which came into existence after the fall of the communist regime.

Even though living conditions have not reached a high standard as yet, youths are not indifferent. They are interested in their future and do their utmost to bring about different and better living and working conditions. Their active participation in the “orange revolution” bears witness to this.

A considerable number of youths take an active part in the life of their Church and are involved in its various associations.

**Holy Land:** Shadi who lives in Nazareth presented a reality which is very different from that in Europe. In the Holy Land, there are two States, three religions and so many different realities within the same Catholic religion.

The basic problem focuses on identity. In fact, a Holy Land inhabitant can have an Israelite passport, does not speak Hebrew but Arabic, is not a Muslim but a Palestinian and does not live in Palestine.

Within this context, youths get a sound education as regards values from their families and within the Church. They play an active role in the life of the Church and strive to strengthen their faith so that they may be able to live in this very complex social and historical context.

After these presentations we could compare the situation in the West, where the standard of living is high but where youths have lost hope, are individualistic and no longer trust institutions and people, with the Eastern situation where the standard of living is not so high but youths still hope that one day living conditions might improve even at the risk of individualism where personal interests prevail.

The problems in the Holy Land are very different. The main factor is the question of identity. This situation is a challenge even for us.

Second question: *“Why should youths choose CA, the ecclesial commitment today in Europe and in the Mediterranean?”*

**Spain:** Virginia pointed out that even though modern society is characterized by individualism, youths get involved in groups in order to experience a sense of communion with others.

Catholic Action gives youths the opportunity to build themselves as a group. CA groups offer a youth the opportunity to grow as a person with a spiritual guide who accompanies them in their personal journey in life.

**Italy:** Simone spoke about his personal decision to join CA, saying that as a youth, CA has made him feel that “he was worth something in life”

Youths who choose to join CA have the opportunity to be “passionate Christians” at school, in the family, within the Church and in their places of work. From an early age, in CA, they experience the “catholic dimension” of the Church. Simone expressed his hope that even through meetings like this youths might grow together further in this “catholic dimension”.

**Rumania:** Anca said that Rumanian youths choose to join CA so that they may follow their journey through life as a group with other youths

and under the guidance of a priest. The Parish or CA group is even more important for those youths who find themselves alone at home without their parents because they feel that there they have someone who listens to them and appreciate them.

**Ukraine:** Volodymir pointed out that youths who are involved in the association feel that “they are rooted in the Church’s tradition”. In fact, the most important aim of his association in Ukraine is to transmit the traditional values of the Catholic Church of Oriental rite.

The major problem faced by Ukrainian youth is the lack of tools for formation and so they find it difficult to work out a well-planned programme and consequently they experience a certain associative uncertainty.

**Holy Land:** Shadi said that in Nazareth, youths meet in CA groups where Christian values are transmitted through spiritual guided formation. Youths in the Holy Land also choose to join CA as this helps them to develop self-respect, to respect human dignity and to treasure the value of peace.

## **Conclusion**

It was evident that working with you youths, starting from the teenagers, is a great challenge for CA, wherever it is.

It might seem a paradox: although they do not believe in institutions, they are ready to be part of a process where they can develop themselves in an association where they are listened to, are given attention and presented with ideals. In spite of their strong sense of independence and individualism, they love the group which gives them a sense of community which helps them to develop their own identity.

Through IFCA, youths meet other youths from other CA groups. They encounter other experiences which have the same common basis and broaden their horizon to all the Catholic Church.

## EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

Readings: *Ezk* 18,21-28      *Mt* 5,20-26

# HOMILY

## *Love because you are loved*

H.E. Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi  
IFCA Ecclesiastical Assistant

Although in these two Readings there is no direct reference to love, it is evident that the message here is love. *Love because you are loved*. Our God is definitely the God of love. He does not want the death of sinners but rather that they are converted and live. He does not want the death of the wicked but with open arms He offers them His pardon. This is precisely why we should not harm our brother. We should never kill or offend him but rather try to reconcile with him. This reminds us of St John's famous expression: "*Dear friends, let us love one another because love is from God*" (1 Jn 4,1).

I would like to dwell on the word "because".

1. All religions say that man should love God and that God's love should be reflected in our love towards our neighbour. The specific aspect of our Christian faith is not so much the widening of the concept of neighbour which helps us to overcome all racial, religious or cultural barriers. Christianity, as we read in the Holy Scriptures, helps us to love God and our neighbour fully and unconditionally because it was God who loved us freely and gratuitously first. Again in St John's *First Letter* we read: "Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God but God loved us first and sent his Son to expiate our sins".

It follows that “if God loves us, we too should love one another” (1Jn 4,9-10).

The link between God’s love for us and the commandment to love him can be found since from the birth of the people of Israel. Miraculously, the people of Israel came out of Egypt as a crowd of nomads which had no fixed abode and which could easily be lost in the desert. In the major event in the Old Testament, the covenant at Sinai, God opens the list of the Ten Commandments with the declaration: “I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt where you lived as slaves”.

It is because God had freed Israel, that Israel was to observe God’s commandments. To put it more simply, it is due to the fact that God loved Israel first that Israel was expected to love God. Through this alliance, God and the people entered into a marriage contract: “I am your God - says the Lord of Israel - you are my people”. Before telling the people “you are mine”, God tells them “I am yours”.

2. This revelation of love reaches its climax in Jesus of Nazareth. According to the Gospel, it is not man who sacrificed himself for God. It is the Son of God who gave his life for man. It is not the disciples who washed the Lord’s feet, it is the Lord who washed the disciples’ feet. St. Paul goes on to say: God loved us even when we were hostile to him. “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (*Rom 5,8*).

There is another aspect which we should consider. Our faith in God’s love for us should not be based only on the commandment which speaks about our love for God but also on that which speaks about the love for our neighbour. If we have experienced God’s love, if we believe that the Son of God has given his life for us - concludes St John, the apostle of love - “then we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1Jn 3,16). And again, “No one who fails to love the brother whom he can see, can love God whom he has not seen” (*ib 4,20*). Faith in God’s love for us on the cross not only makes love of our neighbour possible to understand but it makes it concretely possible. Jesus confirmed this when he washed the feet of his disciples: “If I have washed your feet, you must wash



each other's feet. As I have loved you, you too should love one another". Faith is shown through love.

Modern psychology and our everyday direct or indirect experience amply corroborate this assertion. A child who has never experienced affection finds it more difficult to show affection towards others when he grows up. On the contrary, he who felt or feels himself loved, is normally more predisposed to love and he, who has experienced understanding and mercy, finds it easier to be compassionate and tolerant. How can he, who has not experienced love, understand what love is? This is precisely what faith is. It is not a sensation or a vague impression. It is the unshaken certainty which makes us believe in love and which makes us exclaim with St John "We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us" (1Jn 4, 16). St Paul goes on to say: "The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5, 5).

Inspired by this reflection, let us pray with the luminous words of today's liturgy: "God, our Father, who has based your commandments on the love of God and of our neighbour, instil in us the docility of your love, so that, in trying to see you in everything and above everything and by loving your Son Jesus Christ in each and every brother and sister, we may taste the joy of perfect love. Amen".

