

# **The spiritual and ethical roots of our commitment in European societies**



European Forum of National Laity Committees  
Fátima, 2nd July to 7th July 2004

## **Imprint**

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## Introduction

The Liaison Committee is pleased to present this report of the eighteenth Assembly of the European Forum of National Laity Committees which took place in Fátima, Portugal 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004. Some 120 representatives from 20 national delegations were present together with numerous observers, guests, and visitors from Malta, Ukraine and Russia; from several organizations like EZA, CICO, CCEE, UCESM and WUCWO; and from the laity in Portugal. The theme chosen for the Assembly grew out of the reflections of our secretary Stefan Vesper following the Assembly in Erfurt. These were developed by the Liaison committee and by those who gathered for the in-between meeting in Slovenia in 2003. Our purpose was to provide an opportunity for the delegates to engage in a sustained exploration of Lay spirituality. We were driven by the concern of the Holy Father that ‘Without an interior life culture has no content; it is like a body that has not yet found its soul.’ We were also aware that Lay spirituality must be firmly anchored in the contemporary lived experience of European society. Accordingly the theme, which finally emerged, was

### **“The spiritual and ethical roots of our commitment in European societies”**

To help us explore this topic we had a wide-ranging series of presentations from our guest speakers. Geert van Dartel urged us to make ourselves active at the heart of the European endeavour by openly expressing the message that only a Christian can offer. Luca Diotallevi invited us to reflect on how we can make the link between spirituality and political life not by repeating an old message but by helping to develop a message, which is ever new. Magnus Nyman drawing on the particular experience of the Church in Sweden echoed the theme of ‘project in the making’ but one which can and must draw on a rich patrimony. Paul Michael Zulehner extended this theme by urging us to help produce and spread a message firmly rooted in the Gospel and seen as meeting the concerns of our fellow Europeans.

Róża Thun and Gergely Rosta then offered us an insight into what these concerns are while ranging across society East and West. We then had the concrete example of some of the practical challenges of being a Christian in European public life in the testimonies of Françoise Ramond and Heinz-Wilhelm Brockmann. If we had any illusions about how difficult yet how necessary the task of the Christian will be in the new Europe we were left in no doubt by the final paper by Ernâni Rodrigues Lopes.

This report will not simply serve as an official record of the Assembly. The papers offer a rich source of ideas for continuing discussion in all of our countries and should be disseminated as widely as possible.

The Liaison Committee would like to thank all those who worked so tirelessly to make the Assembly such a great success. Once again the staff of ZdK were at the heart of the action; Bishop Serafim Ferreira e Silva of Leiria-Fátima was gracious in his welcome; the Lay Council of Portugal were splendid hosts; the staff of the Centro Catequético were wonderful. The LC would also like to record the financial support received from the European Commission. Last but by no means least we are once again indebted to Sigrid Schraml for taking on the task of producing this report.

Robert D. Corrins  
President



# Programme

## Meeting of the European Laity Forum

02/07/2004 - 07/07/2004

Fátima – Centro Catequético

### **The spiritual and ethical roots of our commitment in European societies**

(Promoted by the European Commission)

#### Friday, 02-07-2004

until 18.00 Arrival

20.00-21.30 Dinner  
Welcome-Meeting with the Bishop of the Diocese Leiria-Fátima  
and representatives of the local Church

#### Saturday, 03-07-2004

9.00-10.00 Eucharist in the Chapel of the Centro Catequético

10.30 Opening Session  
Welcome by the President of the European Laity Forum,  
Dr Robert D. Corrins  
Presentation of the National Committees and the guests

11.00-13.00 Lectures 1 and 2:  
**'Gaudium et spes' as the fundamental source of our commitment in  
European societies**  
Geert van Dartel, Nijmegen

**Spirituality and socio-political commitment -  
The Catholics in a globalised context**  
Prof Luca Diotallevi, Rome

Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.30 *Meeting of the Heads of Delegation*

15.30 Lecture 3:  
**How we present the spiritual roots of our  
commitment to the European societies**  
Prof Magnus Nyman, Uppsala

Discussion

- 16.30 Coffee break
- 17.00-18.30 Workshops on the three lectures in the presence of the speakers  
 1. Geert van Dartel, Nijmegen  
 2. Prof. Luca Diotallevi, Rome  
 3. Prof. Magnus Nyman, Uppsala
- 19.30-21.00 International buffet
- 21.30 Prayer at the Sanctuary

**Sunday, 04-07-2004**

- 8.30-10.15 Lecture 4:  
**Spirituality and Solidarity – Our keywords**  
 Prof Dr Paul Michael Zulehner, Vienna
- Discussion
- 11.00 Eucharist in the Sanctuary with Cardinal José Policarpo, Patriarch of Lisbon and President of the Portuguese Bishop's Conference
- 13.30 Lunch
- 14.30 Excursion to Batalha, Obidos and Nazaré
- 20.00 Dinner

**Monday, 05-07-2004**

- 9.00 Meditation (Plenary Room)
- 9.15 Lectures 5 and 6:  
**To promote spiritual and ethical values in the societies of the new member states of the European Union**  
 Róża Thun, Warsaw
- How we envision the realization of ethical values in the societies of the old member states of the European Union**  
 Gergely Rosta, Budapest
- Discussion
- 10.45 Coffee break
- 11.15 Workshops  
 1. In the presence of Róża Thun  
 2. In the presence of Gergely Rosta  
 3. About the future of the European Forum  
 (in the presence of Robert Corrins, Stefan Vesper and the whole Liaison Committee)



- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 *Meeting of the Heads of Delegation*
- 15.30-17.00 Workshops
1. *One Church - different experience:*  
The impact of history on the expression of spirituality in the various national lay organisations
  2. *Evangelisation - re-evangelisation:*  
How to present a credible and relevant witness to our fellow Europeans - new ways of being Church
  3. *The Ecumenical Dimension:*  
Learning from Protestant and Orthodox spirituality
  4. *Making spirituality concrete:*  
Serving this world in the light of the next world
- 17.30 *Meeting with Portuguese Catholic movements*
- 18.30 Dinner
- 19.30-22.30 *Statutory Assembly of the European Laity Forum  
(3 nominated participants per country)*

## **Tuesday, 06-07-2004**

- 9.00 Meditation (Plenary Room)
- 9.15 Lectures 7 and 8:  
**Christian involvement in political responsibility –  
Experience in a small town**  
Françoise Ramond, Epernon
- Christian involvement in political responsibility –  
Experience in a regional government in Germany**  
Heinz-Wilhelm Brockmann, Osnabrück
- Discussion
- 10.45 Coffee break
- 11.15 Lecture 9:  
**The influence of Christian values in shaping the  
European Charter and the European Constitution –  
My experience as a member of the European Convention**  
Prof Ernâni Rodrigues Lopes, Lisbon
- Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch

- 14.30      **The spiritual and ethical roots of our commitment in European societies and the Contribution of the European Forum of National Laity Committees – Challenges and necessities**  
Dr Robert D. Corrins, President of the European Lay Forum
- 15.15      *Meeting of National Committees*
- 16.15      Coffee break
- 16.30      Plenary session – Reports from the National Committees  
Conclusive discussion
- 19.30      Eucharist in the Basilica with Bishop Serafim Ferreira e Silva, Bishop of Leiria-Fátima, and representatives of the Episcopal Commission for the Laity
- 20.30      Festive dinner

**Wednesday, 07-07-2004**

- 8.00      Breakfast / Departure

# Message of Greeting

CONSILIUM CONFERENTIARIUM EPISCOPORUM EUROPAE (CCEE)

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Praeses

To the  
President, Prof Robert Corrins,  
and all the participants of the  
2004 Forum of the National Laity  
Committees  
Fatima, July 2 – 7, 2004

Sankt Gallen, July 1, 2004

Your Excellencies, Mr President,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

In the name of the Council of the European Bishops' Conference and its Presidency, I would like to welcome you who are assembled in Fatima and send you all my best wishes for the work you are undertaking in the 2004 Forum from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. I would have liked to personally greet each one of you but regrettably, on-going responsibilities prevented me from attending. For this reason I asked Cardinal José Policarpo, Patriarch of Lisbon und member of the CCEE to represent the Council at your meeting.

This study assembly on the theme „The ethical and spiritual roots of our commitment in European societies” takes place at a highly interesting time in the political life of Europe: on the eve of the convening of the new Parliament, the nomination of the new Commission, shortly after the entry of the new member states into the European Union and above all the acceptance of the new Constitutional Treaty of the European Union.

The fact that the Constitution does not refer to Europe's Christian roots has caused much regret among several countries – a regret that our Orthodox brothers share. It seems to me that not enough courage was summoned to name what has so deeply influenced our identity in the past and will continue to influence it in the future. None the less, I think that Christians have a great contribution to make in order to give full sense to some points of the Constitution, for example, Article 2 which refers to values or Article 51 which calls upon the Churches to commit themselves to a constant dialog with the institutions.

I am convinced that you are the ones who can best judge and act so that the functioning of the social structures and political institutions continues to improve; you the lay Christians, who work and act in the society and who through your education and professional experience have acquired competence in these matters. This task is entrusted to you: to unite faith with life, to harmonize them with each other.

In the light of my duties as a bishop, the years served at the CCEE presidency as well as the meetings and visits to several countries, it seems to me that the most important contribution the Churches of Europe can offer to Europe is Christianity, the gospel itself. The responsibility of bringing Europe and the gospel together does not arise only from the fact that Europe possesses Christian roots (this is a fact I consider as evident, for without reference to Christianity, the past 2000 years are incomprehensible) but also from the fact that Christianity is, as I would objectively define it, a gift for humanity.

Yet another essential dimension is communion, community. I see three areas of community or three main pathways for the future of Europe. They seem to me to be three essential contributions to the 'reunification' of Europe:

a) The universality or catholicity. In the broader sense, Catholicism is described as the opportunity to form a universal community, a unity without any limitation, so that the differences are not extinguished but realized in its identity.

b) Ecumenism. Despite the 'crisis', which we all know, there is a sign of hope. On the occasion of the European Ecumenical Meeting in Graz 1997 one could affirm that there is not only an ecumenical people in Europe who embodies a certain community but also a striving for reconciliation and for co-operation on all levels of endeavour. Ecumenism has brought forth institutional structures, possibilities and closely-knit circles of pioneers; it is a concept which has become a necessity for many Christians in Europe – a 'matter-of-fact' that has made it clear that we have indeed reached a new stage towards reconciliation.

An exemplary experience in this regard is the process set in motion by the Council of the European Bishops' Conference (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (KEK); a process symbolizing the *Charta Oecumenica*. These *Guidelines for the Growing Co-operation of the Churches in Europe* were officially signed on April 22, 2001 in Strasburg. The Ecumenical Charter comprises 26 obligations inviting the Churches in Europe to make visible in history the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Church of Christ. The third and most important part of the Ecumenical Charter describes the fundamental contribution the Churches are called to offer: "our joint responsibility in Europe."

Without pretending to have an exhaustive answer to all social and cultural problems, the Churches feel responsible for their contribution to the building of Europe.

c) Inter-religious Encounter. The phenomenon of migration and the general increased human mobility have led to encounters of the cultures and convictions on a regular basis. This topic, however, has gained an enormous relevance since September 11, 2001, March 11, 2004 in Spain, the crises in Iraq and in the Holy Land: one can almost say that religion is again in fashion! Paradoxically, it seems that terrorism managed to draw the attention of the world to religion and its role in the promotion (and destruction!) of peace. In order to prevent this dialogue from becoming ambiguous, superficial and dangerous, it is opportune time to go into depth. We must, above all, urgently deepen our concepts of truth, identity, dialogue, charity and evangelization.

As the Council for the European Bishops' Conference we are faced with two important events. One is a symposium of 50 European and 50 African bishops. It is the first time that a meeting is attended by a that large number of bishops from both continents, in order to discuss their collective responsibility towards the Church and the peoples they represent.

The second event is the beginning of a process in preparation of the third European Ecumenical Meeting. From 2005 until 2007 this process should enable the facilitation of new steps towards reconciliation between the Churches in different regions.

I am convinced that no concrete results will be reached if we do not work together in synergy as Church and as a true community between bishops, laypeople, consecrated persons and priests.

My wish for you is that this study assembly be a fruitful moment for the Forum, for the Church and for Europe. My prayers accompany you and I entrust the European bishops to your prayers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Grab', written in a cursive style.

**Amédée Grab**  
**Bishop of Chur**  
President of CCEE

(Original: French)



# Lectures

Geert VAN DARTEL,  
Nijmegen / Netherlands

## **,Gaudium et spes' as the fundamental source of our commitment in European societies**

*The joys and the hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes, 1965)*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15,13)*

In a friendly Turkish restaurant, called Topkapi (named after the famous palace of the Ottoman Sultans), in the centre of the city of Utrecht, not far from the statue of St. Willibrord, the patron saint of the Church in the Netherlands, I took part in a preparatory meeting for this gathering in Fatima. I asked my friends for help. 'Please tell me', I asked them, 'are for you *joy* and *hope* a fundamental source for your commitment in society?' The answer did not come at once. The question is not so simple. Joy and hope seem to be in the first place qualities that belong to the life of individual human beings. Some people have a joyful and optimistic character and that is an advantage in comparison to others with a personality inclined to depressions and hopelessness. As Christians we should distinct ourselves by a profound joy and an unbreakable hope, but I am sorry to say that I cannot confirm from my life experience that this joy and hope are a general characteristic of Christians and our way of life. Moreover, Christians who radiate too explicitly the joy of faith are often looked at with some suspicion by others, including Christians.

Neither from the perspective of the present trends in our world, *joy* and *hope* are the first qualities to think of in relation to the commitment in society. *Convictions* regarding basic values and *endurance* in keeping up the good spirit are more likely to be mentioned first. And the events that dominate the front pages of our papers and the news on the television very rarely fill us with joy and hope, rather with *grieves and anxieties*. My friends in the restaurant complained that our lives are more and more in the grip of the economy, that human life is individualised beyond measure and that solidarity, still an important characteristic of our socio-economic system is at stake in our wealthy and free society. Our society is deeply troubled by a series of old and new problems: economic recession and growing unemployment, uncertainty about the consequences of the enlargement of the European Union, the integration and emancipation of the newcomers, political Islam in a secularised society, the crisis of common values and the growing sense of insecurity, are some of the

internal problems we are coping with. Internationally, the situation deteriorates. In Iraq and Israel/Palestine the situation is at a deadlock. The war against terrorism may be clear for those who fight it, but is spooky and undefined for ordinary civilians.

