

International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA)

For a fraternal Europe
The contribution of Catholic Action

Sarajevo, September 3rd-7th 2003

DOCUMENTS
Third Continental European Meeting

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PRESENTATION

We present herewith the *DOCUMENTS* concerning the Third Continental Meeting “Europe-Mediterranean”, which was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina from 3rd to 7th September 2003.

The first Continental Meeting in Europe was held in Malta, in 1997, with the theme: “*In dialogue with God, in the Church, with the world and with cultures*”, in the light of *Tertio Millennium Adveniente* and dealt with the common journey with the whole Church towards the Jubilee of 2000.

The second Meeting took place in Iasi Rumania, in 1998, and referred to the Lineamenta in preparation of the Synodal Assembly and trying to answer the Holy Father’s appeal for building a unique Europe “*from Atlantic to Urals*”. Analysis and proposals focused on CA laypeople’s participation and co-responsibility in the Church, on their contribution to dialogue within the Church and between the Churches, and in particular on the communication between Associations and Movements

On the occasion of this Third Meeting in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, reflection and proposals focused on the theme “*For a fraternal Europe. Catholic Action’s contribution*”. The problems which unite East and West of Europe were considered and reflected upon in the light of faith. We are convinced that the future is in our roots, but it also concerns each of us today to contribute to building this future, with courage and creativity.

The participation of the delegations from Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Spain, Israel, Italy, Malta, Moldova Republic and Rumania and of the Secretariat’s members of Italy, Spain and Argentina, allowed us to experience the riches of communion of so many different realities and a strong and intense feeling of the life of the Church in Europe and of the Universal Church.

The moments of reflection and prayer, exchanges and enjoyment, gestures, words, songs, silences, joy of meeting, different languages and constant effort to understand the other’s reality and from this perspective to rethink one’s own reality, wove real threads of friendship. We are sure that these will help and support us in a solid action for building a fraternal Europe.

In this also, as in all the other continental meetings in Africa and America, IFCA fulfilled its service as a place of meeting, reflection and solidarity between the countries. In presenting these *DOCUMENTS* to all countries and especially to those of Europe-Mediterranean, we trust they can help us to live our vocation as CA laypeople in this providential time where God has given us the grace to live.

We lay all our work in Mary’s hands, our Mother, asking her to accompany us in our journey.

SALUTATION

*Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi
ICA's General Assistant
IFCA's Ecclesiastic Assistant*

“Where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18,20).

These words from the Holy Gospel lighten our meeting, give peace and open a large horizon: it is the light of Lord Jesus' presence, it is his Spirit's peace, it is the large and high horizon of God's Kingdom.

We have gathered here in order to work out a pastoral discernment. We all wish it to be careful, ready to help, concrete. We are called to answer the question: which Catholic Action, for which Church, for which Europe?

The answer to this question does not start from nothing: it is at least forty years that the Churches in Europe have been questioning themselves about this and facing this challenge. We should start from the Ecumenical Vatican Council II. We are asked however to “update” further the updating that Pope John had begun for the Church by opening the Vatican Council II.

In a situation which is culturally defined as “post-modern” and “post-christian” with regard to religion, the christian community cannot take faith for granted. On the contrary it is called to announce the Gospel message with a new impulse, with a new language, with new signs “that amaze the people” (EN 11-12).

In this new evangelization CA cannot remain behind the lines. It is asked to renew itself decidedly in order to renew every christian community so deeply that it may actually be “a missionary station” for all people who live, work and spend their time in that territory. In his address to ICA's Assisants last February, the Pope invited every parish-priest “not to be afraid” to open or open again his parish to CA. We know well however that CA cannot be imposed by obedience. CA needs to be a “beautiful and possible CA”, as Paola Bignardi, ICA's President, says: only this can make the Pope's invitation

find a warm support and a sure welcome. Let us therefore help the Pope to make his invitation welcome.

I deeply thank cardinal Vinko Puljic and Msgr. Pero Sudar, Pastors of this particular Church of Vrhbosna Sarajevo and Msgr. Fanjo Komarica, Bishop of Banja Luka and President of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I thank them for supporting IFCA's initiative, which aims to be a sign of friendship and fraternity between the Churches of so many countries in Europe.

I thank all the presents, in particular Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez, Bishop Assistant of the Spanish Catholic Action.

All together, let us thank the Lord for having gathered us here in His name.



WELCOME TO BOSNIA-HERZOGOVINA

The situation of the country and of the diocese of Banja Luka

Msgr. Franjo Komarica

Bishop of Banja Luka

President of the Episcopal Conference

In the name of the members of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina, some of whom are present with us today, I would like to welcome you to our Archdiocese of Vrhbosna and in our state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The general secretary of the European Episcopal Conference Council, Msgr. Aldo Giordano, could not be here with us, so he has asked me to greet you myself even in his name.

I would like to thank you most sincerely for having decided to hold your annual meeting in our midst, here in Sarajevo. I think you will soon realize that your decision has been a very wise one. It is very important for us Catholics, as well as, for believers of other denominations in this particular country in the European continent.

Please allow me to give you a short presentation, a general overview, of our situation. I am sure that during your meeting here, you will be hearing so many things about our situation.

The South-East of the European Continent

In most of this territory one finds the states which are trying to find a new way for their future after the downfall of communism in 1989.

This way is hard and the inhabitants of each of these countries can only follow it with great difficulty.

Europe's efforts to reconstruct this part of Europe radically and satisfactorily to make it welcoming to all its inhabitants, is an outstanding test for the success of the whole of Europe. This south-eastern part of the European continent has often been neglected by Western Europe. Besides, here we find so many national, religious, cultural and civilization-based diversities. All these converge here and sometimes these can create conflict.

The situation is dramatic especially in the ex Yugoslavia territory. Here the new internationally recognized states have come into being. The separation of these states has come about through so many tragedies caused by the war and also as a continuation of the first and the second world wars.

The war among the great powers has taken place on the territory which comprises the countries involved in this war, amongst them Bosnia-Herzegovina. I have been told by representatives of the international community that we have been the polygon whereby they gauged their interests and tested their latest weapons.

On the 13th April 1997 during his visit to Sarajevo, His Holiness Pope John Paul II said: "Europe has been a witness of this tragedy. We should ask ourselves whether Europe has been a responsible witness. We cannot avoid this question. It is important that an answer be given by those responsible in state, political, military, scientific and cultural spheres".

Development of the situation in the dioceses of Banja Luka and Bosnia-Herzegovina

There are four dioceses in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the archdiocese of Sarajevo and the dioceses of Banja Luka, Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkan.

During the last century, the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced three wars as a result of which seven states with different political orientations have been established. Each war has brought about suffering, persecution and the destruction of the country's ecclesial, cultural and material riches. In each war, the Catholic Church has paid an ever increasing high price for its existence and for its faithfulness to the gospel principles. It has thus become a "small flock". Up to now, thanks to its strong spiritual roots, with the help of God and that of catholic brethren in other countries, it has succeeded to survive and to be still present in this territory where it has been established since the sixth century.

As a result of the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the recent war which lasted for four years, between 1991 and 1995, according to some studies which have been made, the Catholic Church has been most badly effected, especially my diocese, Banja-Luka. This has been the case both during the second world war and during the last war. At the end of the war it resulted that: two thirds of the faithful had been expelled, 95% of ecclesiastical buildings destroyed or damaged, six parish priests, and a male and female religious murdered and two thirds of the priests exiled or in hiding.

One must remember that in my diocese there was no armed battle during the war. We have repeatedly appealed to catholics not to make the sufferings, endured by themselves and by others as a result of the war, worse.

Besides, the sufferings, the destruction, the wickedness, the lies and the propaganda have destroyed all the moral principles of the people and have instilled in them hatred, intolerance and revenge. Human dignity has been most brutally crushed. Ordinary and insignificant men have been deprived of their basic and civil human rights and of their total freedom.

The unimportant man has been emarginated and driven to existential desperation. He has been rendered into an object on which the powerful can realize their egoistic interests.

My country has come out of the war with a destroyed state, cultural and social system and confused morally and ethically. This has provided the ideal ground wherein the strongest and the most powerful could dominate, a situation which favours the consolidation of the effects of the war namely: injustice, criminality, anarchy, immorality, abnegation of human rights, disillusion, degradation and drug and alcohol dependence.

As a result of the war, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been divided into two states each with its own government, its own legislation and its own army.

With the "*Peace Agreement of Dayton*", the International Community has brought about the end of the war but real peace has not been established yet. At the State level, the decisive power falls on the one who represents the Presidency - that is Pfady Eschdaun. The Council of Ministers and the state Presidency, made up of three members, plays a role in the administration of the State, which is more symbolic than real. Many criminals are still free and many of them are involved in important political and administrative activities. So many of them are important "sharks" in the economy and still enjoy their profits in the process of the privatization of the common social good.

People in authority in political, economic, cultural, administrative, educational and health spheres still have war aims in view and their objective is not to stop, at all cost, the situations brought about by terrorism, injustices, by ethnic cleansing and by usury. The hesitation, discord and incoherence of the International Community Representatives to carry out the decisions to bring about a change in the political, juridical, social and economic situations are obvious and really terrible. This applies to the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina but above all to that part governed by Bosnian Serbs who have driven away numberless Croatian-Catholics and Bosnian Muslims. The centre of my diocese and two thirds of the parishes under my charge are located in the Serbian Republic zone.

The return of the exiled and the refugees is moving at a very slow pace. Directly or indirectly, state and local authorities, together with the extremists' parties, obstruct the return especially of Catholics.

For example, from the part of my diocese, which forms part of the Serbian Republic territory, 80.000 Catholics have been expelled. Since the end of the war, that is in seven and a half years, only about 2.000 have returned.

From the whole Serbian Republican territory 220.000 catholics have been expelled. Of these only 10.000 have returned. In the same zone the number of Muslims who have returned is twenty times more. Thus the Serbs have returned to the other part of the State - the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The state does not give the repatriated the necessary material help to reconstruct their houses or apartments and all that which helps them to follow a normal life. Our diocesan Caritas, supported by the Caritas in other European countries, especially those in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the United States and other diocesan Caritas help in the construction and the retrieval of dwellings. It also helps people to lead a normal life and to attain their needs through their own work.

About 50% in all the country are jobless. In the Serbian Republic, 60% are out of work. In the same territory, among the Croatian population, 90% are unemployed. It is very difficult for repatriated catholics to find work and to start living a normal life. Very often the procedures to get a pension take more than a year. On average the pension is about seventy Euro. It is very difficult for families with many children to live decently. Embezzlement, corruption, strikes and dissatisfaction are a common occurrence. Very often international help sent to the country ends up in the hands of individuals, national or international, and these are never punished.

The attitude of the Church

Throughout the war and after, we have felt it necessary to help catholics as well as noncatholics, Serbs, Bosnians, believers and nonbelievers in various ways. We have repeatedly preached love, forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance and solidarity.

Through Caritas, for these last ten years, we have given material help to people experiencing difficulties irrespective of their nationality and religious belief. Together we have thus helped to ease tension and discouragement and to reinforce reconciliation and reciprocal trust.

After the war, during the reconstruction period, to start with, we have reconstructed the destroyed or damaged houses of the people who have succeeded to remain here or to return to their native country.

During these years of suffering, we have provided clothes, food, shoes, hygienic stuff and medicines to those who lacked them.

We are still carrying out this work but on a smaller scale because we do not have the possible means to provide help to all those who need it. We can help as far as we succeed in obtaining the things we need from foreign charitable

organizations. We have given out some items without having being asked them, for example: flour, vegetables, windows, doors, furniture, agricultural machines and tools.

Little by little we are succeeding to reconstruct and build ecclesiastical edifices which have been destroyed or damaged: parish houses, churches, chapels and monasteries. Out of 204, we have renovated 55 and 18 of these are under gradual construction.

The Holy Father has told me explicitly that we bishops of Bosnia-Herzegovina must undertake the task to renew the ecclesial institutions, the parishes and the religious communities. The whole Church will support us in this task. We are very grateful to the Holy Father for His constant paternal care and for the help which He gives to Bosnia.

The most precious gift to us catholics in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been His recent visit to the centre of my diocese, Banja Luka, and the beatification of Ivan Merz, who hails from Banja Luka. He has been proclaimed blessed by the Pope and has been put before us as an example to all catholics especially to young people. In His homily the Pope has said: "The name of Ivan Merz means a way of living and of action for a whole generation of catholic young people. It should be so even today!".

The Holy Father continually thinks of us with love. In fact after His visit to Banja Luka, during an audience, on the 26th June, He said: "I pray to God that the people living in this part of the world may, with the help of the international community, resolve all their complex problems". This repeated itself on the 30th July at Castel Gandolfo, in the presence of about a hundred teachers and students from the Banja Luka Lyceum when he said: "Dear Teachers and Students from the Banja Luka Lyceum, I greet you most cordially. Welcome! I treasure in my heart the beautiful memories of my recent pastoral visit to the Diocese of Banja Luka, during which I have proclaimed blessed your great fellow-citizen Ivan Merz, who attended your lyceum for eight years. I entrust you all to his intercession so that he may assist you in choosing authentic human and religious values so that you may be able to build a society based on truth, justice and human dignity. I implore God's blessing on each and every one of you and on your country Bosnia-Herzegovina".

As members of the Catholic Church in this world, which is our native land, we commit ourselves, with the strength of our constructive faith, to contribute towards the building of our society, based on truth, justice and the respect of every man and every nation.

We are grateful to all those who have helped us sincerely in this responsible task. You are definitely among these. And so, sincere thanks to you all.