*Let nothing disturb you,  
let nothing frighten you,  
all things pass away,  
God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things,  
he who has God  
lacks nothing,  
God alone suffices.*

St. Teresa of Avila

**3 March 2007**

## LAUDS CELEBRATION

*H.E. Mgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo  
ACE Ecclesiastical Assistant*

*Isaiah 1,15-20*

In spite of their sins, the people of Israel feels continually God's nearness to them and his unconditional love. They discover that God, spurred by his passionate love for them, forgives them their sins whenever necessary and re-establishes the alliance broken by their sins. In spite of these manifestations of love on God's part, the people of Israel goes on letting themselves be lured by idols of dust and straw which cannot save them. Thus they renounce to adore the true God and deviate from the way of salvation. However God never stops calling his chosen people through the prophets to acknowledge their sins and leave their sinful ways of doing harm to orphans and widows.

Jesus, the one sent by the Father, started his ministry by inviting everyone to be converted and to change his life because the Kingdom of God was at hand. Some, experiencing the Father's infinite mercy and love in the person of Jesus Christ, repented of their sins and enjoyed God's forgiveness and mercy. "Your sins are forgiven. Go away and from this moment sin no more". Others, thinking that they are upright, were unable to admit their sins and could not enjoy God's love and passionate mercy. Those, who do not accept God in their lives and in their hearts, never admit their sins and thus do not feel the need to be converted. They do not need to ask pardon for anything and to anyone.

Sometimes, this inability to acknowledge ones sins and to realize the repercussions these have on personal and social relationships, is one of

the fundamental problems for the Church and for society today. It is very difficult for today's man to admit that he is a sinner because he does not want to see his interior self in the light of the Lord. He does not want to discover the infinite distance there is between what God expects from us and what we actually do. Many have such a high opinion of themselves and of their abilities that they are always ready to blame others, society and even the Church for anything that goes wrong. They think that by so doing, they can silence their conscience and justify their behaviour, basing everything on "subjectivism and relativism".

Faced with this reality, we should ask ourselves as to how we are actually living. Are we able to admit that we are sinners or do we fall into the same pitfall just like anybody else? One of the things which can help us to acknowledge our sins is that God likes to pardon as we can see from his deeds and words: "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than for ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance".

During Lent, God makes us a special invitation to recognize our sins and to pay attention so that we may not be seduced by present day idols. He appeals to us to let ourselves be guided and judged by the Word of God and to become the new man created according to God's will in justice and true holiness.

Let us put our trust in God's infinite mercy and pray with Psalmist: "Wash me clean from my guilt, Lord, and purify me from my sin. Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong" (*Ps* 50).

Having admitted our sins, full of trust in the Lord, let us pray with the Psalmist: "God does not scorn a broken, contrite heart, but heals it and binds up its wounds" (*Ps* 147).

# CHRISTIANISM, THE WEALTH AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

H.E. Msgr. *Elías Yanes*  
Archbishop of Saragoza

1. “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative, efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it. The contribution which an organised and living Europe can bring to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations... Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in the first place concern these two countries”. These words uttered by Robert Schuman in his famous Declaration of 9<sup>th</sup> May 1950<sup>1</sup>, which will lead to the constitution of the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and later on to the European Economic Community (1957) continue being very actual.

Equally meaningful is Paul-Henri Spaak’s speech at the Chamber of Belgium’s Representatives on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1957: “I believe that there is an

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<sup>1</sup> “La paix mondiale ne saurait être sauvegardée sans des efforts créateurs à la mesure des dangers qui la menacent. La contribution qu’une Europe organisée et vivante peut apporter à la civilisation est indispensable au maintien des relations pacifiques. En se faisant depuis plus de vingt ans le champion d’une Europe unie, la France a toujours eu pour objet essentiel de servir la paix. L’Europe n’a pas été faite, nous avons eu la guerre. L’Europe ne se fera pas d’un coup, ni dans une construction d’ensemble : elle se fera par des réalisations concrètes, créant d’abord une solidarité de fait. Le rassemblement des nations européennes exige que l’opposition séculaire de la France et de l’Allemagne soit éliminée: l’action entreprise doit toucher au premier chef la France et l’Allemagne” (Déclaration de Schuman, 9 May 1950, cf. COMECE Le Devenir de l’Union Européenne et la Responsabilité des Catholiques 9 mai 2005).

historical fact that cannot be denied. This affirmation comes from a man - I repeat it once more - who is neither a catholic nor a believer nor is touched by any vanity. However I cannot help noticing that this civilisation is borne just a short time before Jesus Christ and is based upon something which is essential. Something that, in case we adopt it, contains a number of consequences, namely: this Christian civilisation was made on man's size because it was based upon this essential idea of the respect of the human person"<sup>2</sup>.

2. The European communities were built on the ruins of the Second World War. In the following decades, other countries have been incorporated into them, one wave after another. It should be noticed that some did it after they were freed from dictatorship or after having contributed to the implosion of the sovietic communism. Many of its initiators think that the project of the European Union bears a Christian imprint. They committed themselves with the European project on this basis and had the ambition to bring peace to the European Continent, to overcome the division of Europe and to the welfare its citizens' welfare.

This ambition is deeply rooted in a series of common values, centred around the respect of human dignity. This respect of human dignity served as the basis to improve the protection of man's rights, the constitutional State, solidarity, subsidiarity and democracy. These values correspond to the catholic social doctrine which is based on the human dignity and on the common good as well. As the European integration process evolved, these values and ambitions turned into a constitutional community. These values and ambitions should be specified further within the context of the new challenges

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<sup>2</sup> Paul-Henri Spaak, discours à la Chambre des Représentants, Belgique, 13 mai 1957: *"Je crois qu'il y a un fait historique que nous ne pouvons pas contester, et cette affirmation vient d'un homme, je le répète encore une fois, qui n'est pas catholique, qui n'est même croyant et qui n'en tire d'ailleurs absolument aucun vanité. Mais je ne peux pas ne constater que cette civilisation occidentale est née un peu avant Jésus Christ, en Grèce, qu'elle a été confirmée par l'enseignement du Christ et qu'elle est basée sur quelque chose qui est essentiel, quelque chose qui, si nous l'adoptons, contient en lui-même un nombre incalculable de conséquences. C'est que cette civilisation chrétienne a été faite à la mesure de l'homme parce qu'elle a été faite sur cette idée essentielle du respect de la personne humaine"* (Cf. COMECE: *Des valeurs communes: la source du projet européen*, 24 novembre 2006).

3. No doubt that the European Union represents the longest period of peace between the countries which constitute it. It was a process carried out with democratic methods; it had positive economic consequences which could be never attained without the Union. Yet in the current historical phase, every day we come across new threats to peace and to the peoples' coexistence, mainly from outside Europe. It is enough to think of the current conflicts going on in so many areas of the planet; of international terrorism, of hungry, diseases, lack of schools and of the deep economic and social inequalities which prevail in so many parts of the world. Europe cannot disregard these problems. At the same time it is touched by ethical problems in a worldwide dimension: arms trading, organized crime, narcotraffic, mafias which favour prostitution on international scale and the serious questions about the respect of the human being before his birth; demography and family issues.