Challenged and partly troubled by the problems of our time, my friends are determined to go on with their commitment for social justice in our society. They said to me: 'the source of hope lies beyond ourselves; often the examples of others support and inspire us in our commitment.' Pioneers of the European reconciliation after the Second World War like Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman were mentioned. Also came up an innovative project from Germany in agriculture on a social-ecological basis as an alternative for the dominating world-system in agriculture that is reaching its borders. We talked about our hopes for the European Forum of National Laity Committees and what this Forum could do for a vivid Christian testimony in Europe. Someone suggested that our forum should chose, elaborate and work on concrete topics for several years. Let us take care that we as Catholics do not marginalise ourselves, someone warned.

In our little conversation about *joy* and *hope* as a source for the commitment in our society, neither faith nor Church was directly mentioned. This may be typical for the secularised society and for privatised religion and a bit painful on a gathering of Catholics. But nevertheless it was true. Faith in the risen Christ and the Church did not come up spontaneously as the source of our *hope* and *joy*. How do we as Catholics think and experience the relation between faith and the world today. Are we able in our time, as the Second Vatican Council says in the opening sentence of the famous document *Gaudium et spes*, to share *from the depth of our faith the joys and the hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted?* Does it count for us that in our involvement our faith is not weakened, that we do not become cynical about people and the world, but on the contrary become more faithful followers of Christ, followers who are by grace recognisable by a profound joy and unbreakable hope?

'Joy is not a virtue', wrote Titus Brandsma in 1935, 'but an effect of love'. Is our life a token of that love and are we able to win people of our time for the message of hope, for Jesus Christ as the source of hope? What does the Church say about this? How hopeful and joyful is the Church regarding the developments in today's world and how deep goes her sympathy, solidarity with the people of our time? Has the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* today still that relevance for our involvement in society as it had forty years ago? I thought about these questions on the basis of two documents: *Gaudium et spes* from 1965 and *Ecclesia in Europa* from 2003. In what follows I want to share with you some of my thoughts, which are, I hope, relevant for our theme.

The Second Vatican Council promulgated the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* on December 7, 1965. In a lecture on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this Magna Charta of the Human Dignity, Pope John Paul II stated that it has never happened before in the history of the Church that an Ecumenical Council would focus with such profound involvement its pastoral preoccupation to the temporal events of humanity.

The Pastoral Constitution had a tremendous response. The image of 'opening up the windows to the world' and terms like 'aggiornamento' and 'reading the signs of the time' are connected with this precious document. *Gaudium et spes* was an answer to the widely felt need in the Church for a new approach of the questions of modern time. In this document the Council offered, from a broad biblical and theological perspective, an inspiring and actual reflection on the challenges of modern time.



A reflection today on ‘*Gaudium et spes* as the fundamental source of our commitment in European societies’, obviously has to take the starting point in the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council. An exchange on the reception of the Pastoral Constitution in our countries and its actual significance after all the changes that have occurred since, could help us to see more clearly the fundamental source of our involvement in society.

Let us look back for a moment in the history of the last forty years and realise the major changes that have taken place; changes that the Council could not foresee:<sup>1</sup> The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism, the growing unification of Europe, the world wide dominance of the market economy, the prevalence of a consumer culture and the growing gap between the rich and the poor in the world, the emergence of feminism, the new ecological consciousness, the world wide web, the unchallenged hegemony of the United States, the rise of terrorism, the numerous wars including in Europe, the genocide of Cambodia and Rwanda.... Our time is not called modern anymore, but post-modern, if this term is still valid, and we are said to live in an era of globalisation.

The position of the Church in society and culture underwent also deep changes. In Western European countries the role of the Church in society and culture is diminishing. The Church has little influence on the lifestyle of the people. Religion is more and more treated as a private matter. The Christian churches and believers seem at large to be domesticated, whereas Islam that comes from another socio-political and cultural background obviously doesn’t fit into the scheme. Certainly, the bishops – also in my country – do not rest and take again and again a stand in public matters according to the teachings of the Church, for example in matters of life and death (abortion and euthanasia), marriage and family, the social issues and education. Their statements are noticed, but until now they did not have a great impact in society.

At the pilgrimage in April 2004 to Santiago de Compostela organised by COMECE on the occasion of the enlargement of the European Union, the president of the Council of the European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE), the Swiss bishop Amédée Grab, underlined that the Catholic Church should answer with a strong preaching of the *Gospel* to the moral decay that has Europe in its grip. By ‘moral decay’ he meant very specific laws in several European countries that legalize abortion and euthanasia, the use of embryonic cells and the marriage of homosexuals.

This hard judgement regarding the immorality of some broadly discussed laws in our democratically governed states puts us in the position of conflict with mainstream developments, feelings and convictions. You cannot escape from it by saying that these laws are morally acceptable because of the democratic process of decision-making. The issue at stake is the relation between laws and moral values. In fact these laws bring about a change in the moral standards of society and have effects on a longer period. Here lies a huge task for Christians in public debate, ethics and politics. And especially in the field of education. Are we enough aware of the seriousness of these issues and well prepared? I am not so sure.

In Central and Eastern Europe the Church was set free after the collapse of communism. This freedom opened the possibility for a cultural and political commitment on the basis of religion. The Church in Central and Eastern Europe broke away out of the concept of the privatised religion in which the Church was kept during the communist era whereas ironically the Church in Western Europe is by the course of the development of society moving towards that concept. The experience of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe was never fully

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kelly CSsR, *Gaudium et spes: Too much joy and too much hope?* In Australian EJournal of Theology, published on the internet.

understood by most fellow-Christians in Western Europe. I dare to say so on the basis of my long experience in building up contacts with the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

My story with Central and Eastern Europe started in 1978 when a protestant group in the Netherlands gave me as a catholic student of theology the opportunity to study a year or two in Zagreb now the proud capital of Croatia. I stayed there for five years, studying ecumenical theology and economics. What a strange combination in that country, in that time. But I learned a lot about the Church, the nations, their culture and their conflicts. From 1983 until 1994 I worked for the foundation *Communicantes* in Nijmegen. We sent theological literature to our friends in different Central and Eastern European countries, kept in contact by travelling and wrote in our church periodicals about the position of the Church in Eastern Europe. Experience of freedom in 1989, joy and hope, experience of war between 1991 and 1999, grieves and anxieties. During the nineties we could do a lot in *Communicantes* in material and financial support for the restoration of the Church. But our aim always has been also to build spiritual bridges of understanding and mutual enrichment. This is the most difficult part. In the West concepts and views of Christians in Central and Eastern Europe are often easily played down as outmoded and old-fashioned and there is little capacity of understanding the significance of the testimony of faith. *Gaudium et spes* is an important bridge, I think.

If we look, from our historical experience, to the content of the Pastoral Constitution, I assume that we will quickly reaffirm the basic ideas of *Gaudium et spes*. The biblical-theological anthropology as a foundation of the human dignity and freedom, the vision on the community and the common good, the awareness of and respect for the relative autonomy of earthly affairs and the vision on the task of the Church in the world are still as true as they were then. The same counts for the central topics that *Gaudium et spes* dealt with in Part II, like the dignity of marriage and family, human culture, the social and economic issues, the political order and the responsibility for peace. But notwithstanding a general approval of the content of *Gaudium et spes*, it seems to me that *Gaudium et spes* does not function (anymore) in a way that it creatively links the Christian faith with an involvement in society. The main reason is that post-modern society and culture in Europe have driven away from the Christian perspective and that neither the Catholic Church nor the other Churches are in this moment capable of integrating faith, culture and society in a way that it does convince the peoples of our time. Is the experience in Central and Eastern European countries different here?

Nevertheless, the document *Gaudium et spes* is a great attempt in outlining the responsibility and commitment of the Church in the world, but love came in fact only from one side. Moreover many people do not see and experience the Church nowadays as a token of joy and hope. Many people, not only non-Christians and non-believers, feel a wide gap between what is going on in the Church and what is at stake in the world. This is not only a matter of the image of Church in the media. How can this be changed?

The challenge of the Church and in fact every Christian in our time is to reflect with new intensity on the meaning of faith. The bishops in Europe have done so during the second Synod for Europe in 1999 that was dedicated to the theme 'Jesus Christ, alive in his Church, source of hope for Europe'. The post-synodal apostolic exhortation '*Ecclesia in Europa*' that Pope John Paul II approved in March 2003 is a long and clear tractate on the Gospel of hope. Strengthened by the awareness of the living presence of the Lord in the life of the Church, the exhortation takes a stand against the attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ. It states that the loss of hope is rooted in that attempt. In comparison with

the *Gaudium et spes* document, *Ecclesia in Europa* is far more critical towards the new trends in European culture that directly have effect on the daily life of the people. I quote: 'European culture gives the impression of 'silent apostasy' on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist'. The Pope is aware of the threat that the European culture is disconnected from the contribution of Christianity. He sees the rise of a new culture largely influenced by the mass media that is in content and character often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. On the other hand he also sees signs of hope in the Church as well as in the European societies: the restoration of freedom of the Church in Eastern Europe and also the growth to unity in Europe are mentioned here. Mentioned also are the new church movements that are especially active in mission and evangelisation. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May we had in 's-Hertogenbosch, as in many other places in Europe, an ecumenical and missionary event of the new movements.

*Ecclesia in Europa* is a strong missionary text. The Church has to offer Europe the most precious gift that nobody else can give: 'faith in Jesus Christ, the source of the hope that does not disappoint; a gift which is at the origin of the spiritual and cultural unity of the European peoples and which both today and tomorrow can make an essential contribution to their development and integration'. I hope you notice with me the ecumenical awareness and responsibility that is inherent in this quotation. This gift to Europe doesn't come only from Catholics and the Catholic Church. We share this task with Orthodox and Protestants. The ecumenical responsibility is therefore included in the missionary and social work of our time and may not be put apart from it. We also can learn a lot from the experiences in other church traditions that are confronted with the same challenges to deal with ethical, social and political issues in the light of faith.

From 1994 I have my job as secretary of the Catholic Association for Christian Unity in the Netherlands. In our country there is a longstanding catholic tradition in ecumenical engagement. The flourishing period of ecumenism lies far behind us and in many respects ecumenical relations seem at a deadlock. Therefore I am grateful for the impulse *Ecclesia in Europa* gives here to go forward on the ecumenical path, especially on the field of mission. To make the vision of *Ecclesia in Europa* come through, it is necessary that a new missionary zeal inspires all levels of the Church and spreads in all directions of the European continent so that the Gospel of hope is proclaimed, celebrated, and put into practice in daily life, society and culture. Along that way the Gospel of hope can play a decisive role in the renewal of Europe in which Europe 'finds back its true identity' (nr. 109).

Is the call for a missionary zeal a real possibility or merely an ideological phrase? If this stays on the level of synods or conferences, it probably will be never more than an ideological whim. It has to enter in our personal lives and in our communities. During the last years I see in our country, not only in the Catholic Church but also in the other Churches, a growing awareness of the need for a strong and fresh proclamation of the Gospel. Earlier this year my bishop, Anton Hurkmans, went in the streets of the city of 's-Hertogenbosch on a shopping Saturday with the aim to evangelize. For some it was a courageous action, according to others it was merely a publicity stunt. His initiative occurred in the context of a conference on city-evangelization. Not so long ago we had a little talk about it and I was impressed by his remark: 'before I can start with the evangelization of others, I have to be evangelized myself first.'

The back-to-basics situation in my country reminds me of an old article from 1977 about the Catholic Church in the former Czechoslovakia written by Dr. Oto Madr, a well-known catholic theologian from Prague. His article on the *modus moriendi* of the Church was

published in the German periodical Diakonia. It occurs in history, he wrote, that church communities vanish and die. It happened before in other parts of the world for example in Northern Africa where once there was a flourishing Church. And it can happen here. Communist policy and ideology have condemned us to death and are trying to make that happen. Even if we have to accept the inevitability of our end, we can and have to live that last part of our life as Christians the best we can. Madr himself suffered 15 years of imprisonment from 1949 until 1964 and was after 1968 one of the leading figures of the catholic community in his country. His commitment in writing and teaching always was aimed at the future of the Church. Probably also to his own surprise in the middle of the eighties he saw a real change in the situation that led him to the conclusion that the Church was living up again. He wrote another article and gave it the title 'And yet the Church didn't die, to a theology of a threatened Church' in which he described how the Church could defend herself against a system that is trying to destroy her.