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SARAJEVO

*Msgr. Pero Sudar
Auxiliary of Sarajevo*

For the last twelve years the Church in Vrhbosna-Sarajevo has been fluctuating between hope and fear. Hope arises from faith. Considering all that the diocese has been through, not just during the last twelve years but throughout the last centuries, its epitaph would have been written long ago were it not for the Divine Will to keep it alive. It is enough to remember that in the course of five centuries the percentage of Catholics in this land has fallen from around 90% to 17%, and that it was halved again in the course of the last war. Nevertheless, we keep asking ourselves the awful question: how long are we going to remain deserving of such protection? How long shall we remain capable of believing in the realities and values without which God himself can neither keep a people alive, nor sustain His Church residing in the people?

As in the case of all the Church in Bosnia-Hertzegovina, following the reconstitution of the ordinary hierarchy 120 years back, the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna has lived through upsetting events, recovering slowly over long periods, and flourishing for short stages. Only a church with deep Christian roots could have survived 400 years of Ottoman persecution, during which it was helped by the strong commitment of the Franciscan fathers, who were born and nourished by the faith of their own people. The two world wars and the difficult post-war periods - particularly the Communist regime - have left the signs of a new martyrdom. Nevertheless, or perhaps even as a result of all this, the Church has remained rich in faith and in the loyalty of its own people. The percentage of Sunday Mass attendance and reception of the sacraments remained very high. In the villages it was almost 100%. Between the two wars, the strength of church associations, amongst which Catholic Action, and the inexhaustible riches of spiritual vocations, up to a few years ago, were proof of the Church's vitality.

The last war, combined with the genocide (or so-called "ethnic cleansing") left disastrous consequences. In 144 parishes, some 690 church buildings were damaged or destroyed entirely. One third of the parish churches (52) were razed to the ground. Only 60 parish centres with parish priests and parishioners were

left! Out of a total 528.000 faithful who declared they were Catholics during the Communist era, only 186.000 were left at the end of the war. In four years of war the Archdiocese had lost 342.600 Catholics. Encouraged by the messages of the Holy Father, this particular Church, together with others in Bosnia-Hertzevovina has done its utmost to resist in the face of wickedness and destruction. Through numerous declarations the Church sought to condemn crime and encourage positive action. Aided by various Churches in Europe through their humanitarian institutions, our church has attempted to give concrete proof of her declarations.

However, the good name attained in the course of the war seems to have been, to a considerable extent lost, and this for various reasons which are still not clear. The political solution, the method adopted by the representatives of the international community for promoting peace, the general intolerance and the bad economic situation have together generated in Catholics a lack of confidence and a fear of the future. Unemployment (40,3%), unpaid workers (9.3%), increasing poverty (56,1% without the necessities of llife, 33,3% of families having to live on € 150 monthly, workers “on waiting list” receiving € 20 monthly, 93% of all citizens convinced that they cannot survive economically in Bosnia-Hertzevovina) and the current situation all point to bad prospects (42,2% fear a further war), thus discouraging refugees from returning and encouraging the young to leave (65% wish to leave Bosnia-Hertzevovina).

Having given these details, I shall explain further reasons why the number of Catholics returning has been so low. Having been away for eight years of war, only 31.921 Catholics have returned to their homes out of a total of 342.600, and these are mainly the aged and the poor. Statistics show that last year there were 2.528 baptisms, almost two-thirds less then the 1991 figure (6.644). Still, the number of priests in the diocese (325) is higher than the 1991 figure (257).

The Church could not, and did not wish to worry overmuch on the unjust political situation, the disencouraging economic conditions and the reluctance of her people to return. Guided by the hope expressed in the Gospel and the extreme courage shown by her priests, 80 parishes are once again officially open. Only four of these do not have priests physically present and have not yet started re-building the Church edifices. All activities are aimed at the survival of the Church - by giving the signs of hope.

All this has been possible thanks to the solidarity shown by the Churches of Europe through the intervention of the Episcopal Conferences, the various Caritas organisations, twinning between our ruined parishes and parishes within

other dioceses of Europe, and also the help of various diocesan and parish groups of Catholic Action. We are grateful to all who have been and are still keeping close to us in this ongoing commitment to survive as a Church and as a people, while lending a hand to others.

During these last decades the Western countries have been talking very enthusiastically about coexistence, ecumenism and dialogue. At times it would seem that they forget that only the living can coexist, and that only those who are well rooted in their own identity can give their contribution to ecumenism and dialogue - a very necessary contribution - between different beliefs. Although our Church cannot but be alarmed on account of her past experiences, she wishes to be truly ecumenical and open to dialogue. However, to do this she has to survive in the first place. And this will only be possible if her members can enjoy a dignified existence within their religious, national, and cultural identity in Bosnia-Hertzevovina.

My advice is that, in the case of our country, the priority should not rest on how to help Catholics who have been forced to leave, but rather how to assist those who still remain and help them to stay here. The influences of politics - both that of the international community who do not understand the situation, and our internal politicians who do not want to understand - is far from encouraging. This underlines the importance of the signals which our Church is trying to put forward, with the help and encouragement of the universal Church. Our presence in this Land with such a delicate situation will not be possible without the help of the universal Church in general, and of the European Church in particular!

It is in this light that I see this European meeting of IFCA in Sarajevo. And I extend my thanks to those who have desired it and brought it about! Thanks for your kind attention and your presence amongst us!

THE DIOCESE OF MOSTAR-DUVNO AND THAT OF TREBINJE-MRKAN

*Fr. Zejko Majic
Buna - Mostar*

As delegate of his Excellency the Bishop Ratko Peric, I convey to you his greetings and prayers for the success of this meeting.

My task today is to present you with a brief presentation about the situation of the Church in Herzegovina.

1. - A brief history

According to Canonical Law, the Church in Herzegovina is divided into two dioceses: the diocese of Mostar-Duvno, and that of Trebinje-Mrkan. In actual fact, in order to ensure effective pastoral work, these two dioceses work together as one diocese (one bishop, one presbytery, one common institution). Even though history shows negative results in both these dioceses, their respective stories are different. For this reason one must consider them separately even in their brief presentation.

1.1. - The diocese of Mostar-Duvno

In the present territory of the diocese of Mostar-Duvno, at the time of Lower Empire, there were two dioceses called after their See: Delminium, Narona and Sarsenterum .

I will speak on Delminium because of its denomination, so I will start with the diocese of Duvno. We must not forget the important role played by the bishops of Makarska, who were influential in the actual territory of the diocese of Mostar-Duvno but also in the greater territory.

In the Lower Middle Ages, as well as during the Ottoman Rule, it was the Bishops of Makarska who worked very hard for Herzegovina. Some of the Bishops who stand out are Kacic, the Franciscans Bartul and Peter, and later on their successors the Franciscans Marijan Lisnjic and the servant of God Nikola Bjankovic.

The diocese of Delminium, on the territory of Duvno, was mentioned in 591 in a letter by Gregory the Great, addressed to Malchus, bishop of that Municipality.

In reality it was there that St Venanzi, the missionary-bishop, was martyred after the second half of the 3rd century. But this is not recorded in any writing before 591.

The diocese of Delminium was suppressed at the beginning of the 7th century. In the first ten years of the 14th century it was re-established by the Popes of Avignone as a defence against the Patarian Church, which was already widespread in all Bosnia and which threatened the Croatian territory. Madija was the first bishop of the re-established diocese, from 1337 to 1345.

Even if the succession of bishops continued up to the 16th century, it is difficult to believe that the greater part of them had never treaded the soil of that diocese they never lived there. Its last bishop was the Franciscan Mihal Jahnn of Praga. He tried to live in the diocese but did not succeed because the diocese was devastated and was almost uninhabited so much so that finally he had to leave it. It was the time of the long and bloody war of Candia (1645-1669) which was most devastating especially for the countries bordering the Turkish-Venician territory.

A new page for the diocese started with the political separation of Herzegovina from the Ottoman Bosnia in the 19th century. In 1844, the Franciscans of Herzegovinian origin, returned to Bosnia and built their first convent in Sioki Brijeg (1846) which was the Centre of the independent mission which later became a Custody in 1852 and later a Province in 1892.

At the same time, an Apostolic Vicariate of Herzegovina (1846) run by the Franciscan Rafo Bausic (1852) who was considered as the founder of the Vicariate in Herzegovina and later of the diocese, was established.

When the Hierarchy of Bosnia Herzegovina was being re-established, the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina was given regular canonical status by Pope Leo XIII in his Bull *Ex hac augusta* of the 5th July 1881. Besides the Archbishopric and the Metropolitan Province of Sarajevo, another two dependent dioceses of Banja Luca and Mostar (diocese Mostar-Duvno) were also founded.

The Franciscan Paskal Buconjic, up to this time Apostolic Vicar, was nominated bishop of the diocese. From then on, five bishops were appointed, one after the other, to occupy the apostolic seat in Mostar (two Franciscans: Paskal Buconjic and Alojzije Mistic, and three diocesans: Peter Cule, Pavao Zanic and Rutko Peric). The number of diocesan priests increased and they carried out pastoral work in this old diocese together with the Franciscans.

1.2. - The diocese of Trebinje

The diocese of Trebinje was called so after the bishopric of Tribunium (Trebinje) which was the capital province of Trebinje. The diocese was mentioned for the first time in the Bull issued by Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024) on the 27th September 1022. In its long existence the diocese had to face many difficulties. Sometimes the difficulties, which arose from different political and social circumstances, seemed to disappear. The decisive time in the life of the diocese of Trebinje was, when the See Tribunia-Travunja, followed by that of Trebinje fell under the rule of Raska. Uros I (1242-1276) between the year 1252 and 1254, expelled the bishop of Trebinje Slavija. Although he was an Orthodox, there was also a political reason behind it. In fact the diocese was put under Dubrovnik, and Uros wanted to free it from the political influence of Dubrovnic.

Bishop Slavija moved to Dubrovnik, while the Episcopal office remained vacant. Pope Martin IV (1285-1285) through the Bull *Ad audientiam nostram* and later his successor Pope Honorius IV (1285-1287) with his Bull *Lecta coram nobis*, empowered the Archbishop of Dubrovnik to nominate and consecrate the bishop of Trebinje until the 18th July 1432. After having given the small island of Molunat, the Dubrovnik Senate assumed this responsibility up to the fall of the Ragusean Republic (of Dubrovnik) in the year 1808. Already before this, in the year 1361, the Ragusean Republic, had already given to the bishop of Trebinje, residing in Dubrovnik, the small island Mrkan, in the vicinity of Dubrovnik, as his future residence so much so that the bishop became known as the Bishop of Mrkan.

The already difficult situation became even worse when the whole of Herzegovina, along with the diocese of Trebinje, fell under the Ottoman rule in the year 1482. At that time, the few faithful left remained not only without bishop but also without priests. This situation lasted for a very long time.

In the year 1622, the Holy See constituted the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (Propaganda Fidei). The diocese of Trebinje, which the Holy See declared as "partibus infidelium" was governed by this Congregation. The attention given by this Congregation towards the preparation of priests and the opening of some Institutes (Loret, Fermo) brought a ray of light to the diocese. There were missionary priests in the diocese but the Bishops did not reside there. However on the instructions of this Congregation, they visited their diocese more frequently.

After the death of bishop Nikola Ferić in 1819, the succession of bishops was interrupted in the diocese of Trebinje. From 1839, the diocese was run by a Vicariate appointed by the Dubrovnik Chapter. In 1839, Pope Gregory XVI, in his Bull *Apostolici nostri munera*, entrusted the running of the diocese of

Dubrovnik to the Bishop of Dubrovnik and this time as Apostolic Administrator.

When Pope Leo XIII, established the regular canonical hierarchy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the diocese of Trebinje became an integral part of this new ecclesiastical province, administrated by the bishop of Dubrovnik as Apostolic Administrator until decreed otherwise.

On the 8th July 1890, the same Pope, entrusted the administration of the diocese to the bishop of Mostar.

2. - The diocese to-day

2.1. - The diocese of Mostar-Duvno

Today, the diocese of Mostar-Duvno, has about 200.000 inhabitants. According to the Canon Law, it is divided into 7 Deaneries and 66 parishes. The diocesan priests, along with the Franciscan fathers, carry out the pastoral work. Because of its past history and of its lack of preparation to accept the canonical dispositions, for over 100 years, an unfortunate situation has prevailed in this diocese, referred to as "The Herzegovina Case". This presents an obstacle to the encouragement and carrying out of pastoral work within the diocese. The diocese does not even have a minor and a major seminary. The function of instructing lay faithful is carried out by the Institute of Theological Studies. Already about 100 catechists have graduated in Theological so that they may be fully prepared to share in the mission of the Church in the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They work as teachers of the catholic religion, as assistants to their pastors and carry out any other pastoral work in the Church and in Society. The See of the diocese is in Mostar.

The city of Mostar is the residential place of two provincial religious communities: the province of the Franciscan Minors, and that of the Franciscan Sisters. In the Diocese, besides the Franciscan Sisters, who are the most numerous, there are another five religious congregations: the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who work in hospitals and other health centres; the Daughters of Charity, who run the kindergarten "St. Joseph" in Mostar; the Sisters Servants of the Child Jesus - SMI, who run the Centre for the handicapped "Sacra Famiglia" in Mostar: the Carmelite Sisters who run a Parish Centre and a kindergarten centre in the Parish of Gabela-Polje and the Sisters of the Precious Blood of Jesus who carry out pastoral work in the parish of Prisoje. Besides the Franciscan fathers, there are no other male religious communities.

2.2. - The diocese of Trebinje- Mrkan

Today in the diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan, there are about 20.000 faithful. It is divided into two deaneries and 15 parishes. Pastoral work is carried out only by diocesan priests. There is no seminary and there are no male religious communities. The female religious do pastoral work in two parishes. These are the Sisters of Charity at Stolac, and the Servants of the Child Jesus at Neum who run a kindergarten centre within their convent. The diocese is administered by the Bishop of Mostar as Apostolic Administrator.