The project of a Europe as “unity in diversity”, a Europe which strives for peace, is going on slowly. The European institutions come across many obstacles on their way. The “No” by France and Holland to the project of “Constitution” was an alarm bell. It suggests that the European Union is still very far from its citizens and from their real exigencies. On the other hand it is conditioned by each country's electoral fights, by the local interests which are hard to harmonize with the common interests of the European Continent. Today's European peoples are more and more aware of being seriously conditioned from outside: for example by the economic, demographic, political and military globalization process, by the new emergent great powers such as Brazil, India, China, Russia, Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey. In 2050 China's GNP (Gross National Product) will be the same as USA, and India's GNP the same as Germany, Great Britain and France taken together. In 2005, for the first time, the production of the emergent economies has overcome that of the developed countries<sup>3</sup>.

4. The Church continues to encourage the European Union. On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005, John Paul II said: “As an example, certainly privileged, of a possible peace, we can propose Europe: nations which once were fierce

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<sup>3</sup> Emilio Lamo de Espinosa, Catedrático de Sociología de la UCM, *El futuro que nos arrolla* (The overcoming future), ABC, 6-7-2007.

enemies and fought one against another in deadly wars, are today members of the European Union...”. The Pope John Paul II has dedicated to the theme of Europe thousands of pages which are now collected in big volumes<sup>4</sup>.

Those who went on pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostela on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2002, may still remember John Paul II’s address. After having referred to the religious and civil crisis of today’s Europe, in the highest moment of his intervention, he said: “Therefore, I, John Paul, son of the Polish nation, which always considered itself European by its origins, culture and vital relationships; Slavic among the Latin and Latin among the Slavs. I, successor of Peter in the See of Rome, a See that Christ wanted to establish in Europe and which he loves because of its efforts to spread Christianity throughout the world. I, Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the universal Church, from Santiago, I utter to you, Europe of ages, a cry full of love: *return to and be yourself*. Rediscover your origin. Revive your roots. Relieve those authentic values which made your history glorious and your presence in other continents so beneficial. Rebuild your spiritual unity in a climate of full respect towards other religions and genuine liberties. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Do not boast about your conquests so far as to forget their possible negative consequences. Do not be discouraged if you have lost a bit of your greatness in the world or if you are affected by the present social and cultural crisis. You can still be the guiding light of civilisation and the stimulus of progress for the world. The other continents look at you and also to receive also from you the same reply that Santiago gave to Christ: ‘*Possum. I can*’”.

In the postsynodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (28<sup>th</sup> June 2003), John Paul II wrote: “In her relations with public authorities the Church is not calling for a return to the confessional state. She likewise deplores every type of ideological secularism or hostile separation between civil institutions and religious confessions. For her part, *in keeping with a healthy cooperation between the ecclesial community and the political society, the Catholic Church is convinced that she can make a unique contribution* to the prospect of unification by offering the European

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Prophecy for Europe*, ed. Piemme, Rome 1999.

institutions, in continuity with her tradition and in fidelity to the principles of her social teaching, the engagement of believing communities committed to bringing about the humanization of society on the basis of the Gospel, lived under the sign of hope. From this standpoint, the *presence of Christians*, properly trained and competent, is needed in the various European agencies and institutions, in order to contribute - with respect for the correct dynamics of democracy and through an exchange of proposals - to the shaping of a European social order which is increasingly respectful of every man and woman, and thus in accordance with the common good” (n. 117).

In this Exhortation the Pope gave a special support to the Council of the European Episcopal Conferences and to the Commission of the Bishops of the European Community (n. 118).

5. Benedict XVI succeeded to John Paul II in the See of Rome. In his intellectual and pastoral work, as a theologian and a Bishop, he always bore in his mind the questions about Europe, the European culture’s crisis, the Christian faith in Europe. J. Ratzinger’s reflection for many years focused on criticizing the European culture in respect to the moral values. At the same time he gave answers to the challenges of modernity. In the last ten years he preferred to dialogue with the lay thought, in which the singularity of Christianity stands out as well as a possible encounter of faith and reason. It is an answer coming from the heart of the Christian revelation and from its permanent newness addressed to the heart of the world.

According to CCEE’s Secretary General, Msgr. Aldo Giordano, Benedict XVI, in the light of the search carried out through many centuries, hopes that Europe also today may have the courage to search for the meaning of life, happiness and love; to question itself about sorrow and death; to leave the heaven of eternity open to our countries; to search the secret of coexistence of languages, peoples, cultures and religions present on our earth; to question itself about Europe’s role in relation to the other Continents. Pope Benedict wants to accompany this search, to understand it in depth and to direct the way and the goal. The Pope wants to confirm his brothers in the faith.

In his address to the new Ambassador of Austria at the Holy See, on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006, Benedict XVI said: “It is always a matter of the



identity and spiritual foundations on which the community of peoples and of European States is built. Neither a more or less effective economic union nor a bureaucratic body of norms that regulate coexistence can ever fully satisfy people's expectations for Europe. Rather, the tap-roots of a solid European 'reciprocity', exempt from crises, are embedded in the convictions and common values of the Continent's Christian history and humanistic historical tradition. Without an authentic, common values community it is impossible to build any reliable community of rights, which instead is what people expect"<sup>5</sup>.

The Declaration of Berlin - which is expected on the occasion of the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome on next 25<sup>th</sup> March 2007 - is a favourable opportunity to express not only the values and the ambitions of the European Union but also the religious and humanistic motivations of the European citizenship. Among them the transcendental destiny of the human person holds a special place<sup>6</sup>.

We should consider and keep into account that after the universal Declaration of Human Rights by UNO in 1948, their foundation weakened at a juridical level as well as in the anthropological and philosophical field<sup>7</sup>.

This foundation of human rights needs an untiring reflection upon the dignity of the human person and her essential and specific characteristics. Without this recognition, the respect of the fundamental human rights, of their universality and indivisibility is not possible.

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XVI's *Address* to the new Ambassador of Austria to the Holy See, 18 September 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Encyclical by Pope John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963 n. 45: "When the relations of human society are expressed in terms of rights and duties, men become conscious of spiritual values, understand the meaning and significance of truth, justice, charity, freedom, and become deeply aware that they belong to this world of values. Moreover, when moved by such concerns, they are brought to a better knowledge of the true God who is personal and transcendent".

<sup>7</sup> Elías Yanes Alvarez, *Una cuestión clave: Dios y la dignidad de le personas humana* (A key question: God and the dignity of the human person), 25 January 2007, Page W of Arzobispado de Zaragoza.