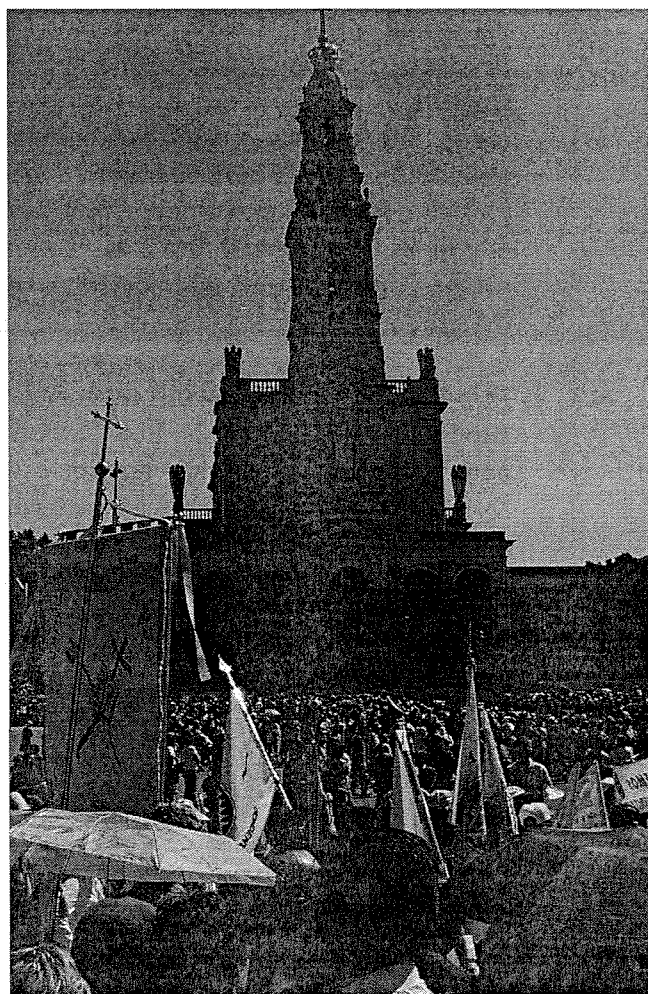
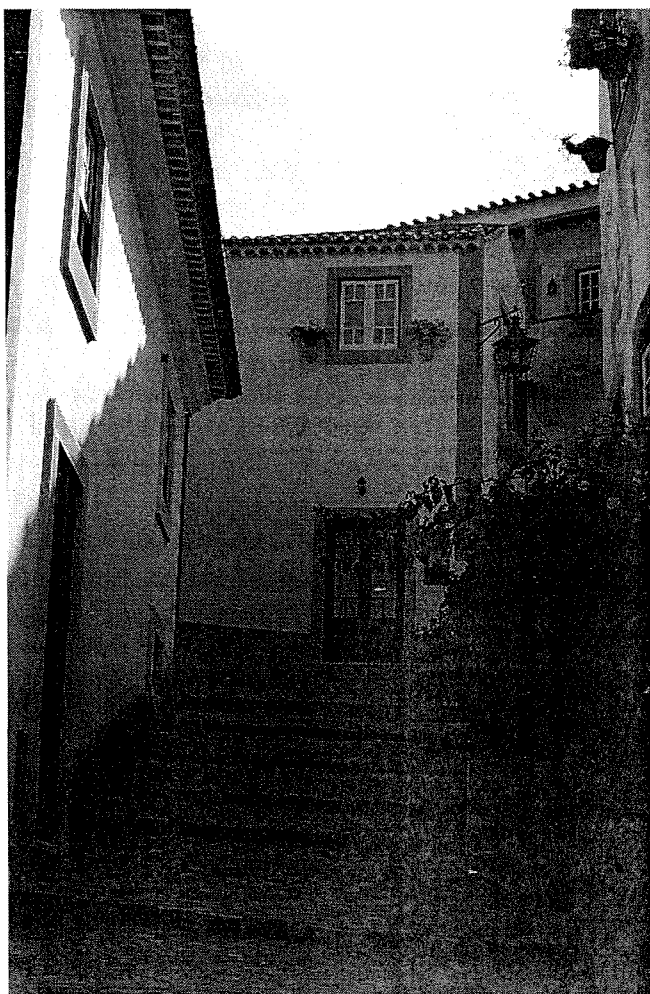
I met Oto Madr in the eighties almost every year in Prague. His ideas about the *modus moriendi* of the Church and the theology of the threatened Church fascinated me not only in relation to the Church in the Czech Republic, but as much in relation to the Church in my country. Of course the political situation in (Western) Europe was and is completely different from the situation in Czechoslovakia in the seventies and eighties. But the phenomenon of the dying or threatened Church is in a way similar although the circumstances and causes are completely different. Only an authentic spiritual renewal can get us through the present crisis of the Church. In the friendship with Madr I experienced more fully the meaning and the strength of the Christian faith. It helped me to make my choices. It is not enough to know things theoretically. The company on the way is important too. Friendship is in my experience crucial. That is where my friends in the restaurant were right when they said: 'the source of hope lies beyond us'. It is difficult if not impossible to reach on your own strength to the source of hope. Someone has to bring you there. And once you have been there you can assist others to come there to. Once I am evangelized myself, my bishop said, I could evangelize others. Once you have experienced the hope and joy of faith, you can be near to 'the joys and the hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the men of this age' and keep it through.

Let me finally summarise where this survey about joy and hope, *gaudium et spes* in relation to our involvement in society brings us. As you have noticed, I spoke about joy and hope from different angles. Firstly from the perspective of believers who are doing their utmost in the line of the Catholic tradition for the common good in our society. Secondly from the perspective of the documents of the Church, *Gaudium et spes* and *Ecclesia in Europa*. A shift has taken place in the way the Church positions herself in relation to post-modern society and culture. I am not sure that we so self-confidently dare to say today, although I want to do so, that the Church has a deep solidarity with the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the people of our times, especially the poor and afflicted. The Church is much occupied with herself and there definitely grew a gap between the Church and post-modern society and culture. On the other hand the bishops of the Church are determined to bring the testimony of the love of God in Jesus Christ back to the centre of European civilisation. Because it belongs there and for the better of the life and future of our continent. And thirdly, from the perspective of my personal life. We all start and come back there. An involvement in society in line of the church documents like *Gaudium et spes* and *Ecclesia in Europa* will stay sterile without personal stories.

At this conference we will hear much about the spiritual and ethical values in relation to the commitment in our societies. On the basis of the titles of the lectures in our program the conference could become a highly theoretical dispute led from different angles and

perspectives. It is very important of course that the fundamental scope and categories that define the European socio-political, cultural and religious context, the expectations and ambitions in our European catholic communities regarding the promotion of spiritual and ethical values in the societies are well explained. This can help us to come to a shared orientation on a European level. But besides that, I hope that in the coming days we take the opportunity to exchange in direct personal encounters our views, hopes and expectations. The concrete stories and testimonies as well as our common prayer and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist are indispensable in our meeting. I hope that these days will strengthen our faith, hope and joy to the benefit of our efforts and work for dignity, justice and peace in our societies. In the words of St. Paul with whom I want to conclude my lecture: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15, 13).*

(Original)



## Spirituality and socio-political commitment Catholics in a globalised context

### PREMISES

- 0.1 I believe the task given to me is an invitation to set in motion a reflection on a few themes – well, many themes, really – some explicit in the title, others implicit. Since I have to choose between them, I have focussed on **some connections** between ‘spirituality’, ‘socio-political engagement’, and ‘globalisation’.
- 0.2 In particular, I will focus on **two** connections. Obviously – and in any case – the usefulness of this choice, compared to other possible choices, should become clearer as you see what I am able to offer.
- 0.3 However, the time at my disposal and my own limited ability **do not** allow for an exhaustive analysis of all the questions that will be gradually touched upon.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- 0.4 As noted above, I have focussed my attention on just two connections: **(a)** that between *spirituality* and Catholics’ *socio-political commitment* and **(b)** that between Catholics’ *socio-political commitment* and the processes of *globalisation*. In both cases, the emphasis will fall in particular on the actual **political** element of the phenomena under consideration (‘*socio-political commitment*’ and ‘*politics* and/of *globalisation*’). Furthermore, ‘political’ phenomena – in the *modern* sense of the word – will be considered<sup>2</sup>. In fact, it seems to me that the urgency of the processes in progress (both social and ecclesial) as much as the agenda of our work pushes us in this direction.
- 0.5 In particular, the following contribution proposes to show *at least one* of the reasons supporting this emphasis. For Catholics, and above Catholics of Western and Central continental Europe, who, among other things, have had such an influence on the formation of the Church’s Magisterium, it is **urgent** to discern more thoroughly the typically modern process of differentiation between *politics in the classic sense* of the word (all that contributes to the institution of the *πολις*) and *politics in the modern sense* of the word (a specific way, necessary but not sufficient, of contributing to the institution of the *πολις*). Such discernment is a necessary condition to elaborate better the expectations and responsibilities concerning the latter. Clearly, that does not imply **absolutely** ignoring or devaluating the responsibilities which, as believers, we have towards political processes in the classic sense of the term. It is simply trying to understand better the meaning of a differentiation, which also differentiates the responsibilities without cancelling neither one nor the other, but in fact specifies them.

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<sup>2</sup> N Bobbio, ‘*Politica*’ in Bobbio N./ Matteucci N./ Pasquino G. (eds.), *Dizionario di politica*, Utet, Turin 1983, p. 826 ff.

To carry out such a discernment seems to me urgent for at least two distinct and, in my opinion, convergent types of reasons: (i) a more adequate reception of the spiritual renewal which has in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council as much a climax as a source, and (ii) a more mature comparison with the social processes to which, at this time, we are spectators and in part at least also co-responsible protagonists.

## THE SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMITMENT OF CATHOLICS

1.1 In itself, a systematic reflection on the relationship between the spirituality and political commitment of Catholics could not leave out a enormous number of problematic **spheres**: from that concerning the political experiences of believers (personal and collective), to that coincident with the political chapter of the Church's social teaching (including the Church's Social Doctrine in the strictest sense of the term<sup>2</sup>), to that regarding theological and, more generally, scientific reflection about political phenomena. Each of these spheres is thematically rich, some of them specific, some of them shared.

By making a third choice alongside those indicated at points 0.2 and 0.4, *only one theme* will be taken into consideration here. It has the advantage of being extremely relevant to each of the study areas just mentioned. It is the understanding of the **'common good' as the proper purpose of the 'political community'**. Exemplary in this regard is paragraph 74 of *Gaudium et Spes*: "For this reason ("a broader implementation of the common good") they ("individuals, families, and the various groups which make up the civil community") set up various forms of political communities".

So it is very interesting here to note, for example, along with Giuseppe Colombo, *that both* the Church's social teaching in general, and the same Social Doctrine of the Church in particular, have not, up to now, been able to reach a precise definition of the 'common good', *but also that* this teaching and this Doctrine tend, to a great extent – or rather up until recent years have tended – to identify *anyway* the political community with a circumscribed group of institutions which have as their own, specific purpose the pursuit and maintenance of the 'common good'<sup>3</sup>. In much of the Catholic Church's social teaching in recent centuries, and today in the majority political cultures among the Catholics in the geographical areas in which it is referred to, only the political institutions are in fact recognised to have a specific and prevalent function – if not exclusive – with regard to the pursuit of the common good compared with all the other social institutions<sup>4</sup>. Even leaving out the extra-political social conditions, the situation just described does not change when the political institutions organise themselves in to the form of a 'state'. On the contrary, often the teaching and political experience of Catholics seem to follow at a distance more or less this process. Just to offer one example, in the 1950s Giuseppe Dossetti, first of all a university teacher, Christian Democrat director and parliamentarian, and then priest, theologian and eminent conciliar peritus<sup>5</sup>, defined the mission of the 'state' as the *'reformatio* of the social body'<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. Angelini, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, in G. Ambrosio et al, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Ed. Glossa, Milan 1989, p. 15-111. This is a text, which helps to examine many of the problems, which we must weigh up here.

<sup>3</sup> G Colombo, *Il magistero recente: indirizzi e problemi*, in AAVV., *La Chiesa e il decline della politica*, Glossa, Milan 1994, p. 126-127.

<sup>4</sup> So much so that for a long time the principle of 'subsidiarity' was only thought of in 'vertical' terms with the definite aim of mitigating but not clashing with such primacy. Cf. Denzinger 4766 ff.

<sup>5</sup> For a personal account cf G. Dossetti, *Il Vaticano II*, il Mulino, Bologna 1996.

<sup>6</sup> G. Dossetti, *Scritti politici*, Marietti, Genoa 1995, p. 367.



When they reach these levels, the political thought and practice of Catholics plug in completely with the modern political history of continental Europe, into the history of *étatisme*<sup>7</sup>. This modern European-continental Catholicism does not deny so much the existence of a tension between the classical and modern understanding of ‘politics’, but legitimises at least the primary attribution of each political entreaty (in the classical sense of the word) to modern political organisations. In this way, at least the relative primacy of the political over the social is affirmed, the higher disposition of the political with respect to other social functions and institutions. In short, one imagines a sort of social monarchy of politics<sup>8</sup>, which finds its fulfilment in the form of a ‘state’ and above all the ‘social state’. In the analytical perspective adopted here, the plan of a ‘denominational state’ does not constitute an alternative, and the same principle of subsidiarity developed just along ‘vertical’ lines only constitutes one in as much as it is an important instant of the very attenuation of the social primacy of politics.

For the purposes of the present contribution, this idea of a privileged relationship between politics (in the modern sense of the word) and the common good offers the advantage of constituting an element assimilated, in a predominant way and with relative homogeneity (in Central and Western continental Europe), from the social teaching of the Church, from theological reflection, and from the political culture of Catholics who are leading figures at various levels (high up or basic) in the processes of political participation.

- 1.2 What is certainly not easier is to define “**spirituality**”, the second strand of the relationship I have begun to analyse. Here I believe it is sufficient to assume that an unavoidable element of this second strand is the *tension* that establishes itself between the practice (and the relative knowledge) of believers and the Church on the one hand and the Word of God, which emerges from a believing and intelligent hearing of the Scriptures on the other. Such a *tension* between believing practice and the Word of God is certainly a component of Christian spirituality<sup>9</sup>.
- 1.3 On this basis it is possible to formulate a *first thesis* that I would like to offer for reflection. However much it is a conviction fairly widespread at all levels of the ecclesial Community, and however much it constitutes an attitude which above all in Western Europe touches upon a large number of Catholics in public opinion and in the political sector, **it seems ever more difficult to find in the New Testament elements in support** of the idea that political organisations (the ‘political community’ or – more or less – the ‘political system’) can lay claim to any sort of primacy if not exclusive competence over other social institutions with respect to the ‘common good’.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. S Cassese, *Lo stato introvabile*, Donzelli, Rome 1999. Such is the difference between the thought and practice known by the ‘*stateless societies*’ that it suggests at least a degree of curiosity about the political culture of the respective Catholicism. It would be interesting to place these studies alongside those dedicated to the modern organisation of the ‘State of the Church’, such as those by Paolo Prodi.