3. - The destruction of the war

The last war has hit the Church in Herzegovina both from the material as well as from the religious point of view. In the two dioceses 106 sacred places have been completely destroyed. The parish of Trebinje-Mrkan has totally disappeared, the other is completely uninhabited and the third one is inaccessible. The three parishes are only sparsely inhabited. In the territory of the diocese of Mostar-Duvno, nine parishes have been totally or partially destroyed and the faithful have been expelled. During the night between the 6th and 7th May 1992, "the heart of the diocese" that is the residence of the Bishop of Mostar was set on fire. Besides precious articles, this housed a well established library containing 50.000 books. At this time of the so called *peace*, the Church is doing its best to restore that which has been destroyed during the war and to resume with a normal pastoral activity in the parishes and in the places hit by the war.

4. - The role and place of the laity in the Church in Herzegovina

History has not favoured much the Church in Herzegovina as it has not allowed space for lay people to involve themselves within it. However, it would be unfair not to mention the many witnesses of their faith during the various difficult periods that is during the occupation, expulsion and dictatorship. I maintain that it is the local Church's obligation to ensure that these martyrs, husbands and wives, remain as shining lights for today's and future generations.

It was only after the establishment of a regular canonical hierarchy that an intensive involvement by the laity in the life of the Church could start. The setting up of different Confraternities within the parochial communities confirm this. However the commitment and existence of these groups

did not last long. In Yugoslavia, in the 20th century, three great wars and above all, recently the communist regime, suffocated every religious commitment both in the Church and in Society. Yugoslavia has been divided into so many different parts. Many witnesses to the faith, simply because they have loved God, the Church, their fellows Croatian countrymen and mankind, were sent to the gallows, where they have ended their lives. The Third Orders of the religious communities, called Lay Orders, have survived in spite of the communist dictatorship. They still carried out their spiritually oriented activities within the Church.

Lately, after the recent “democratic changes” the need for a stronger commitment by the laity has become more evident. In most of the parishes, in the Parochial Pastoral College, and even in others, several committed groups and associations, embracing young people and adults have cropped up. Their aim is to commit themselves actively in the life of the Church and in society. However this move has not taken root deeply as yet and at the local Church’s level, there are no associations and movements of organized lay people recognized by the local Church.

We hope that this international meeting proves to be a favourable occasion for the promotion of new initiatives.

THE PROBLEMS WHICH UNITE US

Experiences from the East

Alexandru Cistelean
Eastern Europe, Rumania

1. - Faith
2. - Culture
3. - History
4. - Hope

1. - Faith

The paradox of all these problems which unite us is that they are the ones which divide us. Each one is ambivalent, has both its constructive and discordant, if not also its destructive side.

Faith unites us, for example, but confession, that is its interpretation, separates us. We have the same root but we have grown up differently.

Even this difference has both its positive and negative side. On one side, it contributes to the spiritual wealth of Europe but on the other it can contribute to tension – and it often does so .

As we can see, God has left space for our free will, for our freedom of choice and action even in this field. The spiritual struggle is no novelty for Europe but up to a certain extent we have reached a situation of dialogue and coexistence.

Dialogue, cooperation and hopefully tolerance towards the other confessions are not lacking even in eastern Europe.

We do not lack either tensions, mistrust or contrasts. The ecclesial/religious developments in the East are more multicoloured than in the West. There is almost no country without this multicoloured situation. Everywhere there is a dominant religion, often super dominant, but there are also those in a minority, religious minorities which can be, at the same time, ethnic minorities. In this

case they are looked upon as "foreigners", with some sense of resentment and with a continuous, even though controlled, xenophobia. The situation is even more serious when the religious minorities ethnically belong to the same nation. Here we have accusations of betrayal and fragmentation of national unity. The concept of monoconfessionalism is still present in our countries even if rethoric has adjusted itself to the exigencies of ecumenism.

It may seem strange that the issue in favour of confessional monolitism comes from the West, where actually there are compact countries from the confessional point of view. Nation=religion is a concept which is still developing, it does not fit in with reality. It is true that in some Eastern countries, for example, the Byzantine Catholic Church has contributed significantly to the birth - as well as to the rebirth - of the respective nations , and in this case the accusation of "betrayal" is considered most unjust. The phenomenon of making someone feel guilty goes on and it adds to the fact that in the postcommunist era, the Byzantine churches continue to have some difficulties in recovering their property. For example, the picture of the centre of the cities in Transilvania, between the two wars: an Orthodox cathedral on one side of the square, a catholic (Latin) cathedral on the other side, a Greek-Catholic one on another and a reformed cathedral which closed the quadrilater was really beautiful. Now this picture is rarely so colourful. God is one, as all believers know, the churches are many. The latter must be ways which lead us to the same port. Just as we have arrived here in Sarajevo.

Definitely if someone tells us that we have taken the wrong way he has to explain to us that we are not in Sarajevo.

It is not only the fact that we adhere to a particular confessional identity which unites or separates us, but also the way of living our faith in our actual daily lives. A good friend of mine used to frequent a bar, which was near to his place, for a coffee, a beer or some cigarettes. He was regularly cheated of some change. He kept going there just for curiosity, to see up to what point this could go on. Besides he had made friends with the lady at the bar as by now they had got to know each other for quite some time. One day he met the lady in church and was amazed by her fervour, devotion and how she prayed in front of all the icons. He thought that he was mistaken, that something had happened and that the lady was "converted". So he went to the bar full of trust. However nothing had changed, the lady's attitude was the same, she cheated him with the same ease. The church was actually on the other side of the road and did not cross the lady's daily life. It is this schizophrenia in religious life which characterizes social life, where corruption is blatant. God is actually enclosed in his church.

ches and his commandments in no way influence daily life. He is a holiday God who very conveniently fits in well on TV together with politicians. And the different confessional groups try to unite themselves in the hope that God may find a place again in daily life.

2. - Culture

Rumanian culture is usually defined as a bridge between East and West. This is probably true and valid also for other Eastern cultures even though on a different level. It is a fact that Rumania has been modernized politically, socially and culturally under the influence of the West.

Since the 18th century it has worked to be westernized. All European political and cultural movements have had a meaningful echo on the Rumanian culture and they have often been decisive. The history of Rumania has been tuned on the European one. But none the less, even today, the eastern influence may still be felt. This mixture makes all the difference in Rumania. It invests in its diversity by investing in the East that which it has taken from the west and in the West that which it has taken from the East. A dialectic of normal and at the same time lively identity is ongoing. The Rumanians define themselves as European but there are outstanding differences in habits, mentality and attitudes.

At the beginning of last century, for example Paymon Poincaré, who later became President of France, at the time a simple lawyer who came to Bucarest to assist at a trial, immediately noticed these differences and before leaving he left us a famous saying, which gives us an accurate definition: "we are here at the gate of the East where everything is taken lightly", meaning that even today, here, the most serious issues are dealt with lightly. Up to a certain extent, this is good, because it reveals a certain sense of humour but otherwise, certainly, it does not show commitment. Often because of this lightness, there is a breach between words and facts, talks and deeds. Enthusiasm in words and scepticism in facts leave a remarkable gap. The problem is whether God is on the side of words or of facts. Someone may tell me that this makes no difference for Him but the story I told you before shows that He is rather on the former side.

Culture means history and projects One is not more important and decisive than the other. The Eastern cultural project is ambiguous: the regaining of identity, roots, and differences on one side, and tuning in to the West on the other. They are like two communicating vessels. Only today as a result of glo-

balization , which is also cultural, the first tendency tends to become more and more dramatic. There is a layer of culture which follows the movement towards uniformity, monotony (the media culture, the consumistic culture etc...) and there are layers which point at the differences: on the one hand the "touristic" culture which wants to enhance local traditions, and on the other hand the "elite" culture which always seeks originality.

But even here that which unites us is rather that which separates us, that which distinguishes us. It is not so much the common media culture which unites us as much as the curiosity to find out differences - the value of differences.

3. - History

For Eastern countries history is like a pendulum. One movement unites us to the history of the rest of Europe, another one separates us. The last before one was communism which separated us from Europe. This last one - we all hope - will unite us to Europe.

But in the East, recent history has left a serious trauma. It is an economical and political difference of mentality which needs to be seen to quickly. During the communist era my village was adopted by a Belgian village. This "Operation Rumanian Villages" was undertaken when the news spread that Ceausescu wanted to destroy the small villages. The Belgians arrived with humanitarian help as soon as they heard about the fall of the regime. It was winter and Rumania did not have good roads. My village does not have them even now. It is difficult to reach it even in summer and you need to know the road well. Yet the Belgians were able to arrive just the same. They brought a photo album and a short illustrated history of their village with them, in order to let my fellow villagers know about their village. I saw that album which had some pictures of the period between the wars. There was no difference then between my village and theirs. They had the same cloths, (holiday ones because they were Sunday photos), the same men's boots, the same white shirts, the same black vests and the same straw hats. Even as regards women, they were not so differently dressed, maybe different colours. The farm was almost identical: on one side the house, with the stables on the opposite side. The hens were in the same place, and even the dung. Even the roads were just like ours, impracticable, they depended on the weather. We could then say that it was one Europe. But now there are drastically two Europes. My village is still as it used to be, the Belgian one as

you all know is all over Europe. In Rumania it can be taken as a holiday place. If there is a beehive, it is only as a decoration, it is a symbol, a memento. But there is no evil without good. If anybody wants to rediscover country life in its authenticity and antiquity, all he has to do is come to my village and not to the Belgian one. If he wants to go back in history, because history makes a difference there, he should definitely come to us.

4. - Hope

It is perhaps the only factor which does not have two sides.

In the East hope is lived mainly as an economical hope. For such a hope one has to wait, one has to have patience. But what kind of patience for people who have lived all their lives in poverty? They have a right to expect urgency because they have to make up for the frustrations they have had all their life. Some can become rich even where they are but not everybody. Presently there is nothing which can be done. Europe can provide the money through work or any other means, even illegal ones. It is only fair that in this case our hope finds the support of the West. In this sense, even hope is problematic. 60% of the youth in Rumania would like to leave the country even if only for a short time. This means that for them hope is elsewhere, not so much in their homeland. This is the hard side of hope: desperation.

That is why the project "Europe" excites so many: because it is a glimpse of wealth. It is also true that it is a hope for justice and rules. Corruption will in fact only be stopped when rules are imposed. Our experience tells us that this will not happen until the rules are made, applied to us and adhered to by us.

But is not this hope a real, unsolvable desperation?

THE PROBLEMS WHICH UNITE US

Experiences from the West

Ilaria Vellani
Western Europe, Italy

I have thought of using the title “Challenges and signs of hope for the Church in Europe” as the Pope has entitled the first paragraph of the first chapter of the post synodal apostolical exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*.

Reading the list of “The problems which unite us” I’ve wondered what my contribution should be since I’m not an expert in any of these topics, from globalization to the process of European integration and from immigration to ecumenism. Then I’ve understood that my contribution could be one of a young, Christian, Catholic, western Europe woman in a Church, the Italian one, which has lived intensively Vatican II, and even though it has hardly continued to accept the Vatican Council’s prophecy in these 40 years, it has accepted to change. So my view is that of a person who simply lives in these times and asks herself questions, worries but also dreams.

Through the *Apocalypse* by St. John, the post synodal exhortation published in June, tries to find out the signs of the times and to read this history of ours; bravely orientates, then, all the reflection through the category of hope.

So hope becomes also for us the unavoidable key to look at this time.

As European Christians, because of our hope, we have an added responsibility. Cardinal Kasper during one of the meetings held in July 2002 concluded his speech recalling the responsibility which Christians in Europe have. “Today hope is very rare. We suffer from a terrible lack of ideas which can imbue us with enthusiasm. The announcement of hope which results from faith is the most important contribution the Church can offer to the future of Europe. Without hope nobody can live: no individual no nation and not even Europe. This is the challenge and the mission of Christians today”.

Assuming this attitude of hope means first of all to succeed in transforming these “problems which unite us” into “challenges”, areas where our responsibility has to play a very important part. If we can face them with hope then our

times will really be fruitful times, times when we can come out with positive dynamics, evangelic virtues in the society; then it will really be a time where Europe can become prophetic and in this way be at the service of the whole world of women and men.

From problems to challenges: this is the first step which according to me has to be taken and which has to be undertaken by all women and men of our times.

I would like to trace some aspects of hope which interlink “the challenges which unite us”. These challenges do not concern only the ecclesial community, lay people, priests... but they concern us as citizens, as men and women: only if we are able to consider them not as “Church matters” but as occasions for building bridges between social society and the ecclesial community and simply with the people who live around us, we will get the answers not only to emergencies and needs of the present time, but we will lay solid basis for the future.

Globalization

One of the first challenges which have been underlined is that of globalization. I do not want to give a definition of globalization because it is a very wide and debated question which has not yet been solved. Surely globalization is a process in which in fact we are immersed and which touches various spheres: politics, economy and culture. It is not only a process which produces interdependence but is also a process which compels us to open our eyes. The President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, wrote: “Globalization, the increasing interdependence among states and nations make it necessary for Europe to redefine itself and its role in a new world contest. In fact exchanges are becoming more and more global. We are more and more dependent on events and developments which take place in other parts of the world.” So if globalization is a “fact”, it is therefore necessary to understand how we can live within it. The path of hope is suggested in the 1998 Pope’s message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace *“From each and everyone justice proceeds peace for all”*: *the solidarity of globalization*. It can become a fertile soil for alliance, an occasion of grace in which peace and justice for all nations can be built, it appeals to politics and to the choices it works out. We have to resist the temptation of reducing the globalization of solidarity to mere assistance or to almsgiving. It should rather be a commitment for spreading

dynamics which humanize man, society and history. It means working in favour of dignity. Involving ourselves as an ecclesial and civil community in working for a globalization of solidarity means becoming participants and constructors of that civilization of truth and peace wished for by Paul VI, which is an anticipation of the Kingdom.