This was clearly highlighted by John Paul II in 1999, in his message for the World Peace Day: “The dignity of the human person is a transcendent value, always recognized as such by those who sincerely search for the truth. Indeed, the whole of human history should be interpreted in the light of this certainty. Every person, created in the image and likeness of God (cfr *Gen* 1:26-28) and therefore radically oriented towards the Creator, is constantly in relationship with those possessed of the same dignity. To promote the good of the individual is thus to serve the common good, which is that point where rights and duties converge and reinforce one another. The history of our time has shown in a tragic way the danger which results from forgetting the truth about the human person. Before our eyes we have the results of ideologies such as Marxism, Nazism and Fascism, and also of myths like racial superiority, nationalism and ethnic exclusivism. No less pernicious, though not always as obvious, are the effects of materialistic consumerism, in which the exaltation of the individual and the selfish satisfaction of personal aspirations become the ultimate goal of life” (n. 2).

Human rights, founded on the equal dignity of the human beings, are universal and at the same time indivisible. “Defence of the universality and indivisibility of human rights is essential for the construction of a peaceful society and for the overall development of individuals, peoples and nations. To affirm the universality and indivisibility of rights is not to exclude legitimate cultural and political differences in the exercise of individual rights, provided that in every case the levels set for the whole of humanity by the Universal Declaration are respected” (n. 3).

John Paul II says further: “I would like... to emphasize that no human right is safe if we fail to commit ourselves to safeguarding all of them. When the violation of any fundamental human right is accepted without reaction, all other rights are placed at risk. It is therefore essential that there should be a global approach to the subject of human rights and a serious commitment to defend them. Only when a culture of human rights which respects different traditions becomes an integral part of humanity’s moral patrimony shall we be able to look to the future with serene confidence” (n 12).

Benedict XVI in his message for the World Peace Day 2007, wrote: “Today, however, peace is not only threatened by the conflict between reductive visions of man, in other words, between ideologies. It is also

threatened by *indifference as to what constitutes man's true nature*. Many of our contemporaries actually deny the existence of a specific human nature and thus open the door to the most extravagant interpretations of what essentially constitutes a human being. Here too clarity is necessary: a “weak” vision of the person, which would leave room for every conception, even the most bizarre, only apparently favours peace. In reality, it hinders authentic dialogue and opens the way to authoritarian impositions, ultimately leaving the person defenceless and, as a result, easy prey to oppression and violence. A true and stable peace presupposes respect for human rights. Yet if these rights are grounded on a weak conception of the person, how can they fail to be themselves weakened? Here we can see how profoundly insufficient is *a relativistic conception of the person* when it comes to justifying and defending his rights. The difficulty in this case is clear: rights are proposed as absolute, yet the foundation on which they are supposed to rest is merely relative. Can we wonder if, faced with the ‘inconvenient’ demands posed by one right or another, someone will come along to question it or determine that it should be set aside? Only if they are grounded in the objective requirements of the nature bestowed on man by the Creator, can the rights attributed to him be affirmed without fear of contradiction. It goes without saying, moreover, that human rights imply corresponding duties. In this regard, *Mahatma* Gandhi said wisely: ‘The Ganges of rights flows from the Himalaya of duties’. Clarity over these basic presuppositions is needed if human rights, nowadays constantly under attack, are to be adequately defended. Without such clarity, the expression ‘human rights’ will end up being predicated of quite different subjects: in some cases, the human person marked by permanent dignity and rights that are valid always, everywhere and for everyone, in other cases a person with changing dignity and constantly negotiable rights, with regard to content, time and place” (n. 11-12).

Creation and Redemption are the keys which introduce us to the meaning of our existence on earth. Pope Benedict XVI quotes John Paul II's address at the General Assembly of the United Nations on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1995: We “do not live in a world either irrational or nonsensical (...), there is a moral logic that enlightens human existence and makes dialogue between men and peoples possible”. “The transcendent ‘grammar’ - continues Pope Benedict XVI - that is to say the body of rules for individual action and the reciprocal relationships of persons in

accordance with justice and solidarity, is inscribed on human consciences, in which the wise plan of God is reflected. As I recently had occasion to reaffirm: we believe that at the beginning of everything is the Eternal Word, Reason and not Unreason”<sup>8</sup>. “Finally, I wish to make an urgent appeal to the People of God: let every Christian be committed to tireless peace-making and strenuous defence of the dignity of the human person and his inalienable rights” (n. 16).

6. The Catholic Action, according to Vatican Council II, has as its “immediate aim the Church’s apostolic aim, that is, the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience among them so that they can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into various communities and spheres of life” (AA n. 20). Therefore CA, in this phase of Europe’s history, has a special responsibility which, among other things, requires:

- A) promoting dialogue between faith and culture within the “new evangelisation”. CA should especially the “culture of human rights” in Europe’s present situation and as regards the role that the European Union should play towards the other continents. This involves the necessity to deepen the Christian idea of man to confront with other partial or wrong ideas.
- B) Being present and acting as lay Christians in the political field, to contribute to making citizens aware that a Europe is needed which is politically united, cohering at a social and cultural level, guided by shared principles and by far-reaching projects<sup>9</sup>. A Europe which is founded on values such as human dignity, freedom, solidarity, democracy, people’s substantial equality. A Europe which is able to bring forward new ways to solve today’s problem such as the population aging, the necessary help to the family - society’s fundamental cell - in order to enable it to achieve its irreplaceable vocation and mission in building a more human world. A Europe ready to promote freedom and social justice in the relationships

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<sup>8</sup> *Homily* on Ratisbona plane, 12 September 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Declaration of the XVIII session of the Social Week in France, *La Documentation Catholique*, n.2371, 7 January 2007, pp.35ss.

between North-South, East-West and in front of the new problems rising from the globalization of economy.

In the postsynodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, John Paul II declares: “Saying ‘Europe’ must be equivalent to saying ‘openness’... European history itself demands this: Europe is really not a closed or isolated territory; it has been built by expanding overseas and by meeting other peoples, other cultures, other civilisations. Therefore it needs to be an *open and welcoming Continent*, continuing to develop in the current process of globalization forms of cooperation which are not merely economic but social and cultural as well... It cannot and must not lose interest in the rest of the world... On the contrary, it must remain fully aware of the fact that other countries, other continents, await its bold initiatives, in order to offer to poorer peoples the means for their growth and social organization, and to build a more just and fraternal world. To carry out this mission adequately will demand rethinking international cooperation in terms of a new culture of solidarity... Europe must moreover become an active partner in promoting and implementing a globalization ‘in’ solidarity” (111-112).

Europe is called to work out politics of social promotion especially in favour of the poor. Today’s problems of immigration present now exigencies and opportunities as well. The Encyclical *Deus caritas est* (2005) by Benedict XVI is a good guide.

- C) Europe which respects religious values and is ready to encourage the dialogue between religions. It is therefore necessary to correct the excesses of the radical secularism and to keep in mind Pope Benedict XVI’s reflections: “In the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet the world’s profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, 12 September 2006, at Ratisbona University.

Human reason is more reasonable when it opens itself to the mystery of God-*Logos*, of God-love. Without him the world would have no rational consistency.