<sup>8</sup> It is not a matter of ‘right’ of ‘left-wing’ Catholics. With reference to Italian Catholicism, note that such an idea of a social monarchy of politics is shared by Jemolo and Balbo, Rodano or Ceriani Sebregondi. Such an idea remains constant even during the ideological evolution of many Catholics, as, for example, La Pira, from at least a non-hostility towards Fascism to a non-hostility towards Communism. In this regard, the analysis proposed by Renato Moro on the relationship between Catholicism and modernisation from the end of the 1800s is interesting, an analysis which focuses on Catholic and magisterial adherence in the hypothesis of a ‘good modernity’, in reality a variation of ‘authoritative modernisation’ (G. Germani), and the influence of this thesis on the “formation of the Catholic ruling (*political*) class” which will govern in Italy after the fall of Fascism. (cf. the essay of the same name by R. Moro in ‘Storia contemporanea’ 1988/4).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for example *Dei Verbum* 5, *Novo Millennio Inveniente* 39, and again E. Bianchi, *Dalla Scrittura alla Parola*, AAVV., *La lectio divina*, Qiqajon, Bose 1994, p. 367, A Louf, *La vita spirituale*, Qiqajon, Bose 2001, p. 13.

If in fact, above all starting from Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, one goes back to trying to present in a more systematic way a notion of the 'common good' not deprived of its essential supernatural dimension<sup>10</sup>, that produces a stronger reproof of the need to understand by the 'common good' something whose pursuit and maintenance cannot be completely entrusted to any single type of social institution<sup>11</sup> (or not even to them together). To express it in terms used long before Oscar Cullmann at the end of his New Testament research into the relationship between Jesus and his disciples and political institutions, those texts portray Christians, in the face of political organisations, with an attitude that at the same time refutes both the extreme of anarchism and the opposite extreme represented by the Zealots<sup>12</sup>.

The New Testament paints a picture of Christians who pray for the political authorities, and who reject every anarchic and irenic utopia, but who at the same time keep watch so that political institutions do not cross specific, precise limits (precisely "*neither anarchists, nor zealots*"). The concern for the pursuit and maintenance of a social order open to the common good and therefore, among other things, always providentially provisional is not extinguished when "Christian rulers" eventually come on to the scene, and such a concern does not become a longing for "*Christian political institutions*".

On the contrary, one perceives and eventually recognises the function of institutions which share – each in a specific and defined way: political ones in a different way from those economic ones or those scientific, for example – in guaranteeing nothing more than a certain level of social order, in any one of the many forms possible without the pretence of being in agreement with, but not even precluding, a 'common good' in the true and full sense. In short, the idea of a completely intra-historical common good which really remains a common good in the narrow, full sense, and even less the attribution of this same common good as an aim of only one particular type of organisation (for example, political ones) is out of the question. Respect is due to political organisations which demonstrate a definite capacity to positively concur on this condition of providential precariousness, independent from the religious convictions of those which hold it *pro tempore*, but at the same time it is necessary to keep tight watch and eventually act in a definite, determined way against the sacralisation or self-sacralisation of these institutions, which less than ever can happen in the name of the Gospel or of Christ<sup>13</sup>.

At its sacramental and spiritual root, this evangelical, New Testament framework of the political culture takes root and at the same time expresses the faithfulness of the Church and the believer to an intrinsic eschatological tension to life redeemed in Christ, a life which implies the simultaneity of two times (two "*eons*"): with the Risen Lord "the end time *has already* begun, but *has not yet* been fulfilled"<sup>14</sup>. Both fundamentalism and

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. G. Colombo, op. cit., p. 130. Cf. also B. Maggioni, *Il seme e la terra*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 2003, e.g. p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> O. Cullmann, *Dio e Cesare*, Ave, Rome 1996. G. Ravasi, at the end of an analysis of the text of *Apocalypse*, refers to an attitude of "respect and suspicion" towards political organisations on the part of Christians. For reasons not possible to develop here, this theological perspective also bears a notion of common good which cannot be abstracted from people's uncompromising diversity and freedom (even religious, cf. *DH*), as well as from a realistic consideration of the various and changeable historic and social circumstances.

<sup>13</sup> The notion of peace as *opus iustitiae* disperses every Christian, irenic or opportunist pacifism, helping to not confuse a believer's responsibility to *the other* (second person), even one's own aggressor, with the believer's responsibility towards *others* (third person), even if threatened in front of our own eyes with being overcome by aggression or tyranny.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

immanentism, as well as every type of irenic utopia<sup>15</sup>, are delegitimised by this New Testament exegesis of the politico-religious themes.

In summary, all the social powers (including political ones) are simply ἐξουσια<sup>16</sup> (“attributable powers”, it could be said, while often the meaning of the term is lost in the modern translations of the original gospel text, sometimes even being made to agree with the unique and matchless δυνάμις of the Lord Jesus Christ: none of those ἐξουσια presupposes for itself this latter, there is nothing divine in the economic, political, scientific power, etc., it is purely an exercise of responsibility which must remain limited and attributable). To these theological applications, the preference for inter-institutional relationships – as we say today – of *checks and balances* would seem consistent, capable of obstructing the attempt that some single power rise up over other powers and transgresses the limits of specific and limited services due. That is valid both in the relationship between powers of the same type and the relationship between those of a different kind, and in what interests us: both in the relationship between different political powers and in the relationship between political, economic, scientific, religious powers, etc.<sup>17</sup>. The culture of the social primacy of politics in the modern sense of the word and even more so the plan of ‘state’ appear instead at least less in strong contrast to these same theological applications.

As already indicated, it must be emphasised, although sadly it can only be done in passing, that if in the Church’s social teaching and its Doctrine the principle of subsidiarity<sup>18</sup> continues to be interpreted only *vertically*<sup>19</sup>, the legitimacy of a social ‘monarchy’ of politics and even more so the continental European idea of a ‘State’ can survive, albeit toned down<sup>20</sup>. On the contrary, the rediscovery of the already noted New Testament applications helps us to recognise the existence of a strong alternative tension between Christian conscience and the ‘State’ political plan in the proper sense of the word<sup>21</sup>, between the social monarchy of politics and Christian conscience, between the absolutisation of the political function in the modern sense and Christian conscience. Henceforth, this latter can no longer tolerate the pretences of the ideals of the European-Continental ‘State’.

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<sup>15</sup> The difference from the perspectives suggested by J. Milbank (*Theology and social theory*, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, USA 1993) is interesting, a perspective capable of attracting a great *audience* in recent years.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. also ἐξουσια in L. Coenen / H. Bietenhard (eds.), *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo testamento*, EDB, Bologna 1991, p. 1340 ff. There is no social institution to which the New Testament attributes (in a positive or neutral sense) the title ἀρχη, while we know full well which reality is defined as *the* (singular) “prince (ἀρχων) of this world”.

<sup>17</sup> In this perspective we can better understand why a biblical theology of the social realities is, primarily, a theology of the city (cf. *Gen.* 4:17), the *polyarchic* place par excellence, and only secondarily a theology of politics, economy, science, the family, etc. It would be very important to better understand how things happened historically (and geographically) thus making available so much preaching, Magisterium, theology, knowledge among believers to assimilate the primacy of political organisations over other social institutions.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. *Libertatis conscientia*, Instruction from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 22 March 1986, n 73. (See also note 3).

<sup>19</sup> According to what today can only be a decontextualising projection of its original meaning. On the contrary, not enough reflection has still been done on the incredible advance made in *Centesimus Annus*, for example in the way it proposed to look at the relationship between politics and economy, and earlier still by *Dignitatis Humanae*, about the relationship between politics and religion.

<sup>20</sup> A toning down which in other times and in other social contexts would perhaps be sufficient in determining political situations and considering the characteristics of the “ideological competitors”. From this stems the great historical interest that so many Christian Democrat experiences of the past maintain, not reducible to simple decline of the “popular” intuitions of the last century. Cf. P. Scoppola, *La ‘nuova cristianità’ perduta*, Ed. Studium, Rome 1985.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. Poggi, *Lo Stato*, il Mulino, Bologna 1992.

Knowledge of this tension (not the only one, obviously) between spirituality and Catholics' political commitment had already emerged in various documents from regional Episcopates<sup>22</sup>. The tension can also be seen in texts from the Papal Magisterium. Some crucial points from some of the documents promulgated by John Paul II show clearly that we can **no longer** limit ourselves to just a vertical understanding of the principle of subsidiarity (“*not to have a large organisation – further removed from the individual – what a small organisation can do – closer to the individual*”), but that a horizontal understanding be developed in parallel, too (“*do not make politics do what the economy can, and vice versa*”): one thinks of texts like no. 42 of *Centesimus Annus* on the “market” or “free” economy and what it says about the absolutely essential character of a political intervention here. Clearly, that does not signify abandoning the question of the ‘common good’, but to have understood that – today, in countries at an advanced stage of modernisation – it can be better pursued in a social context institutionalised in a ‘polyarchic’ fashion, in which different powers control and influence each other, and separately contribute to the increase of opportunities, rather than in an anarchic society or a political monarchy. Some passages in the recent document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life*<sup>23</sup>, show clearly that **this renewed conscience** presupposes as acquired a more precise distinction between the classical and modern meaning of ‘political’, without then re-attributing the gaps in the former to the ability of the latter.

1.4 In short, up to now, between the Catholic spiritual revival *on the one hand* and the prevailing social teaching of the Church and the models of political culture most widespread among Catholics *on the other*, a strong **tension** is taking shape with regard to the expectations to hold *in the face of* and *the prerogatives to attribute to* politics. Above all, European-Continental Catholics still appear to be driven to ask of and concede too much to political institutions and organisations. And now it is no longer even enough to understanding through which historical process – certainly not without reason – this social and cultural situation developed. The risk is that this ‘hyperpolitical’ Catholicism that ever more reaches the heights of a real and proper ‘Catholic nationalism’, can operate under the cover of some doctrinal quotation when its function is actually that of screening cultural prejudices or corporate interests<sup>24</sup>.

## THE POLITICAL COMMITMENT OF CATHOLICS AND GLOBALISATION

2.1 Concerning this topic **we are lacking** in systematic studies, analysis of the attitudes and individual and collective behaviour of Catholics<sup>25</sup>, and Magisterial texts<sup>26</sup> (although obviously there are brief direct and indirect references in texts and records of the Holy See, and in the course of its diplomatic activity).

<sup>22</sup> One thinks of the document from the American Bishops on economic matters published in the 1980s. Cf. Gannon Th.M., ed. *The Catholic Challenge to the American Economy*, Macmillan, New York 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Right from the outset this document takes up and makes use of the emphasis offered by no. 42 of *Christifideles laici*.

<sup>24</sup> In this context it would be also opportune to develop a contribution to discerning Catholic pacifism.

<sup>25</sup> At the moment in Italy there is an interesting study of Catholic academics being conducted by Professor Roberto Cipriani and the author of this article. Cf. the advance material offered by the magazine “Coscienza” published by the Movimento Ecclesiale di Impegno Culturale.

<sup>26</sup> However, we must not forget the two texts *promoted* by COMECE: *Gouvernance mondiale* (2001) and *Gouvernance mondiale. Assessment* (2003), as well as *Ouvrons nos cœurs*, being worked on by COMECE through a vast process of debate, is very interesting with regard to the theme examined here.

2.2 There is not enough space to justify the choice of definitions and theories of globalisation that one could use here. Suffice to say that here the intention is to focus on **two elements** of the globalisation process, normally shared *as much* by the majority of experts who end up being in favour of the process (with varying degrees of intensity) *as by* those who end up in the opposing camp. There is no difficulty in fact in registering a rather large consensus on the fact that **(a)** with globalisation comes a most notable increase in the level of complexity and social contingency, and the fact that **(b)** globalisation is in some way connected to an unknown increase in every form of social differentiation and in particular differentiation of a 'functional' character between the social subsystems.

Despite the profound theoretical and lexical differences, we can find these two ideas in the works of authors such as R. Robertson, N. Luhmann, U. Beck, Z. Baumann, A. Giddens, and so on, even if it is clear that the expression just used comes from Luhmann's proposal<sup>27</sup>. But something largely coincidental could be said – for example – presenting globalisation as the maximum extension of that institutional order proper to a society characterised by the incommutability of its “*social goods*”<sup>28</sup>. In short, due to its elevated complexity-contingency and due to its internal differentiation, first of all functional, global society tends to be a society among other things but not secondarily **(a)** unorganisable and **(b)** polyarchic: a society “without a centre and without a summit”<sup>29</sup>.

Even if you have already gathered the rather benevolent way in which I look at the opportunities offered by the globalisation process, here I have *absolutely* no intention of convincing others to share the same opinion. Instead, the aim is to show the potential *bipartisan* agreement – so to speak – over some characteristics attributed to the phenomenon of globalisation, among which are the two schools of thought already mentioned.

2.3 So we must ask ourselves what happens to politics in the globalisation process. (Here, obviously, only in reference to the two elements just indicated, cf. 2.2a and 2.2b). With reference to **b** it can be said that the communicative codes, political organisations and institutions see their capacity to dominate communicative codes, organisations and institutions which make primary reference to other functionally differentiated subsystems greatly reduced. But, given that this tendency to functional differentiation on the part of society is rather generalised, *it can also be said* that with the process of globalisation the political subsystem – as any other social subsystem: economy, science, etc.<sup>30</sup> - sees its own autonomy grow and not just its own influence decrease, something which obviously does not exclude at all a political influence on economic affairs, an economic influence on political ones, etc.

But, *and this is the point*, it is one thing to place an *anti-trust* law in the market, it is another to maintain there companies directly controlled by the state or corporations of

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. for example Luhmann N. (ed.), *Soziale Differenzierung. Zur Geschichte einer Idee*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1985, and *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1997, p. 743ff. and 806ff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. Walzer, *Sfere di giustizia*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. N. Luhmann / R. De Giorgi, *Teoria della società*, Angeli, Milan 1992. But cf. also the theory proposed and gradually elaborated by R. A. Dahl, from the *Preface to democratic theory*, Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago 1956, e.g. p. 82-83.

<sup>30</sup> The process is not exclusively political. For example (cf. L. Diotallevi, *Il rompicapo della secolarizzazione italiana*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2002) in order to see how often with clear limits secularisation theories describe in general *this same phenomenon* from the point of view of the religious subsystem (cf. N. Luhmann, *Funktion der Religion*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, especially Chapter IV, and *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 2000).

public employees who cannot be dismissed, it is one thing to be able to determine the value of a *currency* through a political decision it is another to not be able to do it.