The means at our disposal are many: firstly Europe - about which I will speak later - we also have the UNO in favour of which we should commit ourselves may be much more than we have done these last years, so that it can be reformed and thus it can operate according to the valid project which it represents.

But not only, in fact during the Iraq war we have seen an unusual phenomenon: the mobilization of the public opinion in Europe against the choices made by governments. This is a sign which has to be read carefully: it has witnessed a transversal convergence of peace themes which throw a hopeful light on the cultural climate prevalent in Europe.

Europe as a potential

In this perspective the reflection on Europe also finds its place. It is truly a great possibility which has presented itself at the moment to form alliances of solidarity, for example between East and West Europe, alliances which can be prophetic as regards the cry of despair which comes from the south of the world. It is a project which, as the Pope says in *Ecclesia in Europa*, "should become active and carry out a globalization in solidarity. Together with this, as a condition for it, a sort of globalization of solidarity and interlinked values of equity, justice and liberty should go with. Europeans should infatigably commit themselves to work for peace within their borders and in the whole world."

It is thus the opportune time for us Europeans and we should try to make the best of it.

Europe is a time and a meeting place of a diversity of cultures.

Europe is a time and a place of dialogue among different religions.

Europe is a time and a place of reconciliation among the different Christian confessions.

And as Christians we should strongly feel our responsibility as regards this time. This responsibility is calling us even with the skills we have at our dispo-

sal. As the Pope says in *Ecclesia in Europa*: “a presence of Christians well prepared and competent in the various European instances and institutions is necessary, in order to give a contribution, in full obedience of the correct democratic dynamisms, and through the confrontation of the proposals, to outline a European ability to live together which respects more and more every man and woman and as such conforms to the common good”.

In this perspective one must also put in a reflection not only as a Church but also as an association. This reflection could be the areas in which we can apply this responsibility, the projects, initiatives, formation meetings and participation at this very important moment to build the future.

Immigration

Immigration is one of those challenges which we look upon very easily as a problem, especially in the west. There is a culture which is not orientated, even by the law concerning the matter, to regard the immigrant as a person to be welcomed; on the contrary very often he is simply considered as a person who “serves”. The perspective which very often goes with the phenomenon of immigration is purely utilitarian. We welcome those immigrants who can contribute to our economy. The immigrant is accepted in so far as he can join the workforce. This mentality is disgraceful.

A Christian should be scandalized by all this in view of the passage in *saint Matthew's Gospel* where Jesus reminds us that in the last judgment those who have welcomed a stranger have welcomed Him. How can we forget the beautiful words in the *Letter to the Hebrews* (13,2,3), which say “remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” Welcoming strangers, which we cannot reduce solely as assistentialism, puts Christians in relation with the mystery of the Kingdom, with the revelation of God in history.

Welcoming, hospitality, pastoral care for Christian immigrants, dialogue with other religions: here are some ways of hope to which we can dedicate our responsibility and where we can work to build fraternity. The subject of this morning's meeting is “the problems which unite us”. The risk is that of stopping only on the first word “the problems”, or the challenges as I have tried to do, and forgetting the rest of the phrase: “unite us”. The clear reading, as far as possible, of reality either helps us to build communion and fraternity or remains something fruitless. So during our discussion we should remember

that the perspective with which we should look at these challenges is that of one who wishes to be with others at this time.

New evangelization

In these last years we are getting aware that Europe is a mission land. It is so because of the high rate of immigration since Europe is sought for landing place. But, above all, it is so because of the increasing shifting away from Christianity due mainly to the advancement of the secularisation process. The situation is complex: on one side Europe requires a first announcement, on the other it needs also a new announcement, a new evangelization, that is a new way of evangelization which knows how to go into a profound dialogue with today's culture. New evangelization: a problem of the "quality" of an announcement able to repropose the good news in convincing terms for the man of today.

It cannot be only a problem of the Catholic Church but it must preoccupy all Christian Churches. It is an itinerary of hope because it entrusts a very important duty to the ecumenical movement which can also benefit from it.

The *Charta Oecumenica* published only two years ago which has been an important move on ecumenical reflection, has not found in these years a diffusion able to grasp its ability to prophecy as regards the unity of Churches. This is an area where we are asked to invest more even as an association, and where we are called to create a mentality and to form the young generations.

Europe can, in this, be truly prophetic for the whole world and it can open unknown ways of announcement. As cardinal Carlo Maria Martini says: "our situation in Europe is once again forward looking. It shows that it is possible to live in a highly technological and sociologically secularized society not only without denying the Christian faith but experimenting its significance in contemporary situations. The new contribution which we are being called to give to the new Churches, which within 15 or 20 years will have to face the same problem, will be the practical prove of the possibility of searching for God even in a secularized society."

The ecumenical perspective is the only one which can help in this need for new evangelization. At the same time the new evangelization can become a significant area for a new impulse to the ecumenical movement, a mutual help among believers in Christ to live their faith today.

These are only some of the ways of hope which can begin from the challenges which history presents to us. I think that the real challenge is essentially a cultural challenge. As the Church, it means that we should sow the seed of a culture which focuses on the dignity of man so that he can reconcile himself with creation and with other men. Affirming the importance of Christian roots in Europe is very important and today for us our being rooted means that we have to decide which changes, which conversions we need to make, which horizons we should share with all men and women.

At Toronto the Pope has entrusted us young people with the task of building a society of peace and love. Building a society means building a sharing culture, that is values, institutions, rules and meanings. But all this cannot come about with violence - even if only a cultural violence - because it would lead us to ideology. It must be a cultural conversion built on peace, welcoming and on dialogue. This cultural conversion is our duty as Christians not only as a responsibility towards Europe but it could also become a gift which we can share with all men. It could go beyond the borders and open ways of planetarian dignity. The mobilization of the European public opinion as regards the Iraq war is a very beautiful sign that dialogue on the big issues which concern the common good is still open and can be built with all men and women. We should create a mentality, operate practices which bring about peace and solidarity.

This is our responsibility today as Christians: to be weavers of fraternity, unity and in dialogue, untireable announcers of hope.

THE FUTURE IS IN OUR ROOTS. The novelty of the Gospel in Europe in the third millennium

p. Ghislain Lafont osb

“United in its diversity, Europe offers its people the best chance of pursuing, with due regard for the rights of each individual and in awareness of their responsibilities towards future generations and the Earth, the great venture which makes of it a special area of human hope”. I would like to start my intervention with this passage taken from the *Preamble* of the future European Constitution. This, in fact, places European unity in a wider perspective of *hope* for the history of the world and of its people. It foresees an endless future, a great coming, where all the values, referred to before (para 2 to 4) will be feasible and will acquire their full meaning: human rights, progress, peace, justice, solidarity...The ideal present time whose characteristics have been given above is written in an absolute Coming, which one cannot describe precisely but which is definitely an essential part of the European project. This “hope” guarantees the development of this “great venture” in our present times.

I would like to start our reflection precisely from this point. In fact, when we read the text, our Christian faith reminds us of Christ’s first message: “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand; repent and believe the gospel”. (Mk 1,15) The “human hope” referred to in the Preamble is the Kingdom of God, its coming and its nearness to us even if this is not evident to all men and if it is still incomprehensible to us. Even if this is not so obvious to most of us and might sound a bit mysterious, it is still a fact. I believe that, to start with, we should try to find out what this conviction means to us and what we could do to keep it constantly in mind. Following this, we should consider the fact that the Europe wherein we live today, is part of a world defined as “modern” sometimes even “post-modern”. This is the Europe where we have to work for the Kingdom of God. If we want to imbue our Europe with the light of the Gospel, we cannot ignore or turn down all that which is modern and take a negative attitude. We should convince ourselves that this is a situation of which God and ourselves should take advantage. This helps us to assume a positive attitude.

With discernment, we should commit ourselves to work for the construction of Europe and ensure that it is truly human. Our reflections will finally lead us to identify some important attitudes which should help us in our undertakings. These are reconciliation, dialogue and the Beatitudes.

1. - The Kingdom of God in the future and within us

Waiting for the Kingdom

The quotation from St. Mark, which I have just referred to, is addressed to us as Christians. Before undertaking the European project, our first duty is to understand what this passage actually means to us and we should try to make it an important point of reference in our lives. We can then be in a position to be witnesses to it. There is in fact a paradox in our way of life. Our times, the times of the planet and of each one of us, only make sense in relation to the future of the Kingdom. On the other hand, this future does not follow our present time automatically in the same way as the seasons follow one another. It is God Himself and only He who can bring about the Kingdom and only He knows when. “We do not have here a stable city” we find in the *Letter to the Hebrews* (13,14). However, filled with hope for the “heavenly homeland” (13,14), we can work down here to have a just world. It is important to understand this message clearly and to let it echo in our hearts so that each and every concrete activity in Europe proves to be really a step forward in the history of salvation started at Creation.

Meditating and living the Kingdom

Because of this, our efforts should be guided by three factors, which are purely spiritual: the Eucharistic celebration, familiarization with the Bible and listening to the Holy Spirit. Firstly there is the Eucharist which represents God’s salvation, which, as we know is our ultimate aim. In it, in fact, we remember the Death and Resurrection of Christ and express our hope in His Return. We offer ourselves, together with the Church and the world, in a spiritual sacrifice to God. In Holy Communion, together we become the Body of Christ and also find in Jesus the perfect fulfilment of the fundamental Law of the Kingdom which is giving our own lives for one another. We thus see that our hope for the Kingdom is not something which is unattainable, abstract and detached from our social and political actions. The Eucharist strengthens our hope, our intelligence and our will.

This nearness of the Eucharist and to the Eucharist leads us to the second factor which is another great help in our quest for the Kingdom. I am referring here to the reading and meditation of the Bible which, these last few years has regained importance. I am here referring to the *lectio divina*. Our sacramental life is in fact intensified by our familiarization with the Bible, which can be fostered through regular private reading of the Bible or through participation in Bible study groups. From our own experience we know that we gradually become what we read. If we read the same newspaper everyday, we end up by making ours its way of looking at events, its “ ideology” and its “tendencies”. If in the presentation about my country, I often refer to the same author, I will be passing on to you his sensitivity, his outlook on life, his questions, his doubts and his expectations. In the same way, our habitual reading of the Bible, especially the Gospel, leads us, without our knowing, to think and feel in a Christian way. It refreshes our mentality and we start communicating to others what St Paul calls “God’s wisdom ” (*1Cor 2,7*).

Lastly, the Eucharist and the reading of the Bible will only bear fruit through the Spirit which the Risen Christ sent on His Church and diffused in the world. Our invocation to the Holy Spirit, in the silence of prayer, opens us to the intimate revelation of God. Imbued with the Spirit and with God’s wisdom, we acquire a certain human and divine sensitivity which influences our assessment of events and our decisions. When faced with difficulties and problems, the man who habitually invokes the Holy Spirit, finally always contributes positively towards the coming of the Kingdom.

We will thus be giving our constructive and creative share in the construction of Europe if we consider this as a step in the coming of the Kingdom. This way of looking at events will arouse in us a greater desire to give our share! We know in fact that this project is part of God’s plan and on our part we should put all our human efforts into it. Jesus himself experienced misunderstandings, difficulties and failure when He set out to establish the Kingdom so we cannot expect to go through this experience without encountering human and spiritual struggles and trying moments. However at the end we can expect success.

The construction of Europe: a opportunity to be grasped

This conviction helps us to look at the construction of Europe as a new experience and as an important period in the history of the world. Up to not so long ago, many of the nations we today describe as “European”, tried their best

to guarantee a more or less transitory balance of power and to develop their own defence against the intrusion of others and on the part of the stronger countries a disposition to affirm and enforce their own hegemony. The idea that they could be united among themselves and eventually be united to their neighbouring countries never occurred to them. Today, on the contrary, this is a universally accepted idea. This is therefore a new project which can materialize.

2. - Europe in the modernity

The European project is a project which is being written in our times. It can materialize through a balanced assessment of modernity. We should not be afraid of the present, nor try to go back in history. What we should do is to discern between what to accept, what to carry out and what to discard. Discernment has always been an important exercise throughout history. No particular event in the past can be regarded as ideal and no present one can be seen as catastrophic.

So I would like to make some historical and theoretic references to help us with our discernment.

Guilt and forgiveness

First and foremost we observe that in all men there is something which makes them indifferent to what goes on around them. A historian of civilizations used to say: "Man is an animal with a dirty conscience, inclined to repent and to inflict self punishment". Man is not spontaneously at ease with others, with himself, or with whatever he calls divine. In the history of nations and religions we notice that this attitude provokes a type of traditional behaviour which is both ritual and moral. It makes man feel bound to adhere to a certain behaviour so as not to arouse the anger of the gods, fall into their disgrace and compromise life hereafter. Man does not dare take initiatives in his social, technical and personal life because he is afraid this might displease his ancestors and the gods and thus imperil his salvation. It is difficult for man to distinguish between, politics and economy, and religion and priests. In a society where there are so many fears, political leaders, workers and businessmen are often in conflict among themselves.

In general, people, especially those in the West, have interpreted Christian Revelation almost exclusively from the point of view of sin and pardon, very much in the same way and with the “religious” mentality which I have described. Although there has been some progress in this regard, we have not succeeded in freeing ourselves completely from this idea. It is therefore important to underline the fact that, thanks to Jesus Christ, God is ready to forgive man and to help him repent. By following God’s commandments, man can lead a good life and thus be saved. The Sacraments are the sign of this forgiveness of sins and the anticipated manifestation of the eternal Kingdom. The Church, and in actual fact priests, play a very important part in this regard as they are the ones to teach and to administer the sacraments. It is because of our Redemption that we can talk about our eternal salvation and our present hope. In this perspective, however, we do not attach enough importance to the realities and progress of this earthly life. In the majority of cases, man seems to be unable to leave a positive imprint on this life. Rather he reverts to violence. The Church tries to give a positive contribution and in situations of military and political conflicts, it tries to reconcile those involved. This gives it an indirect authority on all that which is human as it has to intervene quite often because these situations are common due to the fact that sin dominates the world.