“‘Healthy secularism’ implies that the State does not consider religion merely as an individual sentiment that may be confined to the private sphere alone. On the contrary, since religion is also organized in visible structures, as is the case with the Church, it should be recognized as a form of public community presence. This also implies that every religious denomination (provided it is neither in opposition to the moral order nor a threat to public order) be guaranteed the free exercise of the activities of worship - spiritual, cultural, educational and charitable - of the believing community. In the light of these considerations, this is certainly not an expression of secularity, but its degeneration into secularism, hostility to every important political and cultural form of religion; and especially to the presence of any religious symbol in public institutions”<sup>11</sup>.

Today, as Pope Benedict XVI has often proclaimed during his journey to Turkey, dialogue with Islam is especially necessary<sup>12</sup>.

- D) The enlargement of the European Union to 27 member States with the adhesion of Rumania and Bulgaria on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, means that the European Union’s population grows from 456 to 493 millions inhabitants. The presence of Rumania and Bulgaria strengthens the orthodox tradition in the Union. The Christians of the East and the West, with their own respective confessional identity, are our compatriots. As citizens of the Union they have the same rights and the same duties. As citizens of this new Europe, Christians of the East and the West are called to deepen their mutual acquaintance. Thus they can move forward on the ways of the ecumenical understanding, and discover the common responsibilities of all the Christian confessions in the formation of

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<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI, 9 December 2006, Congress of the Union of Italian Catholic jurists.

<sup>12</sup> Speeches by Benedict XVI in Turkey, Cf. *La Documentación Catholique*, n.2371, 7 January 2007.

the new Europe's ethic and spiritual fibre. Such events as the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu (Rumania) in September 2007 are a good opportunity to tighten our links of mutual understanding.

7. To assume our responsibilities in the current stage of Church's and Europe's history, we need to lean especially upon a theological hope. John Paul II says in the postsynodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* 2003, n. 120:

“Europe needs to make a qualitative leap in *becoming conscious of its spiritual heritage*. The impetus for this can only come from hearing anew the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of all Christians to commit themselves to satisfying this hunger and thirst for life. Consequently ‘the Church feels it her duty to repeat vigorously the message of hope entrusted to her by God’ and says again to Europe: ‘*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty Saviour!*’ (Zp 3:17). Her invitation to hope is not based on a utopian ideology; on the contrary, it is the timeless message of salvation proclaimed by Christ (cfr Mk 1:15). With the authority she has received from her Lord, the Church repeats to today's Europe: Europe of the third millennium, *let not your hands grow weak!* (Zp 3:16); do not give in to discouragement, do not resign yourself to ways of thinking and living that have no future because they are not based on the solid certainty of God's Word! (...) Down the centuries you have received the treasure of Christian faith. It has grounded your life as a society on principles drawn from the Gospel, and traces of this are evident in the art, literature, thought and culture of your nations. But this heritage does not belong just to the past; it is a project in the making, to be passed on to future generations, for it has indelibly marked the life of the individuals and peoples who together have forged the continent of Europe. *Do not be afraid! The Gospel is not against you, but for you... Be confident! In the Gospel, which is Jesus, you will find the sure and lasting hope to which you aspire. Be certain! The Gospel of hope does not disappoint!* (121).

God will not fail. It is not we who save the Church. It is Jesus Christ who saves his Church through the gift of his Spirit and urges our collaboration.

It is the Holy Virgin, Mother of the Church, who saves her through her incessant intercession, a gift that she receives from Jesus. He, however, is the Saviour. It is he who saves humanity, which is still a slave to so many passions, to sin, error, ignorance... to the “prince of this world”.

Upon today’s humanity, which we belong to, God sheds also his mercy. God loves all men of our time and wants them all to be saved. The Risen Jesus Christ is working already in every man’s mind and heart as well as in the different cultures and forms of organisation. The power of the Risen Christ is stronger than the power of sin and death, stronger than Satan’s power. God will not fail in his plan of salvation,

Christ is in his Church, always, until the end of time. We receive from him the gift of the Holy Spirit constantly. Sometimes the triumph of Christ is the triumph of his martyrs like his triumph on the cross, Jesus has taught us to say every day to God our Father: “*Let your Kingdom come*”.

“*We have come to believe in God’s love*”: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> *Rv* 1,4; 2,7.11.17.29; 3,6.13.22; 14,13; 22,17.

<sup>14</sup> *Rv* 12; 2,26-29; 11,1ss; 21-22.

<sup>15</sup> *Mt* 6,10.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 2006, 1; 1 *Jn* 4,8ss.



**4 March 2006 - Avila**

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

Readings: *Gn 15,5-12; Ph 3,17-4,1; Lk 9,28-36*

## HOMILY

*Contemplating, listening, acting*

H.E. Msgr. Jesús Garcia Burillo  
Bishop of Avila

Dear brothers and sisters,

welcome to you all. You very well know that here you are at home and that Saint Theresa is today happy to welcome you and is pleased to see you here with the Bishop of Avila and his faithful, who, in the depth of their hearts, treasure her memories and her spirit. Memories of Saint Theresa many be found in every corner of our city. I pray to the Lord that you may be touched by her faith, her mystic contemplation, her holiness and her apostolic and missionary zeal.

I thank you for asking me to celebrate this Eucharist in the Cathedral which Saint Theresa frequented and where we find the statue of Our Lady of Charity, the same statue in front of which, she consecrated her life to the Lord after having lost her mother at the age of thirteen. Today, in this Cathedral, you too can consecrate your apostolic life to the Lord that you may be “children of light” and “witnesses of light in the world”. You can also renew your commitment to transform society and to imbue

it with the spirit of the Gospel. This is how Saint Theresa, years after, formulated her consecration: “I am yours, I was born for you, do with me as you please”. This could also be your formula of commitment to the Lord following the spirit of our Saint.

During this period of Lent, the Holy Father invites us to “contemplate about those who have passed away”. Together with Mary and John we are invited to contemplate Christ as he lies dead on the cross, an image of suffering due to his death but at the same time an image of perfect love. It is God’s love, the *agape*-love and the *eros*-love which made Christ give his life for us even unto death. Contemplating the crucified Christ, in all his suffering, we discover the great love with which he has saved and redeemed us.

This Eucharistic Celebration is another invitation to contemplate Christ in his glory even though it reminds us of the Lord’s Passion: “the Son of man has to suffer much and he will be condemned by the elders, the High Priests and the Scribes, he will be condemned to death but the third day he will rise”. This is the suffering which the death of Christ brought about and his disciples cannot expect anything better.

Consequently, today we are being invited by Christ himself to accompany the apostles Peter, James and John to contemplate the “glory” and the “departure of Christ from this world”, that is to penetrate into the revelation of his resurrection and of his death. This moment corresponds to the first step in our CA apostolic pedagogy: “see”. In fact today, Christ reveals himself to us in his glory. This is what he does in front of his privileged disciples, chosen to penetrate deeply the mystery of the glorified Christ who has however to pass through suffering.