With reference to *a*, on the other hand, the political subsystem, like every other society subsystem, appears subject to a pressure which tends to make the large organisations seem insignificant, to multiply the number and importance of the organisational populations in its whole, and finally to make intricate the *polity* of each organisation *ceteris paribus*<sup>31</sup>. Even on politics, then, there is imposed a degree of flexibility to a level so far unknown and at times even incomprehensible if not unacceptable for the political culture of European-continental modernity.

**The principle political victim of globalisation** – of society's functional differentiation and the internal complexity of the political subsystem, too – is therefore the 'State', obviously in the proper and strong sense of the word<sup>32</sup>, and even more so the 'social State', as summit of the claims of this family of organisational models planned in view of the social primacy of politics.

**That *definitely, definitely*** – it is worth repeating it – **does not mean** that politics in the classical sense of the word and politics in the modern sense are per se being overcome by the globalisation process. Simply, globalisation constitutes a serious threat (and vice versa) to *a certain type* of political self-organisation in the modern sense of the word and so this too appropriates a primary competence over the whole of the political sphere in the classical sense of the word. Globalisation threatens the 'State', but the 'State' is not the only modern form of political self-organisation.

2.4 There is no need to remind us all how not only in public opinion but also among the analysts and observers of continental Europe today there is a prevailing attitude of **resistance and opposition** to globalisation<sup>33</sup>. It does not matter if sometimes such attitudes aim at phenomena resulting from an inadequate interpretation of some aspect of globalisation on the part of social actors rather than the effects of globalisation itself, or if – at other times – the socio-political culture implicit in the idea of 'State' is still considered realistic and preferable, or that of social equality instead of equality of opportunity. What is noted here, and is so clear that it doesn't even need to be demonstrated, is that the vast majority of forms of resistance or opposition to globalisation that we are getting to know – however they may be judged – appeal to the value of the *common good as the specific aim of politics*.

2.5 It is also well known how widespread is such a sense at all levels of the **ecclesial Community**, both among the laity and religious, among bishops and theologians. Even the predominant emphases in the texts promoted by COMECE see the application of the direction of the common good potentially entrusted to a world *governance* of an exclusively *political* nature<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. S. Cassese, *La crisi dello Stato*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2002 and *Lo spazio politico globale*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2003, A. Moravcski, *Europe without illusions*, a paper presented at the third conference of the Spaak Foundation – Harvard University, Brussels 6-8 September 2002, Ph.C. Schmitter, *Come democratizzare l'Unione europea e perché*, il Mulino, Bologna 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Cf., from among the many references possible, U. Beck, *Che cosa è la globalizzazione?*, Carocci, Rome 1999 p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> This would be the opportune moment to introduce the controversial chapter about the use of force at a global level that a little hastily we can still define as 'war'.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. No. 65ff. of COMECE, *Gouvernance mondiale* (2001).

2.6 A *second thesis* that I would like to offer is based on the observation that the globalisation process – independently of whether it is viewed favourably or not – tends to appear as a process which at the same time tends to reduce and specialise – without excluding – the political contribution (in the modern sense) to the common good<sup>35</sup>.

### CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT TODAY

3.1 Reflecting on the theme given to me (*Spirituality and socio-political engagement. Catholics in a globalised context*), I believed it was worthwhile to remind you of one question – perhaps a strange and certainly controversial. I was stimulated as much by rational theories as by convictions, which matured through ecclesial experience. This contribution was therefore put together trying to emphasise a *convergence*. Just as some issues in biblical-spiritual research, so also some implications for the globalisation process seemed to lead to a no longer exclusive understanding, but one that was no less demanding, of the relationship between the political subsystem and the common good. Christian and ecclesial conscience could today also be pushed by the convergence of these dispositions of reason towards a ‘polyarchic’ understanding of welfare, and alienated from the support (today fairly widespread) towards a social ‘monarchy’ of politics, and especially from the statutory plan as its finished expression. In other words, among other things this convergence could drive one to think more radically not only the ‘vertical’ but also the ‘horizontal’ dimension of the principle of subsidiarity, allowing for the fact that research of the Word of God in the Scriptures and the pressure exercised by social changes direct the renewal of ‘criteria’ through which the political experience of Catholics and the Church’s social teaching have left us this principle<sup>36</sup>.

In parallel, the same convergence between the two dispositions of reason mentioned, while it discusses a certain socio-political culture driven by the statutory model, repropose to believers and to the ecclesial Community in a new and more acute way responsibilities towards the *πολις* and each of its spheres, obviously including the specifically political sphere. In the crisis and delegitimisation of the State, Catholics should grasp with approval and hope the promise of overcoming the pretence of absolutism long advanced by modern politics (in its European-continental version), they should in fact seize the opportunity for reassertion of the conscience of the debt of the political decision towards custom and its values (supporting element of political cultures not of *civil law* but of *common law*!).

Perhaps I will be unable to underline sufficiently the fact that what I have arrived at is simply an interpretative hypothesis about the possible convergence of two cultural and social tendencies. As a theory, it is simply offered up for discussion and discernment. I do not deny the careful *conviction* with which I advance this opinion, but I would not want attributed to it any pretences that at the moment clearly do not belong to it. Instead, to discuss a proposal of this kind demands *no matter what* the assumption of a ***spiritual and theological attitude*** for which, in the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar, it is essential to

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<sup>35</sup> Or, if we adopt the classical sense of political, we can say that globalisation renders the global *πολις* ever more polyarchic and differentiated. In other words, globalisation integrates planetary *πολις* globalising its functions (money, law, scientific methods), decentralising the ever-provisory balance between these, and leaving to personal arbitration a greater share of competence concerning the question about identity, which can develop ever and only in a definite context of *mores* not precluded by the critical application and experience of difference.

<sup>36</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis conscientia*, 22 March 1986, no. 74.

see how “all that has been realized hitherto is not what Christ now, immediately demands of me, of you, of our generation”<sup>37</sup>. The theologian appointed a Cardinal by John Paul II wrote that perhaps we have placed ourselves in situations, which allow us to understand something of the Revelation better than those who have gone before us in the Christian life, just as it could be the other way around. (And the same will probably happen in the future).

3.2 I would like simply to indicate some of the many *particular themes* which acquire primary relevance from the choice of placing this convergence at the centre of our attention, even if only temporarily.

3.2.1 First of all a new hermeneutic and theoretical work is urgently needed capable respectively of **(i) distinguishing** in a better fashion the places in the Church’s social teaching where reference is made to the classical meaning of politics and those where politics is treated in the modern sense (let’s say the ‘Weberian’ sense of the word), and of **(ii) helping** to spread in the Church the meaning of this difference, a useful for anyone who honestly attempts to still try to attribute entirely the competences of the former (politics in the classical sense of the word) to the latter (politics in the modern sense of the term). In any case, clarifying this distinction makes reflection and ecclesiastical dialogue more effective, above all when it does not enclose us in the European-continental mind-set, as is well shown by the recent and already quoted Note from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

3.2.2 Secondly, a **tighter and more open comparison** must be set in motion between Christian spiritual research-experience and the elaboration-transmission of the Christian conscience. The risk that these assume two parallel, and therefore barren paths is already upon us, in large sectors of so many of our local Churches that are examples of the simple juxtaposition of ‘spiritualisms’ and ‘pragmatisms’<sup>38</sup>. For example, one thinks of the spiritual and cultural effects of the weakening of the eschatological tension which should instead animate and enliven Christian life and knowledge, or the utopian and irenic decline of this tension and – to refer to a terrible reality – how much this harms the cause of a realistic commitment to peace.

3.2.3 What also appears to be particularly urgent is a new period of **comparison** between the political culture of Catholics and the magisterial pronouncements made in continental Europe and those expressed in Britain and the United States (the latter developed with regard to “*stateless societies*”)<sup>39</sup>. It is worth remembering here how much a greater openness to those Catholic views ‘from over the channel’ and ‘from over the ocean’ was decisive in so many conciliar passages, the heritage of which we benefit from

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<sup>37</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Razing the Bastions*, Communio Books, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1993 p. 27. Again: “The truth of Christian life is like manna: it is not possible to hoard it for it is fresh today and spoiled tomorrow”, p. 33. G. Angelini (*La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, in G. Ambrosio et al, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Ed. Glossa, Milan 1989, p 79) offers a good example of how theology can accompany this striving for renewal by a better understanding of new applications with which the Magisterium and, in more general terms, a knowledgeable belief have still not sufficiently dialogued with each other.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. in Italy, besides the work of Bruno Maggioni already mentioned, the essay *La deriva spiritualistica* by Giuseppe Angelini, published in February 2004 in “La rivista del clero italiano”.

<sup>39</sup> Wouldn’t it be more useful to go back to a more careful attentiveness to wonder and the toquevillian lesson? Moreover, the path of ecclesial comparison is never travelled enough. With reference to this contribution, think how much could be learned from the experiences of Christian and Catholic Middle Eastern churches, which from the 7<sup>th</sup> century have found themselves radically excluded from almost any link with a political regime. Cf. some passages from R. Larini’s *introduction* to G. Khodr’, *Nella nudità di Cristo*, Qiqajon, Bose 1996, p. 14.



today. On the positive side it is worth noting the particular American contribution to the Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*<sup>40</sup>, while on the negative there is the fact that nothing of such a kind came up in the process of drawing up *Gaudium et Spes*<sup>41</sup>. There is a need, then, to regain all the ecclesial richness generated in different times and places by the comparison between the Christian life and different variations in social modernisation.

- 3.2.4 Logically connected to the theme just mentioned, but somewhat autonomous because of the urgency with which it appears today, mention must be made of the opportunity to *re-think* the major question about the relationships between the organisations of the political system and those of the religious system (already noted in the simplified form of the question about the relationship between Church and ‘State’). Such *re-thinking* must be done in the light of the existence not of just one modern model of the distinction between *religion* and *politics*, what can be termed the *secular* model, but also another, second, equally modern model: the American one of the *disestablishment of church and* (note!) *free exercise*. Don’t many of the controversies and difficulties to which we are spectators today, from those about veils and crucifixes to those about preambles<sup>42</sup>, also perhaps stem from the persistence with which the availability of a vast range of distinctive models is ignored? And isn’t it a bit funny that so many continental-European Catholics who are ‘supporters of the State’ complain about the consistent laicism of the continental-European ‘State supporters’?
- 3.2.5 Without pretending to have provided a complete list, I would like to end by suggesting a path for reflection, which, starting from the discussion on convergence set out previously, reaches a point where renewal of the political culture and the spiritual life intersect. To accept in faith a personal and social condition of pluralism, complexity, contingency, which tears, signifies – this year perhaps *we must* express it using Karl Rahner’s terms – accepting to assume a more correct attitude to the exposure of each believer to a condition of *concupiscence* which was that of Jesus and can only be ours, too<sup>43</sup>. In the Christian life we are called to struggle and choose. We cannot escape this world nor ideologise – or even worse sacralise – its momentary order<sup>44</sup>. Cultures and political institutions become very dangerous when they dedicate themselves to this objective. We cannot conceal the reality of this struggle, this spiritual competitive spirit. Instead, we are called to become capable of choosing, “under the guidance of the Spirit” (A. Louf). Accepting this permanent condition of the Christian life also helps to discern between different spiritual proposals and different ecclesial paths. Accepting this condition helps to better understand the specific value of the forms properly termed ‘*associative*’ compared to the other dynamic intra-ecclesial groupings (movements, groups, confraternities, etc.)<sup>45</sup>, especially today when such discernment is absolutely necessary before the risk of a drift in the denominationalisation of

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. J. T. Noonan, *The lustre of our Country*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles, London 1997 and S. Scatena, *La fatica della libertà*, il Mulino, Bologna 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. A. Komonchak, *La redazione della Gaudium et Spes*, in “Il Regno” 1999/13, p. 446-455. It strikes me as being a particularly useful reference also because the reflection there cannot be said to be driven by the author’s concerns.

<sup>42</sup> A less important question than that touched upon by Article 51 of the Draft Constitutional Treaty of the European Union.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *Considerazioni teologiche sulla secolarizzazione*, Edd. Paoline, Rome 1969.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> For example see the recent intervention of P. Scarafoni (*L’importanza dei nuovi movimenti spirituali e la nuova evangelizzazione*) at the video conference organised by the Congregation for the Clergy on the ‘Lay faithful’, held on 30 March 2004.

Catholicism<sup>46</sup>. The words of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini spring to mind, interpreting the “religious choice” of associations of *catholic action* following and in prophetic loyalty to the Council<sup>47</sup>, and those words help us to understand what John Paul II writes about *catholic action* in *Ecclesia in Europa* (no. 16). So, the right and proper comparison with political responsibilities (general and specific, daily and extraordinary) helps believers to better understand the need without alternatives of an “adult faith” (*EE* no. 50ff.), capable of going beyond emotions, a sense of dogmatic belonging, sectorial identities, and psychic activities, capable of living in a daily regime of choices and signs (cf. *SC* no. 7). And vice versa: a believing adult will know how to become morally mature even through the exercise and ecclesial discernment of choices which realistically know how to take as much from the responsibilities towards the *πολις* in its whole as those towards each of its subsystems and therefore also to that which is specifically political.

### **FACING THE POLITICAL REFORMS IN PROGRESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

4.1 I would like to conclude by giving a quick glance at one of the questions that has its epicentre in the discussion about the draft of the Constitutional Treaty prepared by the Convention for the Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union. As we know, the European Union has so far been established according to a non-governmental<sup>48</sup> model but as an element, even as a whole of elements of a fairly complex European political and

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. L. Diotallevi, *Verso una denominazionalizzazione del cattolicesimo italiano?*, in “Religioni e Società” 2001/40-41, p. 48-59, and *Italian Case and American Theories: refining secularization paradigm*, in “Sociology of Religion” 2002 63/2, or *Cattolicesimo in via di settarizzazione?*, in “Concilium” 3/2003.