The Advent of Modernity

Modernity has come at a time when man has started interesting himself in whatever is human making him forget the question of salvation. We can say that, in the history of the world, a new era has started. The image of heaven proposed by Copernicus has today changed. The same can be said about the image of the earth which has also changed as a result the Great Discoveries which came about at the end of 15th century, beginning of 16th. Forgetting about sin and forgiveness, man has discovered his own ability to understand space and time (science) and to be able to master them (technology, commerce and travel). Man is looking upon the earth as a space to which it is worth dedicating his time and ingenuity. What we today call acceleration of history is nothing but the consequence of the ever increasing speed and the greater control which man is gaining over the earth, thus gaining more autonomy and freedom.

We can understand why when this movement was started in Europe at the time of the Renaissance and after, it provoked political and religious discussions. The impression was that in political spheres, princes did their best to keep men in a state of submission and in religious spheres, this was done by the clergy. At modernity’s initial stage it was in fact felt necessary to redefine

political norms and religious exigencies so that man's humanistic efforts did not make him lose vision of his final destiny. In other words a rethinking of the dual reality of sin and forgiveness was necessary so that these would not present an obstacle to the creation of a different humanity.

Difficulties and successes of modernity

In actual fact, this new political and religious set up is presently being developed. We must say this has its positive and negative aspects. The advent of modernity has renewed an endemic rivalry between Church and State, between princes and bishops particularly the Pope. Technology has brought about bloodier wars but has not been of much help in establishing peace. The development of human skills has resulted in greater social inequalities, and work and money have not been, and are still not being, managed properly. Injustices and violence have increased and these seem to have escalated as man gained more power. Meanwhile man's relations with the supernatural and his preoccupation about his final destiny do not seem to interest man any more. One easily understands why the temptation to give in to desperation is so widespread.

Still, among all these vicissitudes, new values, which are today generally accepted, have appeared. We notice that the Gospel's truths and man's nature entice us to live these values in spite of all difficulties. The vision of this earthly life, shared also by the Church, envisages the establishment of a just democracy which promotes the rights of every individual and the management of an economy which advances the common good which is measured by the access of this common good to the poorest. The final aim and assessment of any development in research and technology should be the common good.

These developments in political, social and cultural spheres should bring about a reform in the church so that that it may be able to reconcile evangelical values and humanity with man's grace and the church's authority. This was the aim behind Vatican II. We have to find a balance between the risk of going back to a religion based on fear and transformed only in appearances, and the idea of abandoning ourselves to an atheist dynamic of uncontrolled progress, even if this is never fully achieved.

What I have been trying to say by these references to modernity is that we cannot work for the coming of the Kingdom of God in Europe if we do not take up this challenge. The supernatural aspect of our faith will be much more credible if it contributes towards the creation of real order in the pre-

sent world and gives sense to today's society. I believe that, this European Project can only materialize if all Christians face this challenge with this perspective in view.

3. - Some Essential attitudes for the building of Europe

We have looked at our contribution towards the building of Europe from the catholic point of view and in the light of the project which God is entrusting to us and in the light of the Law of the Kingdom. We have also seen that the European project is an important episode in the history of modernity. I would now like to highlight three attitudes which can help us to give concrete christian witnessing in the carrying out of this project. These are reconciliation, dialogue and the Beatitudes. Before elaborating on these, I would like to highlight the term I have used: attitudes. It does not mean that these attitudes are to be adopted one after the other in a chronological order. It means that one does not have to wait until full reconciliation is reached in order to move on to dialogue and after having reached a consensus proceed to act. These three attitudes should be adopted concurrently. Even if signs of reconciliation are evident, there is always room for pardoning, asking for pardon or receiving pardon and for fighting against resentment and frustration. Individuals, groups and nations are continually under tension to overcome the antagonism and isolation brought about by events and different points of view. Agreements at times highlight other areas which need to be discussed and about which decisions have to be taken possibly together.

Whatever action is taken, it still remains very difficult to say that work in favour of universal, political, economic and social peace, with all its religious implications, has ever been fully accomplished. This is exactly why I have spoken about attitudes. We need to assess continually our reconciliatory efforts, our dialogue and our actions vis-a-vis the Beatitudes. We should also ensure that we do not drag behind unnecessarily because of the difficulties we encounter.

Reconciliation

When we look at a historical map to try to understand the genesis of Europe, the first word which comes to mind is "reconciliation". Here in Sarajevo, I pronounce this word with hesitation, knowing that this city has been through so much suffering. Europe, with the borders which we provisionally

accept today and which includes all the countries west of Russia and Turkey, is a shattered continent because of the numerous wars and the many deaths it has seen. Many Europeans have sad memories of events which unknowingly fill them with resentment and guilt.

Whether these events are things of the past or quite recent, they are bound to weigh on our consciences as Europeans, especially if pardon has not been negotiated and if prospects of ways of living together have not been found. On the other hand these events also touch our christian consciences and make us turn to the Gospel.

Historic references

1. - Antiquity

Maybe, we should start by going very much back in time. Long ago, the civil world (I could not find a better word for this) did not cover only that which we today call Europe but also all the Mediterranean basin. If we limit ourselves only to the christian Church, this is what we find. The first Fathers of the Church, whom I can think of, are Giustino, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Origine. These came from Syria and Egypt. The first Christian literature which reached us from the West is written in Greek by Clement of Rome, Ippolito of Rome and Irineo of Lyon while the first Fathers who wrote in Latin are African, Tertullian and Ciprian. During the great patristic period (IV and V century) we also come across writers who came from the Mediterranean, Atanasio and Cyril in Egypt, Augustine and Fulgenzio in Africa and in Italy, the Roman Mario Caio Vittorino, the Milanese Ambrogio, Paolino from Nola who came from the south-east of Gallia and Gerome from the Dalmatian coast. We also find the Fathers of Cappadocia, who lived between Costantinople and Cesarea at the far end of the Anatolia territory which is the present Turkey.

This Mediterranean unity started breaking up when the barbaric invasions put the western countries under fire. The Roman Empire of the west fell at the end of the V century and from that time on, a division started growing between the barbaric West during the pagan and Arian period and the East which remained Orthodox. Then in the VIII century we see the rise of Islam, which progressively took over and dominated the Western Empire and spread as far as the regions which we today consider as European - such as Bosnia Hersegovina. One could say that Europe comprises those territories and nations which, on the one hand did not support the Greek West and fell into

the hands first of the Arabs and then of the Turks, and on the other those which succeeded to resist the Muslim attacks, starting from the victory of Poitiers (732 Carlo Martello) up to that of Vienna (1683 Jean Sobieski). Europe was thus established in the west and hostility grew with the East.

Therefore already at this very early stage in the historic construction of Europe, there was already room for reconciliation, first of all because of the way history had developed and also because of the fact that people were trying to get closer to those from whom they had been separated or even fought against, the Greeks and the Muslims. Reconciliation is the first step in the healing of our historic past. This political reconciliation, nevertheless, means also a religious reconciliation, because the confessional aspect had such a decisive role in pre-modern society that it was very difficult to distinguish between politics and religion. Dialogue between “Greek” and “Latin” Christians and reciprocal and respectful understanding between Christians and Muslims are essential requisites in the building of a true Europe, such that it may include the Near and Middle East, Russia included, and that citizens from these regions are accepted and welcomed in the other countries.

2. - Modern and contemporary Europe

If we look at Europe from this point of view, we see, that in reality, it was already constituted as far back as the XIV century. In fact, its formation started with the coming and development of modernity, which, as I have just said, can be described as the progressive domination of man’s autonomy, autonomy in political spheres, the legitimacy of nationalities, an awaking perception of freedom, conscience and history, and developments in science and technology. These were the bases of the European civilization. There were however ongoing conflicts and reconciliation never lasted for long. The European states, already in existence in the XIV century, France, England, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and Prussia were continually at war among themselves to affirm their political supremacy over one another, to control foreign trade and to set up empires and colonies. So between the XV and the XX century, the European map was continually changing as a result of short-lived treaties for peace. Meanwhile, while these internal conflicts were going on, other continents were developing. Europe’s contribution in this process was on the one hand positive as it helped to bring Christianity and modern humanism to the countries which were being colonized, but, at the same time, there was also a negative side to it, because this was being done in the political and economic interest of the rival European countries without respecting the autonomy of

the conquered nations. Even in these cases, there is room for reconciliation for what happened in the past. This has to come after an assessment of the actual situations followed by agreements aimed at creating a better future.

3. - Religious confessions

From the religious point of view, European countries were at first united around the catholic religion. I think here we should try to find out why this was so. This was mainly due to the active role of the Popes as defenders of the Italian nation against the pagan and Arian invaders after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the political victories by catholic princes like Clodoveo, Pipino the Short and Charles the Great and the development of catholic monasticism and the Gregorian reform which unified Christianity from the XI to the XIII century. This catholic unity started disintegrating gradually exactly at the time when modern Europe was being set up. The development of nationalism clashed with the pope's leadership which failed to divert itself to a purely religious position.

A balance between the Franciscan spirituality, the various types of evangelisms and an affirmation of a papacy in which the religious, political and financial supremacy were all excessively intermingled was never found. States and civil society on their part found great difficulty to find an effective social space for any type of faith. After all this, in the XVI century, we find the Protestant Reform on the one side and the breaking up of Catholicism at national levels. So when we speak about faith in Europe, we realize that there is a lot to be done as regards reconciliation. This situation has made us feel the need for ecumenical dialogue.

Three God-sent signs of our times

During the XX century there have been three important signs in which we can see God's hand and which fill us with hope. God is truly with us in the construction of Europe and of the world. The first is the birth and development of an ecumenical movement. This has developed from the conviction that the Gospel cannot be spread in the world if the disciples of Christ are not reconciled among themselves. We know that the way, from the time when this idea started spreading among anglo-saxons just before the first world war to the full reconciliation among all Christian confessions, is very long. However, as we say in one of our liturgical prayers: "that God may accomplish that which He has started in us".

Ecumenism should be part of the normal daily life of each and every one of us and of our communities. It is indispensable for the construction of Europe.

The second fact is the French-German reconciliation which was already evident at the end of the second world war. One may say that this reconciliation offered a “strong base” for treaties to be signed and for the undertaking of achievements which were unimaginable sixty years ago. It is true that Europe is not made up only of Germany and France but we can well imagine what the situation would have been had these two countries persisted in the hostility which they bore for one another for ages.

Finally, there was the Second Vatican Council which came after a very rich and contrasting period in the history of the Church starting from the time of Pope Leo XIII (1878). The Church went through a sort of planned change. It realized that its evangelic life and its mission were asking for a review of its institutions and a re-evaluation of human existence in the personal, social, political and economic dimensions. It opened itself to ecumenical dialogue and assumed an attitude, which could be defined as “full of tenderness”, towards individual souls and towards all men.

These three specific events and many others related to them make us hope for positive solutions even though the world is still afflicted by conflicts which slow down the European movement. We have to trust in God seeing all that He has done and try to build on what man has achieved in the recent past. Instead of nurturing our resentments and resigning ourselves to the diversities which owe their origin to history and culture, we should rather try to find ways of continuing to construct Europe working on what has been achieved by our immediate generations.

It is our duty to do our part to ensure that the aim behind the building of Europe is not to counterbalance the United States, which have become extremely powerful, or Russia, which could become a menace, or the Far East, where we are seeing a movement which could overpower us, or Africa, which we could end up making it collapse under its difficulties instead of helping it to develop its own resources. Past experience in history has taught us that all that which is done to counteract something else never leads to lasting peace.

We should aim at having a strong and peaceful Europe so that it may be a strong element in international relations where no continent tries to dominate the others but all are open to exchange, offering what they have and accepting what they lack. Europe will thus be an important contributor towards the reconciliatory development of the world.

Dialogue

Listening

Today much is being said about dialogue and once we are talking about it, we have in fact started to dialogue. Dialogue is a new and difficult concept which has to be applied at personal, political and even more so at religious level. The instinctive tendency is to assert oneself, present your unquestionable views and expect others to comply. Actually, the first prerequisite as regards dialogue is the word which opens the confession of faith in the Bible: "Listen, Israel". If I assume that my truth is the truth there is no point in my listening to the others, and therefore dialogue is not possible! Dialogue in reality means, people getting together, exchanging views and listening to one another so as to discover the truth together. We dialogue about the past to appreciate its riches and to speak about its wounds in order to arrive at reciprocal pardon. Sharing the views about the present, we discover the truths about which we can agree and on which we can take common action.

Dialogue thus means listening to others, accepting their message genuinely and truly and acknowledging its worth. What is said should be true and plausible and should be passed on with conviction and discretion at the same time. Although one has to be convinced of what he says, he should never try to impose his conviction on others. In other words, dialogue means proposing and observing on the one hand and trusting and agreeing on the other.

Disagreement

To understand this attitude better, it might be useful to consider instances when it is not possible to reach any substantial agreement even on matters considered important. Even in such cases, the exchange of ideas, which should always be carried out with respect and love, is invaluable. Divergences should lead us to reflect more deeply about our personal convictions in order that we may be able to understand our views better, see them in their context and assess them with humility. Sometimes, when faced with other points of view, we have to keep quiet and refrain from passing any comments. A Muslim wise man says: "Nothing is greater than dialogue among people, who, while remaining faithful to their faith and without making any concessions, paradoxically are open to exchange of views in order to arrive at the truth". Even in this case, an agreement on the truth which cannot be put into words is reached.