Today we too contemplate the transfigured face of Christ. We feel dazzled by Christ’s resplendent clothes on Mount Tabor and with all the splendour of the Resurrection of Christ which we will be celebrating within a few weeks and up to the end of times. Even the description of the vision seen by the apostles, given in today’s reading, already has an eschatological aspect: we are called to happiness and to eternal life.

To be able to contemplate the glory we must stay awake. The apostles could see it because they were well awake. They had not gone to sleep as yet, but “in the vigil” (*gregoresantes*, says the Greek text) they saw his glory and the two men who stood by him. Had the three chosen apostles

gone to sleep, they would not have been able to contemplate the Glorified Christ.

This morning Christ invites us to remain awake with him. We should keep awake before the mystery of Christ who is visiting us and before the realities of society and of the world in which we live. We must keep our eyes wide open in order to “see” the mystery of our life in depth and the difficult situations related to humanity, justice and particularly to faith which we experience.

Today we are contemplating the suffering and the problems of the world: man, injustice and the effect of a disorganized globalization. We also think about the secularization process which our society is going through and the lethargy of the apostles who have been called to announce the Good News. Sometimes, we feel tired and helpless in our mission. We find it hard to spread the Spirit of the Gospel and to fascinate young and adult people with Christ’s teaching. There is a lack of vocations both in the field of lay apostolate as well as in vocations for the priesthood and for religious life.

This morning, Christ is inviting us to contemplate his glory in order to get a glimpse of the glory which awaits us and which we can enjoy even now. This visit to Avila, this Eucharistic Celebration, our contemplation of the white host, which has the same colour as the white, resplendent clothes of Christ on Mount Tabor, sustain us in our “hard task to spread the Gospel”, as Saint Paul says. If we do not keep wide awake, Christ cannot reveal his glory to us. We will not be able to see clearly the ways we should follow in our apostolic mission when trying to enlighten those who are living “in this world of darkness and death”.

Saint Theresa, who lived in the places you are visiting today, often contemplated “the sacred humanity of Christ”. This “sacred humanity” is nothing else but the vision of the Risen Christ present in his humanity in her visions and in her frequent and mystic relations with the Lord. Theresa got all the immeasurable strength to carry out her apostolate and to overcome the difficulties she came across, through her contemplation of the passion and resurrection of Christ. Her difficulties were not in fact smaller than ours.

Teofilatto, an orthodox theologian, comments thus about the dialogue among the three figures: “Maybe Moses said: You will be the one whose

passion was represented in my sacrifice of the lamb and in our paschal celebration. Elijah could have declared: "I have anticipated your resurrection when I brought the widow's son back to life". Death and Resurrection is the message which Christ gave to his disciples on Mount Tabor. It is the same message which the Lord is giving us here in Avila.

Following CA's pedagogical process, the voice of the Father calls us to "listen". He uses the very same verb: "listen to him". He invites us to listen to Christ, transformed in his glory, Christ, who announces his passion, his death and his resurrection. Listen to him, he is "my Chosen One".

"Chosen" is the title by which Luke, in his Gospel, describes Christ. Jesus is chosen by the Father to enter into history and to share our life so as to lead us to our salvation, something we could not attain in any other way. He was chosen to suffer and to save us. Together with the "Chosen One" we too have been chosen to carry out a particular form of apostolate within the Church.

Today we feel that we are among the apostles who were chosen. It is a call to listen to the Father who has revealed the intimacy of his Son to us. Our experience will not be very different from his: we have been chosen to suffer with him and to be glorified with him.

All of us Christians, and CA members in a special way, are called to listen attentively and intelligently to the Word of God. We should sustain our relation with Jesus Christ so that we may be adult Christians, well prepared and committed in our apostolic work. This relationship also promotes associated lay apostolate within the particular Churches which in their turn help to invigorate life in the parishes. When, as lay people, we listen to the transfigured Christ we cannot but feel co-responsible within the Church and responsible to be evangelizers and missionaries in the different spheres of society. This is the third stage in CA's apostolic methodology: "act".

To conclude, let us entrust your apostolic efforts to the Lord and rejoice when we contemplate the glorious face of Christ. While we celebrate this Eucharist, wherein we are privileged to be in the real presence of Christ, let us be in communion together and enjoy the

comfort, consolation and confirmation which the Lord gives us in our apostolate. Let us pray especially for CA and for the universal Church; for our Bishops, for your particular Churches and for the Holy Father.

May the presence of Jesus Christ be our support in all our apostolic endeavours and may it be the source of communion amongst us all.

*They should begin well by making  
an earnest and most determined resolve  
not to halt until they reach their goal,  
whatever may come,  
whatever may happen to them,  
however hard they may have to labour,  
whoever may complain of them,  
whether they reach their goal  
or die on the road  
or have no heart to confront  
the trials which they meet,  
whether the very world  
dissolves before them.*

St. Teresa of Avila,  
VII Way of perfection 21,2

# CHRISTIAN CITIZENS OF TOMORROW'S EUROPE

## FINAL DOCUMENT

### **I. The cultural and spiritual identity of the “old continent”**

1. Christians look at Europe's future with hope because of their faith in Jesus Christ, the only true source of peace.

“World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts which match the perils which threaten it. The contribution which an organized and dynamic Europe can give to civilization is indispensable for the keeping of peaceful relations”. The words pronounced by Robert Schuman in the famous Declaration of the 9 May 1950, which within a year brought about the launching of the European Coal and Steel Community and later on the setting up of the European Economic Community (1957), are still very relevant today. Half a century has passed; we have seen the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the “cold war” and the completion of the process of decolonization. The words of the then French Foreign Minister still call on Europe to stick to its primary and true vocation: “to be an agent of peace”, within its frontiers and on the world's chess-board.

2. The current period in history is clearly different from that which followed the Second World War. Yet, everyday we come across new threats to peace and to the possibility of nations being able to live together. It is enough to think of the current conflicts, of international terrorism, of the political instability in different parts of the world, of hunger, disease, ignorance and of the great socio-economic differences which prevail in so many parts of the world. The concept of “unity in diversity” and of a Europe which strives for peace has not been clearly understood. Even today, the European Union Institutions come across many obstacles to function efficiently. The second time “no” to the Constitution by the French and Dutch electorate has raised an alarm. It indicates that the EU is still very far from its citizens and from their real

aspirations. Today's Europe seems to be lacking a "vision" and runs the risk of distancing itself from the vision of solidarity envisaged by its "founding fathers". Europe is at the mercy of a reinforced spirit of nationalism from within and is affected by the great challenges imposed on it by the economic, demographic, political and military globalization process from outside. This communitarian Europe needs a new impetus which should stem from individual efforts. Individuals need to know themselves and to see their own identity in relation to that of others so as to build an authentic community.

It is not arbitrary that the Church has, on repeated occasions, reaffirmed its trust in the process of political integration, at the same time, pointing out the difficulties and limitations of this process.