<sup>47</sup> In the homily at a Funeral Mass for Vittorio Bachelet, President of Azione Cattolica Italiana in the post-Conciliar years and Vice-president of the Superior Council of the Magistrature, assassinated by the Red Brigade in the early 1980s, Cardinal C. M. Martini saw in the life of this exemplary “layman” “the length, the breadth, the height and the depth” of the “lay” vocation, rediscovering there a most dense spiritual significance and the strong biblical roots of that “religious choice” with which *catholic action* assimilated the Magisterium of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council and was led by it along the path of a profound renewal. Martini called for a timely shift in attention as to what had been the focal point of the violent controversies within and against ACI from the 1970s. Such controversies focussed – so to speak – on the adjective “religious”: ‘What is and what isn’t religious?’ and again ‘In society, how far must the Church’s initiative go and where can it not go, when it is an initiative of Church and ‘lay Christians’ and when it is just of ‘lay Christians’ (according to the heritage of old schemes, including that of Maritain)? On that occasion Martini expressed himself in this way with regard to “religious choice”: “Even more important (*than the adjective ‘religious’, Editor’s note*) is the noun “choice” which must be understood in reference to its biblical basis and is linked to the theme of discernment. Among other things I remember the text of the letter to the Philippians, with the appeal made to the whole Christian community: “My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception (love therefore enriches and works better, little by little as it becomes aware of the reality it discerns), so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ...” (*Phil* 1:9). The category of choice or discernment is fundamental for the spiritual figure of the lay person and always expresses better than other similar categories the sense of positiveness and attention to God’s plan in the world; it is not an immediate and definitive judgement about things, which is the task of God alone, but a careful and patient discernment of how the Spirit gives life to and builds his church in the world”. This is now in C. M. Martini, *Le virtù del cristiano*, Centro Ambrosiano – Edizioni Piemme, Milan 1988, p. 210-211. For a theological-spiritual reflection on the theme of ‘choice’ cf. G. Angelini, *Le ragioni della scelta*, Qiqajon, Magnano 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. for example the texts already mentioned by S. Cassese and Moravcsik, capable – especially the former – of effectively showing how the EU has up to now proceeded with the demolition of the state monopoly of legal production. We have a community right (many, in fact!) without which the EU would be absolutely one state and while they have seen up to today their essential competences decline while the EU has grown and asserted itself. The founding states have found themselves faced with what at least virtually and in certain aspects are major difficulties in the face of the effects of the process they have set in motion, while others like the British “stateless society” is a classic example of that heterogenesis of aims which historical events often put before us.

more generally global *polity*. Today, that same European political *polity* is irreducible to that set of structures, which we call the European Union. At present, it is known that a dominant current within the Convention has tried to seize that seat (and the process of ‘enlargement’) to attempt some correction in the state sense of the political edifice of the EU, at times even proposing to make this the nucleus of a future continental state (it matters little whether it is more or less federal)<sup>49</sup>. So much so that the British Prime Minister Tony Blair has expressed the opposing position with the now famous phrase according to which the EU would be depicted as “*not a super state but a superpower*”, even a *network of superpowers*. (To these two plans could correspond two orders which must definitely not be confused: that of a strong nucleus of the EU presided over perhaps by a small group of large ‘States’, and that of a series of reinforced co-operations of variable structures).

Today Catholics can certainly not refuse to acknowledge their own responsibilities in the face of the political events just mentioned, so much so that at the outset they played a decisive and positive role. Likewise, one cannot but appreciate that around the idea that connects in priority terms the common good and politics, and practically the common good and form of state, Catholic political culture and Continental-European culture for a long time have usually found a strong meeting-point. Now the future of Europe’s political forms appears to be in discussion once again and Catholics, too, have a share in responsibility for this matter. The stakes are obvious: it is about the whole world and not just Europe, it is about Europe’s responsibility to itself and to global society. Realistically, as Europeans and as European Catholics we must ask ourselves if it will be possible, and eventually opportune, to insist on the social primacy of politics characteristic of our continental soul, or will it be better to renew ourselves culturally, too, accompanying and guiding processes already in motion at a global and intercontinental level, giving greater space to some of our other traditions, for example but not only to the British one? *What is to be made of the future political institutions of the European Union: an opportunity for further consolidation of global polyarchy or an attempt at resistance and the recovery of the social primacy of politics-in-the-form-of-a-state?*

Independent of the convictions and preferences of each, one cannot deny that placing at the centre of attention doubts (in two areas: social and theological) about the exclusivity or otherwise of the link between ‘politics’ and the ‘common good’ once again helps us a bit more, at least in grasping the difficult responsibility which we bear as Catholics with regard to the political agenda on the table. Furthermore, perhaps facing this agenda with seriousness establishes for Catholics even a help and stimulus towards a profound renewal of their own spirituality as well as their own political culture.

Perhaps it is worth adding that the fact that these questions divide peoples, European liberals and socialists, and Catholics who clearly face them, could reveal itself to be an element capable in some ways of making the common quest both more difficult for some and more stimulating and opportune for others.

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<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note *how different* (!) it is from the position adopted in no. 113 of *Ecclesia in Europa*. The EU remains an instrument, however important, of an aim, which exceeds it. *If* the state model for which political integration is equivalent to political unification is abandoned, and *if* it is understood how the political integration of Europe can be more effectively pursued by a complex political, variable *multi-level* structure of *governance*, it then becomes easier to understand that point of the Encyclical [Translator’s note: *sic*]. On the contrary, for a most recent example of the identification between European political integration and the “enlargement” of the EU, cf. R. A. Siebenbrock, *Europa: un tentativo di definizione*, in “Concilium” 2/2004, p. 21.

4.2 Having reached the end of this journey, we can and perhaps must make one final observation. How many more times down the centuries, and even in the last two, thinking in terms of liturgical renewal or the rights of believers in the Church, of social responsibility or a deepening of the Mystery of the inclusive People of God, there is imposed today on European Catholic “lay men” and “lay women” choices that in one way or another contribute to defining, and we hope in making more faithful to the Lord’s call, the future of the *whole* Church. The cautious exercise of political responsibilities on the part of the “laity” could produce a positive spiritual maturity capable, as in the past, of spreading through the whole ecclesial Community. A spiritual growth of the “laity” could indicate new directions for a less inadequate exercise of the responsibility of *all* the believers in the face of the “joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted” (GS no. 1). If that were to happen according to the Spirit it will restore new youth to faith and to the Church, it will show once again the truth of the Balthasarian prophecy – and of so many others: “The future of the Church (and today she has the greatest opportunities) depends on whether laymen can be found who live out of the unbroken power of the Gospel”, and for this: “What at all costs must be shattered is the historical consciousness of Christians, a consciousness which has become senile because the pulse that beats in it is a pulse of insufficient faith”<sup>50</sup>.

(Original: Italian)

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<sup>50</sup> H. U. von Balthasar, *Op. cit.* p. 42 and 43. Again: “That is why cooperation between theologians and laymen, for example in the form of a “lay council” for bishops and pastors, is something demanded not only by the practical-minded Catholic Action, but also by the Church’s theology which is to be read from the hour now sounding in the world” (p. 85).

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## **How we present the spiritual roots of our commitment to the European societies**

I hope that I have correctly understood the rather complicated title given to me for this lecture. I presume that my task is to say some words about how we ought to present - "praesentare" - to actualise, to make present in a vibrant way, to present as a gift, the spiritual roots, that is our holy Faith, our Faith history, our Tradition, not as a tin containing preserved dogmas or dusty history, but as a living faith, that we together share throughout history, that it is our joint venture, our commitment - or "co-missio" - to communicate, in an ongoing dialogue, also today and tomorrow in our societies. At the end of every mass we are sent out to do exactly that, it is indeed our co-mission, not as aggressive violators but as the People of God rendering service to our societies, in respect and mutual cooperation with all our neighbours. "People are waiting for an answer ... it will be increasingly clear that the People of God and the human race in whose midst it lives render service to each other. Thus the mission of the Church will show its religious, and by that very fact, its supremely human character." (Gaudium et spes, 11).

Let me first of all remind you that our Catholic faith is a call both from the past, the present and from the future. Our faith tradition is our ongoing exploration and transmission of our belief under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our faith reflections once gave birth to a structured Church, to the development of the ministry to its present form, to our sacramental theology. Our Catholic history is a history of a constant communication, with its peaks and its depths. We are living and creating and proclaiming our faith tradition also today, or may be rather actively receiving and interpreting and confessing it, it is a project in the making. Also Fatima is part of that lived and received and interpreted adventure. How to understand in the light of our faith the contradictory signs of our present European situation?

But tradition is also a call from the future, an anticipation of the fulfilment of the promises of God, a participation in the times that lie ahead. The spiritual roots, our tradition, are the Church collective memory, but memory exists and functions not only for the sake of the past that is remembered but also for the sake of the present and the future. When an elderly person is living more in the past than in the present we find that to be a sign that all is not well. If such signs are noted we might call for a doctor - or dealing with the Church we call in emergency situations for a Council - to find an antidote, to restore order, to reform the mind, to cure the memory.

It is the vocation of the Church to remember the great deeds of God, making them present. That is what *anamnesis* is all about, making the past actively present and even with a touch of the future, the *anamnesis* in the Eucharistic prayer tries to cure us from amnesia, from a loss of memory. It seems sometimes as if our present European generation has got a touch of amnesia, rather rapidly forgetting the great deeds of God. "I would like to mention in a particular way the loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression

of living without spiritual roots and somewhat like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history." (*Ecclesia in Europa I*, 7). The question is how to make all this understandable and relevant today? How to implement our Catholic insights into our societies?

Maybe I need to be a little bit more down to earth and give some examples from my own experience in the far North of the Catholic world, from Scandinavia, and I might disappoint you by adding that I have no simple answers to give to you. But I sometimes find it to be a great gift from God to live as a **diaspora Church**, with a mixture of people from maybe **ninety countries**, and with **all the different rites** of the Church present, in a **secularized society**, in many ways it is a blessing - don't feel sorry for us, the Church in Scandinavia may have problems, but we do have a rather optimistic approach towards the future, it is exciting to be pioneers, we are proud of our cultural and ethnical diversity. Sometimes catholic visitors from the US or from say Germany don't seem to realize that "small, odd and exotic is beautiful"!

May I begin by giving you some basic facts? Scandinavia, with 23 million inhabitants is geographically about the same size as Portugal, Spain and France together. We Catholics in the Nordic countries are maybe 300 000, all included, in eight dioceses or districts. I am a secular priest in the diocese of Stockholm in Sweden, where the Catholics are a small minority of two or three percent of the population. It is a well-known fact that Sweden, as well as the rest of Scandinavia, is one of the most secularized parts of the world, also with a long anti-Catholic tradition. In fact before 1860 it was in law forbidden for a Swede to join the Catholic Church, if you transgressed the Law you were expelled from the country and your property confiscated. The last restrictions were taken away just some few years ago. Also today the Catholic Church is primarily an immigrant Church, many of the immigrants are living in the outskirts of the bigger cities where the Catholic infrastructure often is weak, with few churches, and normally no Catholic schools, convents or other Catholic institutions.

If you visit Scandinavia you will probably notice the many beautiful medieval churches that still exist, they were once Catholic but due to the reformation turned into Protestant use (in many of them the medieval altars, sculptures and paintings are preserved - Mary and all the saints are there). In Scandinavia it is therefore natural to think of Catholicism as something medieval, something belonging to the past, to a lost world. In recent decades however a number of Swedish intellectuals, university teachers, artists and writers have converted to Catholicism. Four of the 18 chairs in the prestigious Swedish Academy that chooses the winner of the Noble Prize in Literature are at present occupied by Catholics. We have - as you can already understand - a sociological strange mixture of Swedish intellectual converts, a minority of well established Catholics, and many recently arrived immigrants, three categories with perhaps few interests in common, who try together to build the Church. Many immigrants have adjusted well to their new cultural context others have drifted into criminal activities and eventually ended up in prison. As the former bishop of Stockholm used to say: "Catholics are overrepresented in two institutions in Sweden: the Swedish Academy and the prisons."

But even if we Catholics are a small (but growing) minority we are not totally invisible. In the Stockholm-region (with two million inhabitants), there are around 100.000 people participating during a week-end in a religious service (or 5% of the population), quite a few of the brave few are attending a Catholic mass. We are trying to cooperate with the other churches and denominations. May I add that most of the Christian churches and denominations in Sweden have a large number of hymns in common, in an ecumenical part in

our different hymn-books and, as well, a common modern Bible translation. The Catholic Church together with the Pentecostals introduced last year on a national basis a debate about Jesus Christ - "a Jesus-manifest" - it created echoes in all the major newspapers and in the Radio and Television, the discussion was going on for months. We have a challenge to try to reintroduce - with all people of good will - a metaphysical awareness in our society (hopefully avoiding the strange dualism of the past) that is very exiting!

There are problems, it is not always easy to be the only Catholic or even Christian in school or at work (a teenager in my parish recently said to me that it was no problem for him because there were "few Swedes in his class"), it is naturally sometimes difficult for a believer to explain and defend his "strange" behaviour. It is a problem already with the words, after 400 years of Protestantism many important words have got a "taste" of Lutheranism (I have understood that protestants in Italy, Spain and Portugal also have a problem with the language!), but even worse "religion" is often transformed to something "private" and "subjective", an "opinion" or even a "hobby". I can go to the Mass or collect stamps - we have all our different and somewhat odd interests!

1) One big advantage being a minority is that the Sunday Eucharist is in a sense a **family celebration**, the Catholics often know each other and at the obligatory Coffee/Tea after Mass (in Sweden called "the Eighth sacrament") you can notice how people from all over the world friendly mingle with each other: academics, workers, employed, unemployed, Swedes, immigrants, man and women, young and old. I think that the Scandinavian Catholic vocation is to show the Catholic unity in diversity as a sign for the secularised World. Many parishioners from traditionally "Catholic" countries have told that they have rediscovered the Faith under their new circumstances in Sweden and Scandinavia.

2) Our parishes (with few exceptions) are maybe the only places in Scandinavia (and perhaps in Europe) where people regularly meet in this **intercultural** way. We have parishes with people from more than ninety countries present at mass. In my own small parish of Saint Francis we are at least people from 20 countries a normal Sunday. We are practising what many all over Europe talk about. Many are inspired and excited to find that it is possible to work together the way we do. It creates a certain optimism and enthusiasm among Catholics. We can honestly tell you that faith unites people.