Agreement and compromise

Nevertheless, except in these extreme cases, dialogue leads to a certain degree of agreement. We notice that the word agreement (accord), which is an intellectual sounding word, is derived from the latin word *cor* which means heart and thus has an affective connotation as well. Agreement means that we find common ground and a plan which is acceptable to all, even if this is not to the satisfaction of all.

Thus with some compromise, joint efforts will be possible. In many languages, compromise has a negative connotation as it indicates that no one is in full agreement or fully satisfied. In reality, the etymological meaning of the word “compromise” is “that which we can promise together”. Surely it is preferable to be and to act with others, even at the cost of a lesser personal and collective satisfaction, than to remain alone.

Dialogue in concrete practice

In this assembly, it is maybe worthwhile to consider the dimensions which agreement and action should reach. It is possible that, in many cases, theoretical agreement and practical compromise are difficult if not impossible to achieve.

The wounds of the past are so deep that reconciliation is still far. Divergencies, especially religious ones, are insurmountable and do not help in the reaching of an agreement between the different groups. Besides, at a certain point, words and initiatives have to wait for action to be taken by political and religious leaders on whom we do not have much influence.

These difficulties leave no other way but to organize meetings for those whom we call the ordinary men. These can talk about their experiences, their environment, their familiar and professional interests and their religion. It is actually at this level that Catholic Action's parochial and diocesan groups should work.

I think that, in reality, true dialogue can take place in a very discreet and unobtrusive way between two or more families, within a village, a small business firm etc. Dialogue on a larger scale, that involving European nations, Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, cannot be realistic if not well planned beforehand, sustained and followed by the modest efforts of each and everyone in his own environment. The ability to listen and accept proposals and statements is an indispensable. It is the only concrete possibility which strengthens our hope.

The Beatitudes

It is therefore important that we contribute towards the construction of a truly modern Europe which does not fall back in science, technology and economy, a Europe where freedom, reconciliation and dialogue prevail. It should be a place where the efforts, the undertakings and the religious faiths of the different nations are acknowledged. In other words there should be space for the sharing of views and no one should be allowed to assert his views in an exclusive way. This is the secret behind communion and the building of a community. The process of uniting or re-uniting cannot come about with self-renunciation. Even at the political and social level, “he who loses his life saves it”. That which one loses at the individual level, be it at the personal, collective, national or religious level, is found at the collective level. The idea should be “we together” rather than building a wall around “oneself”. As we have already said, the first step in this dialogue is reconciliation.

The Gospel can be very helpful to us in achieving this. It proposes the Beatitudes. Besides being looked upon as purely religious and as being the Law of the Kingdom to come and the charter along which the Church could and should live, they are also a complete list of rules outlining a way of life which is universally valid. Many observe the Beatitudes even without knowing it because they observe the law indicated by their hearts. The Beatitudes in fact tell us that happiness cannot be found where we most expect to find it. They base it on poverty, affliction, hunger for justice and persecution and link it with gentleness, purity of heart and commitment towards peace and mercy. At this meeting, I think, we should choose one particular Beatitude, that which is most essential in the construction of a reconciled and dynamic Europe. I would instantly choose the beatitude of meekness: “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the land”. Meekness is in fact a determined and calm struggle against violence. Physical, military, economic and social violence can only be stopped by a determined effort. This effort should also be calm because we cannot expect to stop violence with violence. True strength is mild. We all know this either through personal experience or through the example of meek men and women whom we have come across in our lives. In the Gospel we find that this determined meekness guarantees the possession and inheritance of the land. It is not a possessive dominion but an ownership which puts everything at everybody's disposal. We cannot have a true Europe unless meekness prevails therein.

At the end of my intervention, I must point out that the construction of Europe is nothing but an “occasion” we should take advantage of. If we look at

it from a historic perspective, we notice that it is “a gift from God” which we should take up and work on. It is an “instance” (*kairos*) not only in the history of men but also in the dynamics of salvation which leads towards the Kingdom of God. It is for this reason that I have insisted on two aspects which are both of great importance. Firstly I referred to the meditation on the Kingdom, with the Eucharist and the Bible which mysteriously indicate to us the reality towards which Europe is heading, its real “human hope”.

Then I dealt with the serious and critical acceptance of modernity of which Europe and the world are part. We should resist the temptation of thinking of going back to an ideal period in the history of Europe which never existed. It is the duty of all Europeans to work so as to ensure that modernity, freedom, history, science, technology... become means of developing a true humanism. And among Europeans, we Christians have our proposals to make which, knowingly or unknowingly, many are awaiting.

Lastly we know that, like every great undertaking, the construction of Europe entails a lot. The teachings of the Gospel could be of great help to us because the word “renounce” does not frighten Christians. They are convinced that fear can be overcome with Christ’s help and with the grace of the Holy Spirit. We should renounce old and more recent resentments and work hard for reconciliation in our own little corner. We should renounce to any type of violence by trying to establish the truth and by being always open to listen and to dialogue. The meditation of the Beatitudes is not only the secret of our strength and perseverance but it is also the source of the happiness we experience when we dedicate ourselves to this political and social commitment which leads towards the Kingdom and up to a certain extent makes it present even now.

WHY THE CHURCH NEEDS CATHOLIC ACTION

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Ringrazio gli organizzatori di questo incontro del FIAC per avermi invitato a condividere con voi tutti le gioie e le speranze dell'Azione Cattolica e insieme le inquietudini per la sua attività evangelizzatrice nel futuro.

La missione della Chiesa e dell'AC è evangelizzare. La Chiesa nasce per evangelizzare. Questa è la missione che il Signore le ha affidato: annunciare la Buona Notizia a tutte le genti. Il Papa Paolo VI dirà che l'evangelizzazione è la missione essenziale della Chiesa e la sua identità più profonda (EN 14). L'AC, come realtà ecclesiale che assume il fine globale della Chiesa, non può avere altro fine che l'evangelizzazione.

Come ben sappiamo, fin dai primi momenti della Chiesa ci sono stati uomini e donne che animati dallo Spirito, hanno collaborato con gli apostoli alla diffusione del Vangelo. È lo stesso Spirito che ha spinto i Papi, a metà del secolo XIX, a incoraggiare e sostenere con decisione l'impegno sociale dei cristiani laici in forma associata.

I Vescovi di tutto il mondo, raccogliendo i contributi della riflessione teologica ed ecclesiological degli anni precedenti, danno forte risalto, in diversi documenti del Concilio Vaticano II, alla vocazione e missione del laico cristiano nella Chiesa e nel mondo. Riferendosi all'associazionismo laicale, i padri conciliari dichiarano che tutto l'apostolato secolare è costitutivo dell'apostolato della Chiesa e, in modo speciale, "l'Azione Cattolica" (*ChrD* n. 17b). I movimenti ecclesiali devono conformarsi alle quattro note che definiscono l'identità dell'AC e che devono essere accolte cordialmente tanto dai pastori come dai fedeli (AA 20).

Il Papa Giovanni Paolo II, in diversi documenti ed allocuzioni, ha manifestato la necessità di dare nuovo impulso all'AC per portare a compimento la nuova evangelizzazione. L'anno scorso (26.4.2002) ha detto all'Assemblea nazionale dell'Azione Cattolica Italiana: «La Chiesa non può prescindere dall'Azione Cattolica... La Chiesa ha bisogno dell'Azione Cattolica perché ha bisogno di laici

disposti a dedicare la loro esistenza all'apostolato e a stabilire con la comunità diocesana un vincolo che dia un'impronta profonda alla loro vita e al loro cammino spirituale. Ha bisogno di laici la cui esperienza manifesti, in modo concreto e quotidiano, la grandezza e la gioia della vita cristiana; laici che sappiano vedere nel Battesimo la radice della loro dignità, nella comunità cristiana la propria famiglia con la quale condividere la fede, e nel pastore il padre che guida e sostiene il cammino dei fratelli; laici che non riducano la fede a un fatto privato e non esitino a portare il fermento del Vangelo nella trama stessa delle realtà umane e nelle istituzioni, nel territorio e nei nuovi aeropaghi della globalizzazione, in vista di costruire la civiltà dell'amore».

Riassumendo l'intervento del Papa, potremmo dire che la Chiesa ed il mondo hanno bisogno di un laico adulto nella fede, che viva la comunione ecclesiale mediante il suo inserimento nella diocesi e che sia presente nella società per impregnare le realtà temporali dei valori evangelici.

L'AC continuerà ad essere necessaria per la Chiesa e per il mondo in futuro, se si mantiene fedele alla sua identità, se ascolta la voce del Signore a partire dalle realtà e assume con gioia gli inviti del Papa e dei Vescovi a formare militanti cristiani con le caratteristiche sopramenzionate. Per questo è necessario che l'AC verifichi il suo lavoro apostolico ed evangelizzatore e si impegni in una sincera e costante conversione a Dio, alla Chiesa e alle esigenze della nuova evangelizzazione.

Tenendo conto della realtà sociale, culturale e religiosa del mondo odierno e in sintonia con le indicazioni del Santo Padre, mi provo a segnalare alcuni aspetti che l'AC dovrebbe curare in modo speciale oggi.

1. - Speciale cura della spiritualità e della formazione

La società attuale è profondamente influenzata dal soggettivismo, dal relativismo e dall'indifferenza religiosa. Questi criteri toccano anche i membri della Chiesa per il fatto di essere parte di questa società. Nei prossimi anni soltanto i cristiani con una forte spiritualità e con una solida formazione cristiana, potranno resistere ai criteri della secolarizzazione, dare ragione della loro speranza ed essere testimoni del vangelo di Gesù Cristo.

Questo esige dalla Chiesa di prestare speciale attenzione alla spiritualità e alla formazione di tutti i battezzati, in modo che arrivino a scoprire la loro vocazione e missione nella Chiesa e nel mondo, a partire da una sincera conversione al Vangelo del Regno. Sappiamo tutti che può evangelizzare solo chi è stato a sua volta evangelizzato, può essere testimone di Gesù Cristo solo chi risponde liberamente e consapevolmente all'amore del Padre, manifestato in Cristo, e si impegna incondizionatamente.

Questo suppone amicizia e incontro personale e comunitario con Cristo nella preghiera per conoscerlo e amarlo con tutto il cuore, con tutta l'anima e con tutto se stesso. La santificazione personale il "nuovo ardore missionario" e la coscienza della missione nascono dall'incontro e dall'amicizia personale e comunitaria con Cristo nella preghiera e nella celebrazione dei sacramenti.

L'AC mediante il metodo della revisione di vita, ben utilizzato, e mediante i suoi progetti formativi, rende possibile ai suoi membri l'esperienza dell'incontro con Dio, con la Chiesa e con i fratelli. A partire dall'incontro con Dio è possibile che ogni cristiano consegua progressivamente un modo nuovo di essere, di pensare, di sentire, di vivere e di affrontare la realtà in tutte le circostanze della vita, in conformità ai criteri evangelici. In questo modo, tutta la vita e l'attività del militante cristiano, mediante lo sviluppo di una fede matura, cosciente ed impegnata si convertono in occasione propizia per l'ascolto della Parola, per l'adorazione a Dio e per la diffusione del Regno.

L'AC deve continuare a promuovere la spiritualità e la formazione che hanno dato in tutti i militanti tanti buoni risultati spirituali e apostolici, ma deve offrire e promuovere questi processi formativi nelle diocesi e nelle parrocchie a beneficio di tutto il popolo di Dio.

In futuro, i militanti dei Movimenti di AC dovranno stabilire priorità nella loro azione apostolica e dovranno pensare alla possibilità di sacrificare una parte del loro tempo per dedicarlo alla formazione integrale, all'insegnamento della preghiera e a far vivere le celebrazioni liturgiche ad altri fratelli, anche se non inseriti nei loro movimenti.

Solo in questo modo i battezzati, con una insufficiente formazione cristiana o lontani dalla Chiesa, potranno scoprire le esigenze della loro vocazione battezzata e vivere il loro impegno apostolico.

A mio avviso ci sono oggi due pericoli in relazione alla spiritualità e alla formazione cristiana per la Chiesa e per i Movimenti di AC. Da un lato, in tempo di fretta e di attivismo come quello che viviamo, si può inconsciamente cadere nella tentazione di pensare che siamo noi, con il nostro impegno e attività, a salvare la Chiesa e il mondo, dimenticando che Dio solo può salvare noi tutti. Il Signore non ci chiede che facciamo molte cose, ma che facciamo tutto per amore.

Dall'altro, l'AC può cadere nella tentazione di porre una fiducia illimitata nei suoi progetti, programmi, metodi o idee. Tutto questo dobbiamo curarlo e dargli debita attenzione, ma non dobbiamo dimenticare che sono semplici mezzi per evangelizzare. Per cui se le esigenze dell'evangelizzazione lo richiedono, mezzi e metodi possono e debbono cambiare. Dio solo è l'unico assoluto. È il Signore della storia e pertanto solo in Lui dobbiamo porre la nostra fiducia. Penso ai molti battezzati che si avvicinano oggi alla Chiesa e ai movimenti

apostolici con una formazione insufficiente di contenuti dottrinali. In questo caso il metodo della revisione di vita, anche se ben utilizzato, può non bastare per dare impulso alla loro spiritualità e alla loro formazione. Bisognerà allora cercare il modo di introdurre nei processi formativi quei contenuti dottrinali e morali imprescindibili per vivere l'identità cristiana.

2. - Comunione con i pastori e con tutti gli uomini

Oggi abbiamo di fronte un forte individualismo sociale e religioso a cui si aggiunge, in certi gruppi sociali, una concezione della Chiesa paragonabile a qualsiasi altra istituzione sociale in cui si offrono e si sollecitano determinati servizi religiosi. Molti cristiani non hanno mai fatto una riflessione sulla Chiesa come mistero di comunione missionaria, né hanno scoperto la loro appartenenza ad essa come membri vivi ed attivi.