3. The words of the late Pope John Paul II, addressed to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005, are an example. "Certainly, an outstanding example of the possibility of peace can be seen in *Europe*: nations which were once fierce enemies locked in deadly wars are now members of the European Union, which, during the past year aimed at further consolidation through the constitutional Treaty of Rome, while at the same time showing an openness to admitting other States willing to accept the requisites for membership". This is a peace which, if one reads between the lines, requires the building of a mature democracy (a reference to the Constitution) and of a "common house" open to new members who share the great values and the same communitarian goals.

Numerous interventions (documents, speeches, exhortations, homilies...) by John Paul II develop the "Europeistic" concept which could already be found in the teachings of Paul VI. The Polish Pope called two synods of European Bishops, one just after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the other on the eve of the new millennium. He was interested in bringing down the "walls" which divided Europe so that East and West, "the two lungs - according to his famous expression - without which Europe cannot even breathe", may be united. Wojtyla travelled far and wide within this continent. During his many journeys, he advocated understanding, dialogue and reciprocal pardon as well as the protection of life, the defence of human rights and of fundamental freedom. He encouraged intercultural and interreligious dialogue. He also identified some "patrons", like Benedict, Cyril and Methodius, St. Catherine of

Siena, Edith Stein and Bridget of Sweden. All of these shared a common spiritual and cultural identity which was rooted in past centuries and was the foundation of the Europe of the future. It is the concept of a Europe united within itself and open to the world, committed to work for peace and in full solidarity with the poorest countries in the world.

## **II. Christians as protagonists. The teachings of the Church**

4. Within this framework, one can understand the sad and repeated appeals for the mention of the Continent's "Christian roots" in the EU Constitution's preamble. "Europe, at the beginning of the third millennium, "Know yourself. Be yourself. Rediscover your origins. Revive your roots". "Down the centuries", John Paul II writes in *Ecclesia in Europa* n.120, "You have received the gift of Christian faith. It has founded your life as a society on principles drawn from the Gospel. Traces of these may be found in the art, literature, thought and culture of your nations. But this heritage does not belong just to the past; it is a project in the making, to be passed on to future generations".

We too would like to put forward our request once more to have this Christian heritage recognised. Together with other traditions, this heritage has moulded the spiritual, social, cultural and religious face of Europe. Besides the recognition of Europe's Christian roots, we would also like to have our religious values and symbols respected and our freedom to worship and to give witness of our faith in public guaranteed.

Christians are called upon to be active agents in this project which aims at rebuilding Europe spiritually, culturally, politically and socially. It calls for "the engagement of believing communities to commit themselves to work for the humanization of society by putting the Gospel in practice and presenting it as a sign of hope". "Properly trained and competent Christians are needed in the various European agencies and institutions, so that, while respecting the correct dynamics of democracy and with their proposals, they may be able to contribute towards the building of a European social order which respects every man and woman, and which aims at the common good" (*Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 117).

5. Benedict XVI's frequent reminders aim in the same direction. He has already spoken about Europe in quite a number of his interventions. Even European ecclesial organisms, *in primis* CCEE (European



Episcopal Conference Council) as well as the COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community) have spoken about this.

Benedict XVI affirmed this when he said “Neither a more or less effective economic union nor a bureaucratic body of norms that regulate coexistence can ever fully satisfy people’s expectations for Europe. Rather, the tap-roots of a solid European ‘reciprocity’, exempt from crises, are embedded in the convictions and common values of the Continent’s Christian history and humanist historical tradition. Without authentic common community values it is impossible to build any reliable community of rights, which instead, is what people expect” (*Address to the Ambassador of Austria to the Holy See*, 18 September 2006)

A document which deserves special mention when we speak about Christians as builders of tomorrow’s Europe is the COMECE document entitled “*The future of the European Union and Catholics’ responsibility*” ([www.comece.org](http://www.comece.org)). On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, in order to show that they are conscious of the fact that “the European Union needs to be a community built on solid values” (*Common values - the vital source of the European project, 1*), the COMECE Bishops are organizing a Congress with the theme, “Values and perspectives for Europe of the future” (Rome, 23-25 March 2007). Other Catholic Movements and Associations, including our representatives, will attend this meeting. We are all asked to accompany the participants with our prayers.

Another appeal has been launched by the “Christians’ Initiative for Europe” Group. This says: “We affirm that Europe’s reconstruction project should have a wider perspective. It should have a sense of direction and should be relevant. It should aim at reconciling nations so as to create a space for peace, rights, prosperity and solidarity. It should also be open and at the service of the world.” (*Let us rediscover the aim behind the building of Europe*).

### **III. New evangelization: areas of involvement**

6. If these are the situations (not only in the European Union but in the whole of Europe) then Christians should try to be true and effective witnesses. With renewed and courageous commitment they are expected to involve themselves in the “new evangelization” process. Besides using

modern means to re-announce the Gospel, in certain cases, they have to announce the Gospel to those who never had the Gospel announced to them. In a spirit of reconciliation and dialogue, they should be Christian witnesses to men of good will.

In view of this, on the occasion of the IV IFCA European Mediterranean Meeting, we have identified some specific areas wherein we can involve ourselves:

- a) *commitment in cultural spheres.* Today more than ever we need to have “a faith which is friendly with intelligence” (Benedict XVI) and which can dialogue with culture and cultures, through free and calm discussions, and which can be an “authentic contamination” among traditions, customs, knowledges and languages. As Christians, we should go on proposing that undeniable patrimony of the European tradition, which promotes a pro-life culture, renounces racism and all forms of slavery, is against the abuse of minors, of the elderly and of illegal immigrants. We should also promote a culture of the family founded on matrimony as “the sanctuary of life”. John Paul II appealed to Christian families in Europe saying: “Families, be what you are”. In collaboration with other realities and humanitarian associations, we also commit ourselves to promote a culture of solidarity aimed at supporting the poor, the weak, the sick, the disabled and the suffering. Thus, the Christian faith can continue to be “salt and leaven” in everyday life. This will help Europe understand that our Christian heritage is inscribed in its originating “DNA” and is a fundamental part of its present identity.
- b) *Commitment in formative spheres.* This is a must if we want to make citizens aware of the need for a Europe which is politically, socially and culturally united and which is inspired by common values which are based on the fundamental principles of human dignity and the common good and which is ready to undertake projects which aspire high. New ways can only be opened if Europe succeeds to be a workshop of active citizenship and if it succeeds to convince people to work for human dignity, freedom, solidarity, democracy and equality. Europe has to find new ways as to how it can face the pressing demographic problems among which are the progressive aging of its population and immigration. Other challenges include: the promotion of freedom and social

justice; bridging the gap between North and South, East and West of the planet; sustaining dialogue between civilizations and between the great religions and helping concretely poor Countries to develop.

c) *Commitment in ecumenical and interreligious spheres.* “The most important task of the Churches in Europe is the common proclamation of the Gospel, both by word and deed, for the salvation of all” (*Charta Oecumenica*, 2). Christians should look forward towards the experience of the ecumenical assembly which is meeting in Sibiu, 4-7 September 2007. They should open their hearts up to the rich experiences which always result from ecumenical and interreligious dialogues; dialogues which give all the children of Abraham the opportunity to meet. This aspect has lately assumed a special importance with the entry within the EU of Rumania and Bulgaria, two countries with an orthodox majority. Divisions among Christians seem even more heart-breaking at a time, when, even if amidst thousands of difficulties, Europe is working for unity in economic and political spheres. Thus, in this globalized era, when peoples and civilizations are facing constant confrontation, religions should make people understand that it is possible to proceed through life together, respecting each other, listening to one another and showing compassion for one another. It is this, which will, eventually, bring about understanding and hope for the future. We should be continually discerning and listening to the Word of God: “*Church in Europe, enter the new millennium with the Book of the Gospel!...May the Holy Bible continue to be a treasure for the Church and for every Christian: in the attentive study of the Word, we find sustenance and strength to carry out our mission day by day*” (*Ecclesia in Europa*, 65).