3) **The Catholic laity** are not very well organized in Sweden due to the enormous differences in background, education, linguistic capability and the problems related to the huge geographically distances (one of our parishes in the far north of Sweden has for instance the same size as Portugal), add to that the different views as to what the mission of the Catholic Church ought to be in secular Scandinavia, but still the enthusiasm is there and quite a lot of parishes have been founded because of initiatives of the faithful. Sometimes, unfortunately, a certain type of clericalism is still creating problems. The increasing involvement of the laity is crucial for the future of the Church in Scandinavia.

4) A danger in a minority situation is that **the Church might be somewhat rigid**, sometimes "more catholic than the pope", especially with many converts in leading positions in the Church, with foreign priests that might feel uncomfortable with Nordic customs, and with immigrants in search of stability after lives unsettled by experiences of war, terror and threats.

5) Naturally it is also important to add that the Catholics have a number of things **to learn from our secularised age**. Or to quote *Gaudium et spes*: "Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their (= the Christians) hearts". We not only give but receive gifts - the

equality between men and women, the institutional transparency in Scandinavia, the open society, the social welfare systems et cetera, may inspire the Church to rediscover her roots. The Church in Sweden is slowly learning to behave less as a monolithic institution and more as the people of God.

There are always a number of people complaining - at least in Sweden, hopefully not in other countries - that things today are out of order. Some claim that the Sun was shining more clearly before the Second Vatican Council, some believe it was more radiant immediately after, some have other claims - but they all tend to agree that today it is some dark clouds on the sky. If you sometimes feel like that - listen to the following quotation:

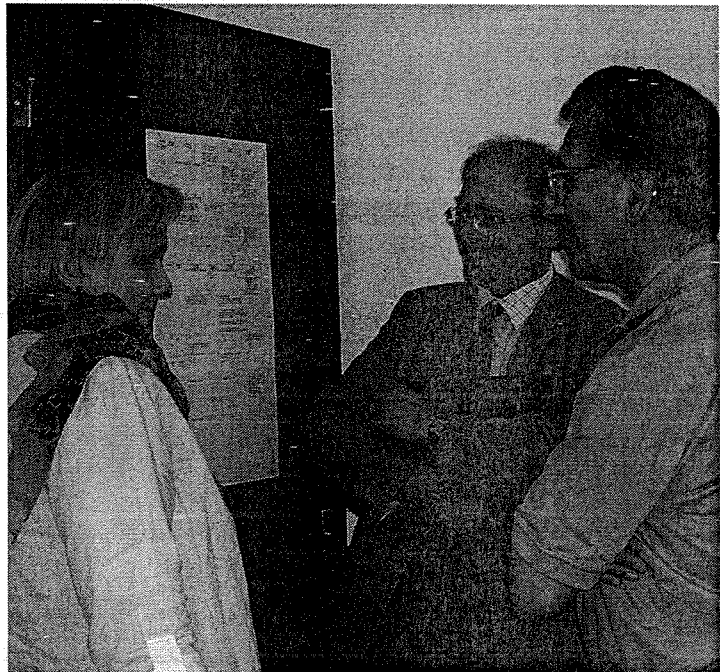
"In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who in these modern times can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse, and they behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life ... We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand." (Pope John XXIII, Opening Speech to the Council, 8)

Catholicism in Sweden may have problems, but it also enjoys the rich variety of a world Church, it is already in a rudimentary way a positive sign, and can even more convincingly one day become an inspiring model for the universal Catholic Church in this new European and global age.

I have interpreted my mission here today in a rather personal and not very academic way - my intention was to share with you some of our experiences, including our many shortcomings - and here in Fatima pledge the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for us all, inspiring us to be what we in a way already are a people elevating Christ.

(Original)





## Spirituality and Solidarity Our keywords

1. The ancient Greek salvation myth talks of Orpheus and Eurydice. Its central topic: Which is stronger, love or death? The myth is about someone who loves and fails: seen from a human perspective, death is stronger than love.
2. The ancient Church picks up the question and tells the story anew. The Christ-Orpheus does not fail. Descending to the dead of the Underworld, he returns Eurydice to the land of life and love. Love is victorious, death defeated. He succeeds thanks to a lyre on which resounds the song of laughter, hope and resurrection: the Church.
3. Where is Eurydice today? How can her situation be understood according to the Gospel? Which “keywords” can depict this state of affairs? We need an empathic theological contemporary analysis as well as an ecclesiological futurology, based on the latter. In short: which song are we to sing as a Church (= instrument at the hands of Christ-Orpheus) for Eurydice (= mankind)? We are tempting an incomplete “kairology” thanks to the keywords solidarity and spirituality, and are thereupon searching for the “church song”.

### SOLIDARITY

4. Today, we are witnessing the “disposal of redundant elements”: *“Even in rich societies, each of us can become superfluous. Where should he or she go?”* (Hans Magnus Enzensberger).
5. The following are at risk of becoming “dispensable”: those who do not work (“*working society*”), those who do not buy (“*consumer society*”), those who do not experience (the so-called “*Erlebnisgesellschaft*”, “*experience or adventure society*”), those who do not know (“*knowledge society*”), and those who do not have the right genes (“*biological science society*”).
6. Amongst others, this threat moreover concerns the long-term unemployed, the handicapped, the unproductive and expensive dying (we are planning the social compatibility of premature demise and call it the liberalisation of euthanasia), children (who are disturbing adults and are considered more worthless than cars), entire continents (“*Fortress Europe*”).
7. We are standing at a political crossroads today: one road leads to a cold “waste management culture” (or rather non-culture), the other one towards a culture of solidarity. Only if solidarity is achieved and realised democratically, is there hope for a life in peace and freedom.
8. Hence, one may ask whether the European people are in fact ready for solidarity. The answer is ambivalent: the wish is strong: the most important thing to learn for children is to learn how to share. On its way to turning into an action of solidarity this desire is stifled by a

jungle of fears. Especially the fear of seeing the desire for optimal happiness and minimised pain unfulfilled.

### SPIRITUALITY

9. Though we live longer, all in all we live shorter: formerly, people lived eternally at the age of 30; today the mark is set at 90. The consoling prospect of a hereafter has shifted to this very life. Within these 90 years we want optimised pain-free happiness: in our love life, in our work, in our entertainment. The guiding idea for life in Europe is “Life as the last chance” (Marianne Gronemeyer).

10. This “life as the last chance” turns out to be hasty, overstrained, anxious and selfish, that is lacking solidarity.

11. It leads more and more - especially young - people to a form of escapism: an escape towards virtual life (TV), alcohol, drugs, crime, psychosomatic diseases (e.g. depression), sects, suicide.

12. There is however a revolt against such a life: the revival of spirituality as a trend of the late nineties (Mathias Horx) as emerging from a sharpened secularity. A spiritual search of a new quality is taking place and presents many dimensions: journey to the inner, far away travels, healing, community, strength, and a new world.

### THE SONG

13. This human race (today’s Eurydice) needs an appropriate church song (in the hands of Christ-Orpheus). A well-balanced spiritualization and deaconisation of the Church is to be promoted.

14. Spiritualization of the Church: „Tomorrow’s pious will be a mystical, someone who has ‘experienced’ something, or else he shall not be at all.” (Karl Rahner). What is needed is first hand God experience – accompanied by the “experienced”. This requires spiritual places, spiritual persons (women and men of God), spiritual procedures (service, mystagogical missions). Spiritualization in accordance with the Gospels means an immersion in the living God.

15. Whoever immerses himself in God appears God-like amidst men, especially the poor (Ex 3,77-10). Thus grows a community-oriented church culture whose features are: looking at instead of away, entering instead of (just) appearing, and empathy instead of mere pity.

16. It is of great importance for the Church to keep a balance between spirituality and solidarity (see Mk 12,28ff.). *“A church which turns around itself and thus forgets God becomes immune to suffering. Whoever though immerses himself in God appears amidst men. Besides, this road can be reversed: whoever meets men will find God in the same. (see Mt 25).”* (Close to God and men. (Gott und den Menschen nahe) Passauer Pastoralplan 2000)<sup>3</sup>

(Original: German)

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<sup>3</sup> Lit: Zulehner, Paul M. / Brandner, Josef: Meine Seele dürstet nach dir (Psalm 63,2). GottesPastoral, Ostfildern 2002. – Zulehner, Paul M. / Polak, Regina / Hager, Isa: Kehrt die Religion wieder? Religion im Leben der Menschen 1970-2000, Ostfildern 2002. – Zulehner, Paul M.: Aufbrechen oder untergehen. So geht Kirchenentwicklung, Ostfildern 2003.

**Róża THUN,**  
Warsaw / Poland

## **How to promote spiritual and ethical values in the societies of the new member states of the European Union**

The question you asked me to answer is “How to promote spiritual and ethical values in the societies of the new member states of the European Union?” Especially at present, in these days following the last European Summit I have to admit that in Poland the question is rather put the other way round. Is this due to my misunderstanding of the question or does it mean that we know so little about each other?

You asked me how to promote spiritual and ethical values in the societies of the **new** EU member states. Since the adoption of the European Constitutional Treaty with a preamble not referring to God and to Christianity, the Polish ask themselves how to defend against the laicism reigning in the **old** member states. The prevailing feeling is that this preamble has been imposed on us by the old member states, especially by France. In consequence innumerable articles were printed in the press and debates took place on the radio and on TV in which the authors and participants were looking at how to promote spiritual and ethical values in the **old** member states.

Might it be possible that we treat each other as pagans? Is this due to a lack of knowledge or maybe a lack of mutual confidence? Christian faith is not the only field in which one can observe this phenomenon. We know the other Europeans much less than we pretend. We think of the others above all in stereotypes. May I give you some examples of stereotypes which we frequently use: the emotional coldness of the Western peoples versus the spontaneity of the slaves; the material richness of all people in the West versus the general poverty in the East; the degeneration of Western families versus for instance the submission of women to the dominance of men in Eastern countries.

I have participated in many debates on the European Constitution and I have been quite impressed by the simplistic and superficial image we have of our fellow Europeans. I have the impression that our relationship is often characterised by distrust and suspicion rather than real interest in each other and a serious dialogue. In Poland all these discussions are accompanied by real fear. The most frequent fear expressed is that we will be slowly infiltrated by a cult of consumption, by a very liberal way of life which does not respect our traditional values closely linked to our families and religious practice, and that the role the Church is playing in public life will be diminishing. Many Polish ask themselves a very serious question: was our government right in accepting a preamble to the new European Constitution which does not mention the historical role of Christianity on our continent and which imposes laicism on us? Laicism is something strange and not very sympathetic to us. All these people would, therefore, be quite surprised to hear that you, the laypeople in the Western countries, would like to promote Christian and spiritual values in Catholic countries like Poland, Lithuania and a few others.

It is quite easy to state the difference in religious practice and spiritual education in our societies. One thing you can quite easily notice coming to Poland is that the churches are full, that a religious youth assembly organised by a Dominican easily attracts 250 persons, and the

Pope even 2 million. In August one can meet groups of pilgrims marching from all over Poland towards Czestochowa. One has to see all the processions taking place at the Feast of Corpus Christi in order to understand the richness of our religious traditions. Surely, these traditions are largely based on an emotional attitude towards the Church. But this is beautiful and deeply rooted in our - often difficult - history. Every generation in Poland has experienced the importance of our fidelity towards the Church in order to protect our personal liberty and our national identity - especially in sinister times such as military occupation and totalitarian dictatorship. In consequence, a cross that - while in earlier times forbidden - can today be found in a public room, is now not only a precious, religious sign, but also a sign of reconquered liberty. The Polish now fear to loose all this again.

In Western countries one can observe without difficulty that churches are empty, that the rhythm of life is less, or not at all, penetrated by religious feasts. However, there is an active presence of laypeople in the Church, which, in Eastern countries, is less common and thus unfortunately only understood to a minor degree. This lay presence impresses me profoundly. While there are less people actively living their Catholic faith, those who do assume more responsibility for the Church and social life than we in the East recognize or understand. In Germany, for instance, Christian organisations play an important role in public life. They also run numerous help programmes for countries that need assistance. In Poland we lack this kind of lay commitment. Talking to you about all this I am still under the impression of the Katholikentag (Catholic Assembly) in Ulm/Germany, in which I recently had the chance to take part.

Regarding the old Europe, to me it seems essential to state that Christian values are observed and practiced in public, professional and private life by a large majority – Christians and others. Even those rejecting them intellectually and by words observe Christian values in every day's life. Here, I think of the sense of responsibility for one's own country: for instance the election turnout (participation in elections is much higher in the West than in my country), professional ethics and transparent organisation of institutions (which is not perfect, I know, however, there is still much more to be done in Eastern countries); I think of the widespread commitment to non-governmental organisations and initiatives, organised solidarity in form of social welfare systems, medical services and foreign aid for developing countries and help organised in the case of catastrophe.

All these examples (and many other things) are to me proof of the respect of the human person and brotherly love, even if it is called differently. By mentioning these examples, I would like to stress that we as Christians should see them as examples of realizing Christian values and should openly denominate them as such. In this way one might promote Christian values in the societies of the new EU members states, which regard themselves as true Christians. We need a profound discussion on the meaning of the practice of Christian values in public, professional and private life in our societies. And we do not have to be afraid of putting into question our present image of the others and ourselves. We have to strive for dialogue instead of judging each other.

I count on your participation, your help and the forthcoming discussions, which might be rich, fruitful and efficient. That is the best way to mutually christianize each other. The assets of the new member states in the field of religious practice can enrich the religious life in the old member states. The new EU member states could in turn follow the example of Western societies with regard to a higher degree of realisation of Christian values in public and professional life, the functioning of Catholic organisations and the commitment of laypeople.

(Original: French)

**Gergely ROSTA,**  
Budapest / Hungary

## **How we envision the realization of ethical values in the societies of the old member states of the European Union**

The famous Hungarian author, Sándor Márai relates an incidence that happened to him while waiting in a Swiss train station. When the train arrived, he intended to check his luggage in the luggage wagon and keep only the lighter bag during the ride. He handed his luggage to a train attendant and waited for a claim ticket. When this did not happen, he asked the attendant for one. The attendant looked at him with suspicion and asked him with a rather surprised tone „ You don't really think someone will want to steal your luggage?”