Nel contemplare questa realtà, il Santo Padre precisa che la costruzione della comunione ecclesiale è una delle grandi sfide per noi cristiani in questo millennio, se vogliamo essere fedeli alla Chiesa ed alla società. Per favorire la comunione, è necessario tener sempre presente che questa è anzitutto dono di Dio alla Chiesa, che esige di essere accolto con cuore libero e generoso.

La contemplazione con gli occhi del cuore dell'amore e dell'unità esistente tra il Padre, il Figlio e lo Spirito Santo, debbono aiutare tutti i cristiani a praticare una spiritualità di comunione e a svilupparla nell'accoglienza cordiale dei fratelli e nella partecipazione responsabile a tutti gli strumenti di comunione ecclesiale (cf *NMI* nn. 43-45).

Inoltre il Vangelo ci ricorda che la comunione con Cristo, mediante il dono dello Spirito, è indispensabile per dare frutti: «Senza di me, non potete fare nulla» (*Gv* 15,5). È il Signore che ci ha scelti e che ci invia in missione fino ai confini della terra per annunciare ad altri il mistero di Dio, aiutandoli a vivere in intima comunione con la Trinità santa. Com'è possibile annunciare agli altri il mistero di Dio, se non lo si conosce e non lo si vive?

I processi formativi dell'AC hanno come obiettivo la formazione umana, spirituale e dottrinale dei cristiani laici, perché non solo stiano nella Chiesa, ma perché si sentano membri vivi di essa. Dall'allontanamento dalla Chiesa consegue anche l'allontanamento da Cristo, al quale si vuole dedicare la vita. Però oltre a questo, l'AC per la sua identità, è chiamata non solo a vivere la più piena e perfetta comunione ecclesiale, ma anche ad essere promotrice e costruttrice di comunione in seno alla comunità cristiana e nella realtà sociale frammentata, divisa e talvolta contrapposta. Ciò suppone, oltre il coordinamento e l'organizzazione di un insieme di attività apostoliche, il vivere una

spiritualità di comunione senza la quale non è possibile risolvere i conflitti che possono sorgere nella convivenza e nelle relazioni ecclesiali.

In futuro l'AC, a partire da un'attitudine al dialogo cordiale e fraterno, deve incrementare la comunione con il ministero pastorale come garante e servitore della comunione ecclesiale e deve coinvolgersi con più decisione nel sollecitare, preparare ed applicare i progetti pastorali diocesani, offrendo la sua esperienza associativa e le sue conoscenze sulle condizioni in cui deve esercitarsi l'azione pastorale della Chiesa (AA 20).

Questa comunione fraterna tra il ministero pastorale e il laicato deve aiutare l'esercizio della corresponsabilità ecclesiale. In questo senso, i Movimenti di AC devono offrire la loro collaborazione nelle parrocchie e nella diocesi perché i cristiani scoprono che il dovere di evangelizzare è responsabilità di tutto il popolo di Dio, come esigenza del sacramento del battesimo. Essi non possono cadere nell'errore di vivere la comunione e la corresponsabilità solo all'interno del proprio movimento, perché questo li rende incapaci al dialogo interreligioso e alla pratica dell'ecumenismo. Inoltre, se si chiudono in se stessi, in futuro avranno difficoltà a scoprire le ricchezze umane e spirituali degli altri movimenti apostolici e a dare valore al lavoro pastorale della parrocchia in cui devono celebrare la fede e nel cui ambito devono attivare la comunione e la corresponsabilità ecclesiale di tutti i suoi membri. L'AC perde la sua ragion d'essere quando cessa di essere stimolo, fermento e servizio a tutto il popolo di Dio.

Per vivere secondo questi criteri ecclesiali, il cristiano laico deve avere piena coscienza che prima di appartenere ad un certo movimento o associazione, è membro della Chiesa universale, che si concretizza nella Chiesa particolare. Quando si fugge dalla parrocchia e si diprezzano i progetti pastorali diocesani, non si nega l'essenza e l'identità della stessa AC?

3. - Presenza evangelizzatrice nel mondo

Durante gli ultimi anni è cresciuta la partecipazione dei cattolici alle attività pastorali intraecclesiali, ma, nonostante gli sforzi fatti, risulta molto difficile dare impulso alla presenza evangelizzatrice dei cristiani nella vita pubblica e nei "nuovi aoropaghi". Molto spesso pratiche religiose vuote di contenuto rendono difficile questa presenza della Chiesa e dei cristiani laici nel tessuto sociale.

Senza dubbio la presenza pubblica della Chiesa è un'esigenza del compito ricevuto dal Signore che la invia al mondo perché stia in esso, senza però farsi contaminare dai criteri mondani. Giovanni Paolo II precisa che i fedeli laici

devono animare evangelicamente l'ordine temporale, a partire dal servizio alle persone e alla società, e che "non possono abdicare alla partecipazione alla politica, alla multiforme e varia attività economica, sociale, legislativa, amministrativa e culturale, destinata a promuovere organicamente e istituzionalmente il bene comune (CFL 42).

La presenza nelle istituzioni sociali è il campo proprio, anche se non esclusivo, in cui i cristiani laici devono santificarsi mediante la pratica attiva del comandamento dell'amore, la partecipazione e l'inserimento nelle realtà terrene, come fermento e lievito nella massa (EN 70); tenendo presente che la grazia di Gesù Cristo Risorto e la forza dello Spirito Santo agiscono costantemente nel mondo e nel cuore degli uomini. L'umanità, anche se lontana da Dio, continua ad essere oggetto del suo amore, perché ogni essere umano è stato creato a sua immagine e somiglianza e perché nel profondo del cuore di ogni persona c'è l'ansia della trascendenza e il desiderio della salvezza di Dio.

D'altra parte, la causa del Regno non può essere estranea alle situazioni disumane che si generano nella convivenza sociale e che reclamano una maggiore giustizia e fraternità fra tutti. Come il Signore così la sua Chiesa deve passare per il mondo facendo il bene e curando le infermità e i dolori degli uomini (Lc 9,1-29). La Chiesa "mentre mira alla salvezza degli uomini, abbraccia anche la restaurazione di tutto l'ordine temporale" (AA 5; CFL 15).

L'AC è esperta in questo impegno nel mondo, specialmente attraverso i suoi movimenti specializzati. I piani di formazione, la lettura della realtà alla luce della fede e gli insegnamenti della dottrina sociale della Chiesa abilitano i cristiani dei movimenti di AC ad impegnarsi progressivamente nella trasformazione delle organizzazioni sociali, culturali, sindacali e politiche, a partire dalla illuminazione della Parola di Dio.

I militanti cristiani di AC, assumendo una vita austera, possono prestare un servizio prezioso nelle parrocchie e nelle diocesi, portando la loro conoscenza dei problemi sociali, di lavoro e politici e coscientizzando la diocesi e la parrocchia alla dimensione sociale della fede e all'impegno con i più poveri, nei quali il Signore si fa specialmente presente (Mt 25).

In futuro l'AC dovrebbe curare in modo speciale nei suoi membri la vicinanza, l'attenzione e l'aiuto agli emarginati dalla società, alle "nuove povertà", come esigenza della nuova evangelizzazione. Non dobbiamo dimenticare che la carità delle opere conferma sempre la carità delle parole.

4. - Vescovi e sacerdoti responsabili dell'AC

Queste esigenze evangeliche proposte all'AC, obbligano i pastori a prestarle speciale attenzione e sostegno, impegnandosi a vigilare sulla spiritualità, la formazione e l'ecclesialità dei suoi membri. Le carenze che talvolta si avvertono nei movimenti di AC, possono essere provocate anche dalla pigrizia, svogliatezza e scoraggiamento dei pastori nell'occuparsi dei suoi membri.

I vescovi e i sacerdoti non devono dimenticare che con l'AC si assume una responsabilità speciale, che dobbiamo esercitare raccomandando di aderire ad essa (*ChrD* 17). Dobbiamo curare specialmente la convocazione e l'accoglienza fraterna dei cristiani delle nostre comunità, perché vivano la fede in forma associata. Dobbiamo essere coscienti che è necessario promuovere tutti i carismi e ministeri nel popolo di Dio, sapendo che la nuova evangelizzazione non sarà possibile se i cristiani laici non assumono responsabilmente la loro vocazione e missione nella Chiesa e nella società.

Tutto ciò esige dai pastori e dai movimenti di AC di favorire attitudini di dialogo, di stima fraterna, di sincera comunione, di corresponsabilità e di lavoro comune. Se è necessario e arricchente per il ministero pastorale il lavoro pastorale a partire dalla vicinanza ai laici, è altrettanto arricchente per questi collaborare apostolicamente con i pastori sotto la loro "superiore" direzione.

5. - Conclusione

Tutti siamo consapevoli della difficoltà attuali per l'annuncio della Buona Notizia e per il rinnovamento spirituale dei Movimenti di AC. Però dovremmo chiederci: quando non ci sono state difficoltà? Se siamo convinti che l'AC è necessaria per la Chiesa e per la stessa società, dobbiamo collaborare con il Signore per renderla possibile. Ma, in questa gioiosa missione, dobbiamo tener presente che né la Chiesa né l'AC cominciano e finiscono con i nostri sforzi personali. Prima di noi arriva sempre Dio mediante il suo Spirito, nel cuore di ogni persona e pertanto ciò che sembra impossibile agli uomini è possibile a Dio. Nonostante le difficoltà, non possiamo perdere la gioia, perché la croce è anch'essa parte della vita degli evangelizzatori, come è stata parte della vita di Gesù Cristo, il primo evangelizzatore. E nemmeno possiamo perdere la pace né la pazienza, perché il futuro ce lo dona Dio, perché è suo e nostro.

THE FEATURES OF CATHOLIC ACTION'S FACE FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
Coordinator of IFCA Secretariat

Let us see which are the features of Catholic Action's face at the beginning of the third millennium.

In order to outline this face, we need to start from the "founding" reality of the Baptism. Through it we are all embodied in the people of God, we are all children of the Father, members of the Church, whose head is Christ.

Through the Baptism we are all called to holiness. This is the common vocation of all christifideles, both priests and laypeople. This common vocation to holiness in us as laypeople shows specific characteristics owing to this divine vocation that we, as laypeople, have to live in the world and from the world aiming at the height of holiness in our life. This is the specific way of our Christian existence and, at the same time, the specific function of our apostolic commitment. The Vatican Council II states this in a very precise way: "Laypeople they ought themselves to take on as their distinctive task the renewal of the temporal order" (AA 7). "It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will" (LG 31).

The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* n. 43 clearly states this ecclesial mission of the laypeople, which, at the same time, is their journey towards holiness: "Christians who shirk their temporal duties, shirk their duties towards their neighbour, neglect God himself, and endanger their eternal salvation".

Aware of the double belonging to the ecclesial and to the civil community, we should live and help each other to live the Church, mystery of missionary communion. We are called to make the Church present in the heart of the world and the world present in the heart of the Church. This existence comes from the Baptism, for all laypeople.

We have answered the Lord's call and have decided to live this lay identity according to our special CA vocation.

So, what is essential for CA? Which are the features of CA's face?

In the Council ecclesiology of communion and mission, CA's identity is defined by the "four notes" of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, to be taken all together: ecclesiality, laity, organicity and cooperation with the Hierarchy (AA 20). These four notes are the wealth of the tradition of CA and of the conciliar experience.

The first note, **ecclesiality**: it is constitutive of CA, since its goal is the same apostolic one of the Church; because it is called to work so that the Church may give witness of its unity in diversity, before the world and may proclaim the Gospel to all men and women with no fear. This apostolic aim of the Church which CA takes on itself is not lived in an abstract way, but becomes a concrete historical and geographic reality in the particular Church, in the diocese. CA is characterized by its fitting in the diocesan pastoral action.

The second note, **laity (secularity)**: it underlines the lay character. CA is made of laypeople who, as such, collaborate with the hierarchy, contributing through their own experience and assuming their own responsibilities in directing and organizing their association and in developing its methods of action. From this lay character arises CA's unavoidable responsibility in the apostolic work within the various spheres of life.

The third note, **organicity**: CA is not a commitment carried out by single people. In CA the laypeople work together, united as an organic body. This communitary style of the association keeps in account the different realities, the different ages of life and the different apostolic fields where its members work for the evangelization both of the ecclesial and the civil community. Organization is essential (not the the concrete organizative form).

The fourth note: the **cooperation with the hierarchy**, together with the other notes, completes CA's identity. This special bond with the hierarchy requires from CA a special service to communion and mission. It is a characteristic deeply connected with CA's specific ministeriality and pastoral readiness. It is because of this service and readiness to collaborate in the pastoral plans that *Ad Gentes* mentions CA as one of the essential ministries for founding the Church (*plantatio ecclesiae*).

After the Council Vatican II many lay movements spread giving new life to the Church and bringing a great wealth with the variety of charisms aroused by the Spirit. It is in this context that the Synod for Lay people was held. Its recommendations are summed up in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* about "The vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and in the world";

there John Paul II explains clearly the Council teachings, mentioning, among all ecclesial movements, CA as an association of laypeople called “to be of service through their faithfulness and good works to promote, according to their own vocation and their own method, the growth of the entire Christian community, pastoral activities and infusing every aspect of life with the Gospel spirit” (CFL 31).

CA is called to live the ecclesial communion to the utmost, to offer a firm and convinced witness to communion with the Pope and the Bishops, through its faithful readiness to receive their doctrinal teachings and their pastoral directions and, in real terms, to take on itself their pastoral plans, working together with the other movements and associations.

CA is committed with an active presence in human society. This commitment places it at the service of man’s dignity, in the light of Church’s social teaching. Its action is addressed to the whole society and to all fields and settings of society, as well as to the Church herself. Among the children, the youths, the adults, in the families, in the world of work, of culture, of politics, of economic, of education, of science and of art, wherever it wishes to be presence and action of the Church, wishes to announce the Gospel and to set up the Church.