All Catholic Action Associations, reunited in IFCA, thank the Lord for the gift of this meeting and for having, once again, deigned to work his wonders amongst them. They commit themselves to put these proposals into practice in their respective historical identities and realities.

Madrid, 3 March 2007

# IV European-Mediterranean Continental Meeting

Madrid, 1-4 March 2007

## WHERE IS EUROPE GOING? CHRISTIANS THE WEALTH AND HOPE OF THE FUTURE

### PROGRAMME

#### Thursday 1 March

Morning - Arrival of the participants

- 16.00 - Opening Prayers  
H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo, ACE Assistant
- 16.30 - Presentation of the meeting and participants  
IFCA Secretariat
- 17.00 - Welcome and presentation of the Spanish CA  
within the country's and the Church's context  
ACE General Council
- 18.00 - *Santiago's influence on Europe's life, culture and faith*  
H.E. Msgr. Julián Barrio Barrio,  
Archbishop of Santiago di Compostela  
President of the Episcopal Commission for Lay Apostolate  
(CEAS)
- 19.00 - Eucharistic Celebration in San Francisco El Grande  
Presided over by H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez

## Friday 2 March

- 9.30 - Lauds  
H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Presentation of the day's programme: Lourdes Azorín,  
ACE General Secretary
- 10.00 - *The socio-cultural reality in Europe*  
Carlos M<sup>a</sup> Bru Puron, President of the Spanish Federal Council  
of the European Movement
- 12.00 - *Catholic Action in Europe: challenges and opportunities*  
Paola Bignardi, Coordinator of IFCA Secretariat
- 16.00 - Round Table. Young Christians: apostles and builders  
of the world  
Coordinator Oana Tuduce, CA Rumania
- 17.45 - Workshops
- 19.30 - Eucharistic Celebration  
Presided over by H.E. Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi, IFCA  
Ecclesiastical Assistant and ICA general Assistant
- 21.30 - Exchange of experiences  
Presentation by the CA Associations of IFCA/EU member  
countries and by the observer countries present

## Saturday 3 March

- 9.30 - Lauds  
H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Presentation of the day's programme: Emilio Inzaurraga  
CA Argentina
- 10.00 - *Where is Europe going? Christianity, the treasure and hope  
of the future*  
H.E. Msgr. Elías Yanes, Archbishop Emeritus of Saragoza
- 11.30 - Time for personal reflection or in small groups
- 12.00 - Discussion

- 13.00 - Eucharistic Celebration  
Presided over by H.E. Mgr. Elías Yanes
- 16.00 - Preparation of the Final Document  
Coordinator Luigi Alici, National President of the Italian CA  
Discussion and approval
- 18.00 - Proposal of work by CA in Europe and in the world
- workshops
  - plenary session
- Coordinated by IFCA Secretariat
- 20.00 - Vespers. CA, School of Sanctity
- 22.00 - Social evening

### **Sunday 4 March**

- 07.30 - Leaving for Avila

# LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

## **Bulgaria**

Ivanka Genova

## **Holy Land**

Shadi Abu Khadra

## **Italy**

Luigi Alici

S.E. Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi

Rev. Claudio Nora

Simone Esposito

Francesco Miano

Giuseppina De Simone, Armando e Irene Miano

Gianni Di Santo

## **Malta**

Carmen Agius

Ninette Borg Grech

Miriam Cassar

Joyce Pullicino

## **Poland**

Bozena Ulewicz

Halina Szydelko

## **Portugal**

Margarida Contado

## **Rumania**

Codruta Fernea

Anca Lucaci

Mihai Floran

Oana Tuduca

Rev. Felix Roca

**Spain**

Juan Bautista Andrés Vellón  
Virginia Burgos Venero  
Rebeca Heredia Rodrigo  
José Manuel Marhuenda Salazar  
M<sup>a</sup> Gracia Rodríguez Gállego  
M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Ferrandez Espinosa  
Bartolomé Segarra Sanchez  
María del Pino Trejo  
Cavero Araceli  
Lourdes Azorín  
S.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodríguez Martínez  
Rev. José Manuel Agost Segarra

**Switzerland**

Christine Arizanov  
Christel Charles  
Luigi Maffezzoli

**Ukraine - Ukrainian Youth for Christ**

Volodymyr Malchyn  
Vasyl' Urbanovych

**IFCA Secretariat****Argentina**

Emilio Inzaurraga

**Burundi**

Térence Mbonabuca  
Salvador Niciteretse

**Secretariat in Rome**

Maria Grazia Tibaldi  
Maria Laura Naticchioni



+  
 nada te turbe  
 nada te espante  
 todo se pasa  
 Dios no se muda  
 la paciencia  
 todo lo alcanza  
 quien a Dios tiene  
 nada le falta  
 solo Dios basta  
 Teresa de Jesus

**LET NOTHING DISTURB YOU**

Let nothing disturb you,  
 let nothing frighten you,  
 all things pass away,  
 God never changes.  
 Patience obtains all things,  
 he who has God  
 lacks nothing  
 God alone suffices.

*Teresa of Jesus*

Europe, be certain! The Gospel of hope does not disappoint! Throughout the vicissitudes of your history, yesterday and today, it is the light which illumines and directs your way; it is the strength which sustains your trails; it is the prophecy of a new world; it is the sign of a new beginning; it is the invitation to everyone, believers and non-believers alike, to blaze new trails leading to a "Europe of the spirit", in order to make the continent a true "common home" filled with joy of life.

John Paul II  
*Ecclesia in Europa, 121*

**Photo on the cover:**

**The walls of Avila**

by José Manuel Agost Segarra

"When seeing Avila one understands how and from where came to St. Teresa the image of the interior castle".

*Miguel de Unamuno (Bilbao 1864 - Salamanca 1939)*



**International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA)**

I - Via della Conciliazione, 1 - 00193 Rome  
 tel. 0039 06 661321/66132344  
 fax 0039 06 6868755/66132360  
 e.mail: info@fiacifca.org  
 http://www.fiacifca.org