To achieve this mission, *Christifideles Laici* underlines that CA has its own specific formative style. Formation is essential for CA, a formation which has its own characteristics:

Formation to communion: seen as the development of a special sensibility to create communion, in the Church as well as in the world. For this, we should love the Church, this real Church, we should feel, as our own, this social and cultural reality we live in and in which God has thought we should live since eternity. Only in this way we can be builders of reconciliation in our communities and countries.

Formation which brings us to unity between faith and life: formation which allows us to be witnesses of the Resurrection in our places.

Formation to Social Teaching of the Church: a formation which may allow us to imbue all fields of culture, politics, economy, education, health, art, communication, family with the Gospel spirit.

Formation for the interior and progressive growth in the holiness of life through a spirituality of the incarnation.

In short, a formation for communion which leads laypeople to unity between faith and life and to a steadfast interior growth towards sanctity in life. Formation in CA should express the baptismal dynamism and aim to build christian laypeople who are aware of their baptism and of their own responsibility in the Church and in society. *Ecclesia in Europa* n. 41 rightly underlines the necessity of pedagogic programmes, which enable the lay faithful to risk their faith in the temporal affairs and offer them not only doctrine and impulses but also a spiritual direction so that they may live their commitment as an authentic journey of sanctity.

These are the essential characteristics of CA, yesterday, today and forever, in this as well as in many other countries in the whole world. This is the permanent gift of the Holy Spirit to its Church.

In the CA of the different countries, we may discover various forms which embody its essential features in connection with the particular historical, cultural and ecclesial characteristics of each country. All of us however should cast a deep look into our associations to verify whether and how these features are incarnated today. This means a renewed engagement to search for and build the common good. It is urgent that we commit ourselves and involve others in searching for and building the common good.

This demands a serious care for formation, a deep inquiry about our attitudes and at the same time a determined action. All of us have something to do in our communities, in our countries: children, youths, adults, nobody can be feel excluded. It is urgent to contribute to the renewal of the parishes according to *Ecclesia in Europa*, so that they may be “a place where christian life is actually practised, as well as a place of authentic humanization and socialization, both in a context of dispersion and anonymity as that in the big modern cities, and in the rural areas with few population” (*EiE* 15).

If we commit ourselves seriously to this task, we will contribute to build a new Europe which answers the thirst of justice, so long hoped for by so many brothers and which is the base of a more human, fraternal and solid world.

Thanks to our faith, we know that this time belongs to the Father’s design and is essentially a time of grace, a time of salvation. Jesus opens us the journey to change it in a providential time, a time of hope.

Let us listen to John Paul II’s words: “*Duc in Altum*, Catholic Action” and let us look to the future with courage!

FINAL DOCUMENT

The Third IFCA Europe-Mediterranean Meeting was held in Sarajevo (capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina) from the 3rd to the 7th September 2003 on the theme: "For a Fraternal Europe".

The Archbishop of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo, card. Vinko PULJIC presided over the opening session during which Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi, ICA's General Assistant and IFCA's Ecclesiastic Assistant, and Beatriz Buzzetti Thompson, IFCA's Coordinator greeted the participants.

The meeting was also attended by the Bishop of Banja Luka Msgr. Franjo Komarica, who is also President of the Bishops' Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Auxiliary Bishop of Sarajevo, Msgr. Pero Sudar as well as Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez, Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo and Bishop Assistant of Catholic Action in Spain.

Representatives and those responsible for Catholic Action in 11 countries took part in the meeting: Argentina, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Malta, Moldovian Republic, Rumania and Spain.

In this city, which is the symbol of peace and which we all love, and in actual fact at Sarajevo's Seminary, where the presentations and the working sessions were held, we implored the Lord of Peace to enlighten the way, which thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, we are taking in the building of Europe: a Europe of peace, a Europe where justice reigns, a Europe where fraternity is lived.

Msgr. Komarica, Msgr. Sudar and Fr. Zeljko Majic, parish priest of Mostar, gave us a complete description of the situation in the country which helped us to understand the very difficult and complex situation which the people and the Catholic Church have to live. This highlighted the importance of this international meeting as this sensibilized us all the more towards a Europe which is to be more open and welcoming, a Europe built on solidarity.

On the 4th September, Ilaria Vellani and Alexandru Cistelean, representatives of Catholic Action in Italy and Rumania respectively, both spoke about "problems which unite us" in their interventions. In this analysis of reality, they raised points for discernment and themes for discussion on which comments were also made in the plenary session. In general they identified: faith,

culture, history, hope, globalization, ecumenism, immigration and new evangelization.

Globalization of solidarity was highlighted as being a positive element together with the awareness of the fact that in the building of a fraternal Europe hope is another indispensable element in our life together. Our true witnessing testifies the love of God which fills our hearts. This is a challenge which is not void of suffering and entails a great effort and sacrifice. It is a challenge which looks at the living Christ: yesterday, today and always.

Friday 5th September, the French Benedictine monk, Fr. Ghislain Lafont gave a presentation about "The future is in our roots: the novelty of the Gospel in Europe of the third millennium". Basing his talk on the documents of Vatican II and the more recent *Ecclesia in Europa*, he outlined important attitudes for the novelty required for the building of this continent: reconciliation, dialogue and the Beatitudes. He urged us to live a spirituality based on the Sacraments and on a familiarization with the living Word. If we live a sacramental life and concretize the Word, we will be helped to overcome fear, diversity and all that separates us. It also helps us to open new ways which get us nearer to each other such as pardon, meekness, ability to listen to each other and comprehension. All this entails a great deal of self renunciation which makes us come out of ourselves to give ourselves to the others.

Lastly he referred to patience as the basic attitude in this process and recommended the daily, personal and communitarian practice of love. This can only come about if only we make the Gospel the Good News for all.

Saturday 6th September was dedicated more concretely to Catholic Action. In the light of the encouragement of His Holiness John Paul II "*Duc in altum, Catholic Action!*", a series of interventions, which were later studied more in depth in small working groups and on which conclusions and final proposals were drawn up, were made.

- Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez, from his experience in Catholic Action in Spain, spoke about the theme: "Why the Church needs CA". Briefly it may be said that the reason is that CA assumes the very same aim of the Church which is evangelization.

In order that this evangelization may bear fruit in today's Europe, CA should have two fundamental bases: spirituality and formation, together with a close accompaniment of its members by some bishops and priests.

- Beatriz Buzzetti spoke about "The features of conciliar CA for the third millennium". As a result of the fact that we are all baptized and considering the four characteristics with which the Vatican Council describes CA, CA should be spread in all places and in all spheres of life with its typical formative style, which is based on communion, correlation between faith and daily living, knowledge of the social teaching of the Church and an incarnated spirituality, as stated in *Christifideles Laici*.
- Beatriz Pasqual from the Spanish CA described CA as a school for the formation of lay people, a seminary of lay sanctity and looked at formation as being a life-long process.
- Maria Giovanna Ruggieri from the Italian CA dealt with the relation which should prevail between the parish and CA, highlighting the contribution which this lay association can give to make the parish an authentic missionary community open to new challenges.
- Oana Tuduce from the Rumanian CA spoke about the complex religious and cultural situation in her country and her experience as a young woman, stressing the indispensable fact that CA should be organized at national level and the question of the emigration of Rumanian youths to other countries.

A fraternal climate prevailed throughout the meeting and this was greatly enhanced by the prayers and Eucharistic celebrations held together. Moments of relaxation were not lacking. Our visits to the city gave us the opportunity to discover its beauty inspite of the signs of violence still evident.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Catholic community of Sarajevo for the attention given to us during these days. We will treasure deeply in our hearts their warm welcome, their testimony and their love.

In conclusion, three fundamental aspects were elaborated upon such that we may promote further our being CA.

FORMATION

It is the fundamental choice, that of linking faith with daily living, a formation aimed at the whole person and with Christ as the centre of lay people in CA. This formation requires animators and priest assistants prepared to accompany children, youths and adults in the different stages and the various spheres in life.

THE PARISH

The basic place of CA's communitarian life should win back the beautiful image given to it by Blessed John XXIII who defined it as "the fountain of the village". The parish should be missionary communion, open to all the needs of the persons living therein and having a diocesan and world dimension.

YOUTH

They are persons with a right and a duty to be protagonists in their history through action and decision making. Young people should be given attention in the present. They need persons who listen to them, who support them and who share their lives.

As a result of the three workshops on the themes, the **following suggestions were made to IFCA:**

Formation

- build a data base at IFCA's head office of all the material which the different countries use as regards formation. The different countries are to assume the task of sending this material.
- Draw up guiding material which can orientate group animators.
- Organize a European meeting on ecumenism..

The Parish

- Make a reflection about the laity and prepare a basic itinerary for the study and knowledge of the Council and the Church's teachings.
- Exchange of experiences .

Youth

- contact and exchanges among the different countries.
- Launching of an IFCA Youth Department

IFCA is the place for meeting and for solidarity. During these few days we have all lived the richness of the experiences which we have brought with us from the East and from the West. IFCA also urges us to feel ourselves as the people of God and to be active members of the Church and desires that CA may contribute towards helping lay people to live their vocation.

Third Continental European Meeting Sarajevo, September 3rd-7th 2003

For a fraternal Europe The contribution of Catholic Action

PROGRAMME

Thursday 4th September 2003

09.30 Opening Session

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

- Welcome and presentation of the meeting and participants

Interventions

- *The situation of the country and of the diocese of Banja Luka*
H.E. Msgr. Franjo Komarica, Bishop of Banja Luka
President of the Bishops' Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- *The Archdiocese of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo*
H.E. Msgr. Pero Sudar, Auxiliary Bishop of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo
- *The diocese of Mostar-Duvno and that of Trebinje-Mrkan*
Fr. Zeljko Majic, Buna-Mostar

11.15 Eucharistic Celebration at the Seminary

Presided by H. E. Msgr. Franjo Komarica

15.00 Looking at the actual situation: *The problems which unite us*

Interventions:

- Ilaria Vellani - Western Europe (Italy)
- Alexandru Cistelean - Eastern Europe (Rumania)

Open dialogue

Evening prayer

20.00 Evening in Sarajevo

Friday 5th September 2003

08.00 Eucharistic Celebration

Presided by H. E. Msgr. Francesco LAMBIASI

ICA's General Assistant and IFCA's Ecclesiastic Assistant

- 09.45 Lecture: *The future is in our Roots.*
The novelty of the Gospel in Europe in the third millennium
 Father Ghislain Lafont osb
- 11.00 Press Conference
- 11.15 Visit to the interethnic school
- 15.00 Small groups about the lecture: Adults and Youths
- 16.00 Assembly
- 18.30 Presentation of the countries participating in the meeting
 and of some parishes in Vrhbosna-Sarajevo

Saturday 6th September 2003

- 09.00 “*Duc in altum*, Catholic Action! Have the courage of the future...
 Be a prophetic presence in the world... Have the humble courage
 to gaze on Jesus...”

Interventions

- *Why does the Church need CA*
 H. E. Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez, Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo
 Assistant of CA of Spain
- *The CA's conciliar features for the third millennium*
 Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson, coordinator of IFCA's secretariat

Open dialogue

- 12.00 Visit to Sarajevo
- 16.00 Workshops
- 18.00 Eucharistic Celebration
 Presided by H.E. Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez, Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo
- 20.15 Assembly and prayers

Sunday 7th September 2003

- 09.00 Presentation of the Final Document
- 10.30 Eucharistic Celebration in the Cathedral
 Presided by H.Em. Card. Vinko Puljic
 Archbishop of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo

LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Country Name and Family name	Diocesis
Argentina Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson	Lomas de Zamora
Austria Peter Grubits	Vienna
Bosnia-Erzegovina Mons. Vinko Pulijc Mons. Pero Sudar Mons. Franjo Komarica Zeljko Majik Vladko Medugorac Andrei Salom Marin Ceric Mateo Dacic Dario Markovic Klara Cavar Oliver Kristo Franjo Tomasevic Marko Gavrilovic Zvomir Misilo Hrvoje Sunjic Srdjan Vukelio Ivan Lasi Damir Vukovi	Sarajevo Sarajevo Banja Luka Mostar Mostar Mostar Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo Sarajevo
Croatia Ivan Nekic	Gospic
Hungary Gabriella Nenyei	Esztergom - Budapest
Israel Jacob Kassabry	Latin Parish Nazareth Haifa

Italy

Ilaria Vellani	Carpi
Don Ugo Ughi	Fano
Maria Giovanna Ruggieri	Gaeta
Silvia Corbari	Cremona
Thierry Bonaventura	Acireale
Anna Gobetti	Senigallia
Giuditta Barchiesi	Senigallia
Don Gesualdo Purziani	Senigallia
Daniele Gambassi	Siena

Malta

Ninette Borg Grech	Malta
Carmen Agius	Malta

Moldovia Rep.

Viorel Gortolomei	Chisinau
Tereza Matussevcaia	Chisinau

Rumania

Alexandru Cistelean	Blaj
Adrian Popescu	Cluj
Cornel Cadar	Iasi
Anca Lucaci	Iasi
Dragos Florean	Iasi
Ciprian Muntean	Blaj
Codruta Fernea	Cluj
Pr. Iuliu Muntean	Oradea
Iulia Iova	Oradea
Oana Tuduce	Oradea
Dorel Popa- Mihuta	Oradea

Spain

Msgr. Atilano Rodriguez Martinez	Ciudad Rodrigo
Beatriz Pascual	Alcala
Araceli Cavero	Husca
Fernando Urdiola	Zaragoza

IFCA Secretariat

Ghislain Lafont osb, Speaker
Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi
Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
Maria Grazia Tibaldi