To Márai, this little incidence clarified the difference in the mentalities between the 'West' and the 'East and Central' European people. In Márai's opinion, the 'old' ethical values such as trust are still quite natural and evident to West Europeans. Contrary to the thinking in the Europe east of Vienna, ethical values have a limited and sometimes even a questionable effect on society. These assumptions raise various questions such as:

- (1) Which images can be found that portray the differences in the morality of the new member states, independent of whether the differences actually exist or not?
- (2) Is there indeed a difference in the realization of ethical values between the ‚old' and the ‚new' European states? Or could it be that differences within each entity be sometimes more than the differences between them?
- (3) If differences which form the dividing line between eastern and western ethical values exist, how can these differences be seized?
- (4) Are the differences in accordance with their perception? Do the images of western morality's differences accurately reflect the true differences that exist?
- (5) Where did these differences take root: from the heritage of Communism or from earlier historical processes?

It must be mentioned from the beginning that I do not intend to discuss all of these questions extensively. Starting with the last question, however, the historian, Jenő Szűcs, points out that due to centuries of the Ottoman empire and the shift of the European economic fulcrum towards the Atlantic, Eastern Europe may be characterized by its delayed modernization. This delay made Eastern Europe its own unique identity, a 'region caught in between' according to Szűcs. This 'region in between' experienced annexation into the Soviet empire after World War II rendering it exempt from western development. According to several authors including Elemér Hankiss and Miklós Tomka, the Soviet influence ruined the cultural continuum as well as the civil society and implemented instead a 'forced modernization'.

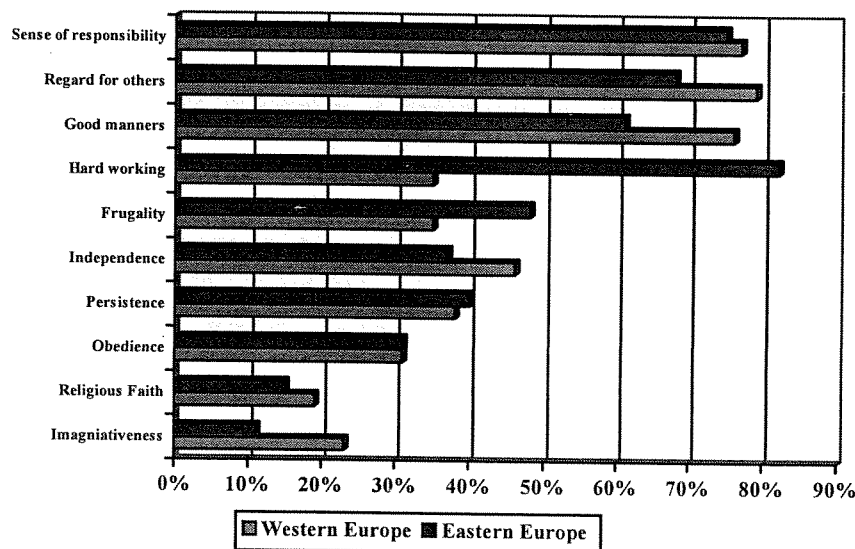
Its consequences manifested itself in obviously different measures in the individual Eastern Block countries. According to a sociological comparative study of Central and Eastern Europe, Zulehner and Tomka called 'Emergence/Awakening', societies of *less* modernized countries in the former Eastern Block suffered less socio-cultural damage under Communism

than those with a *higher* pre-communism modern standard and those that experienced a very rapid modernization. But is there indeed a difference in ethic between the East and the West? The results of a 1991 European Values Study (EVS) by Broek and Moor show that although a delay in the modernization of Eastern and Central Europe truly exists, only a few differences can be attributed to the delay. Inglehart also illustrated that the differences between these regions are lesser than between the two and countries of other continents.

If someone on the street were asked (I unfortunately do not know of a study on this theme) to reflect upon the moral problem of his or her own society, answers would most probably be as follows: there is less corruption in the West. Rules and regulations are upheld (e.g. one does not drive through a red signal light). People in general are more civil to each other. They have more trust in the other. They are more industrious, etc. Independence and social accountability are also ,western values'. Perhaps it would even be assumed in some countries that West Europeans are more religious, although in other countries the assumption may be the exact opposite. But I expect that the positive assumptions are far more likely than the negatives ones because of the important issue of the stereotypic opinion that everything coming from the West is, in principle, valued as positive in Eastern and Central Europe. Although this basic attitude has mellowed since Communism fell, it is my opinion that the successful EU-plebiscite of the previous year is a clear sign that the positive attitude towards the West still remains.

Only a few still speak of the moral decline in Europe. This is no surprise when one observes how little is still spoken about the 40-year communist regime. These answers could be derived to only a certain degree from one's own experience and more predominantly through stereotypes because the majority of the population of these societies has never been in a West European country. This doesn't imply, however, that stereotypes are not based on some reason. Results of a 1999 European Values Study show that more West Europeans than East Europeans hold values such as independence, regard of others, good manners and imaginativeness as important. There are, however, two characteristics that are more appreciated in Eastern and Central Europe: hard work and frugality. Material values are at contrast with immaterial or, as a term coined by Paul Inglehart, post-material values.

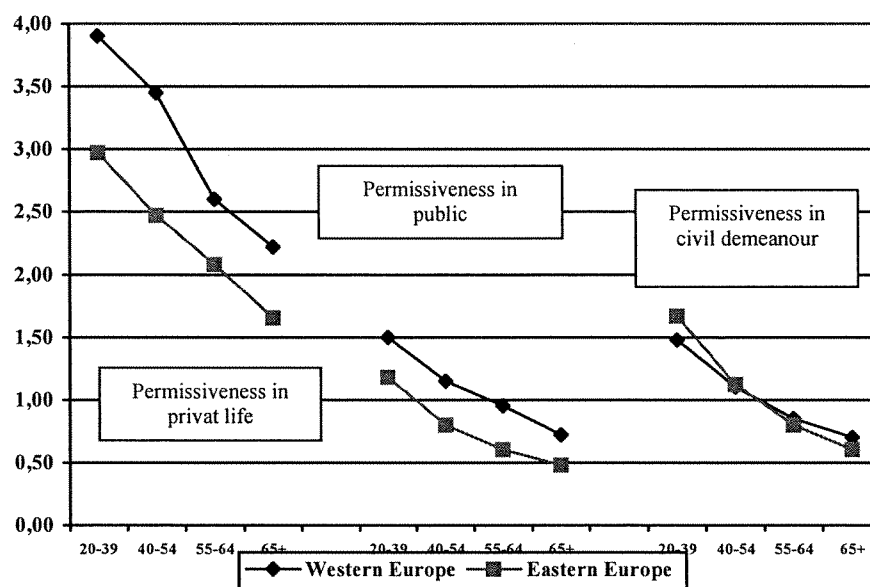
*Diagram 1: Educational Values. The ratio of people in Western and Eastern Europe with the intention of imparting the following values and characteristics to their children.*



Source: EVS 1999, Tomka, 2002

The difference in the moral permissiveness may be analyzed again using results from studies by the EVS. Three scopes of different moral positions were compared in a survey: the private sphere, the public and civic demeanour. Each area is presented with 18 situations in which the subject is asked to decide whether he or she finds such a behaviour appropriate. Three indices were formed from the answers, each with a scale from 0 to 9, where 0 is a clear disapproval and 9 an approval. The second diagram shows the average value of the three scopes for Western and Eastern Europe according to age group. The younger cohort in all three scopes extenuates the moral rigidity; in this respect there are no difference between the East and the West. What may be surprising is the distinct strong rigidity of East Europeans in private and public areas. This tendency is strongly present in the area of private behaviour. Only in the civil area do strong moral tendencies surface equally in the West and the East. The question still remains, however. Whether the results can be ascribed to the social morality in the East or they are merely adaptation tactics on the part of the subjects who do not express their true opinion in a survey situation when it involves an alleged norm breach.

*Diagram 2: Permissiveness of various age groups in three scopes of morality, in Eastern and Western Europe (Average Values, 0 = correct under NO circumstance, 9 = correct in every case)*



Source: EVS 1999, Tomka, 2002

If we are to look back at the questions posed earlier, we can assert that true differences exist in the moral values between both parts of Europe. On the one hand post-material values seem to play a somewhat more important role in the West than in the East. More importantly, however, in my own subjective opinion that although East Europeans have a positive view of ethic in the old EU member states, an apparently stricter morality exist in the new member states. The question remains whether these differences expressed verbally are realized in the day-to-day moral choices or whether the difference is perhaps obscured in various measures of sanctimony. The heritage of communism may readily be found in the latter interpretation.

(Original: German)



**Françoise RAMOND,**  
Epernon / France

## **Christian involvement in political responsibility Experience in a small town**

I have been mayor of a small town of 5,500 inhabitants from March 2001 to the present day (Epernon in Eure et Loir). I am also the president of a regroupment of local authorities representing a population of 11,000 (Le Val Drouette). Epernon is situated in the Greater Paris region, 65kms south west of Paris. The town has a historic city centre (12<sup>th</sup> century church) and an industrial zone where 3000 people are employed.

Before becoming mayor I was deputy mayor in charge of information and communication for 6 years. It is therefore not a coincidence that in March 2001 I decided to compete in local elections, alongside 29 women and men, to be elected mayor by male and female voters. It was out of personal conviction and choice.

### **1. WHY BECOME CANDIDATE IN A POLITICAL ELECTION?**

I have been a member of the “General Catholic Feminist Movement” (*Action Catholique Générale Féminine, ACGF*) for over 30 years. This Catholic and feminist movement has convinced me how important it is to assert oneself as a woman and Christian, and to be proud of both. Little by little the women members of this group realised, even though this may seem obvious, that women make up half of humanity, half of the church and half of the citizens of each country. Women must strongly assert their role in the political world.

#### **1.1 A few historical facts about the ACGF**

The ACGF has existed for over 100 years. The League from which the ACGF is evolved was created in 1901 during a period of political resistance to secular and antireligious laws. From the start the League showed an interest in the role of women in politics. It became a member of the “Commission for the civic and political education of women” in 1919. The battle was long: French women only obtaining the right to vote in 1944. The League became the ACGF in 1955. A section of the ACGF specializes in the promotion of women in public life; it is called “elected municipal and political women”. A conclusion came out of one of the group’s meetings in 1991: there are too few women elected in politics (see annex). Women must be encouraged to run for elections and helped to do so.

The ACGF did not want to start raising awareness about the importance of the place of women in politics alone. It wanted to work with other feminist organisations. In 1992 it founded, with 5 other feminist movements, an organisation called “*Elles aussi*: for parity in elected organisations”. The aim of this organisation is to encourage and support the candidature of women in all political elections and to encourage the consideration of parity in electoral laws. The battle has been partly successful because, in 1999, the French Constitution was modified and the law of the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2000 established male/female parity in all elections.

## 1.2 Reading the Bible in women's groups

Reading the Bible, and especially the Gospels, convinced the women of the ACGF that parity in politics is essential. We were impressed in particular by the Gospel according to Luke. We realized that, already in the first century after Jesus Christ, the concept of parity, a notion, which has only recently been understood and recognized in current society, already existed in the Gospel according to Luke. It is not included in the Gospel by coincidence but is there to stress the fact that a new relationship between humans, between men and women, based on parity, is essential in order to build the Kingdom.

## 1.3 My personal decision

I realised I could not be a member of the ACGF, and of “*Elles aussi*” (of which I was president at the national level from 1997 to 2001), actively promoting the importance of male/female parity without being myself a candidate for election. I was therefore a candidate in 1995; and again in 2001, as the head of a list made up of 14 women and 15 men. Our list got 23 seats (12 women and 11 men), the opposition got 6 seats (3 women and 3 men) which created a municipal council in which both sexes are equally represented: 15 women and 14 men.

## **2. TODAY I AM A MAYOR AND THE PRESIDENT OF A REGROUPMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

I am a woman, a Christian, and have been elected. What have I learnt from these 9 years in the political world?

- I have often been amazed, during these 9 years, by the elected officials, both men and women, who devote so much of their time and energy for their fellow citizens. We, of course, face difficulties, sometimes we are confronted by a lack of understanding, a certain slowness in progress... however we enjoy working together to improve the life of the people in our *communes*. We develop new projects and are delighted to see some of them materialize. I find that a partnership between men and women is essential for the successful implementation of policies in all areas: education, family affairs, culture, health, and justice....  
There are male and female Christians in both the elected majority and opposition.
- The following ethical values are shared with my municipal team:
  - the respect of individual men and women, as well as their opinion and roles in society
  - the respect of people in the opposition
  - the importance of dialogue and of listening to others
  - the conviction that politics are part of our everyday life
  - the need to have strong ties with the population
  - the acknowledgement that male and female citizens must be allowed to manage their own lives
  - the search for the common good
  - the acceptance that one must improve gradually and through compromise
  - the humility to recognise that we all make mistakes
  - the conviction that not everything in life is political.

- I believe the Church must reflect upon its Christian involvement in politics. The pronouncements of the Pope and of French Bishops are very encouraging to all those who risk getting involved in politics.

I am still a member of the ACGF study groups.

I am very happy to participate in this study assembly of the European Lay Forum and to be able to learn about what other Christians involved in the political world are doing in Europe.

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Annex:

### Statistics June 2004

| Statistics of women elected                          | 1992   | 2004    |
|--|--------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senate                      | 4,98 % | 10,9 %  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Assembly           | 5,7 %  | 12,13 % |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Governments        | 12,6 % | 47,5 %  |
| President(s)   | 0 %    | 9 %     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department Councils         | 5,1 %  | 9,9 %   |
| President(s)   | 1 %    | 1 %     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Councils          | 17,1 % | 33 %    |
| Municipalities of more than 3500 inhabitants         | ?      | 47,5 %  |
| Mayors   | 5,4 %  | 10,9 %  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic and Social Council | 10,4 % | 19,5 %  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> European Parliament         | 22,2 % | 41,2 %  |

(Original: French)

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## **Being Christian in a regional government in Germany**

In Germany, the responsibility over education and culture policy lies with the governments of the various provincial states, the so-called *Bundesländer* who enjoy full scope their shaping. Although every *Land* has to comply with agreements made amongst the 16 states, especially over the acknowledgment of school diplomas, each *Land* tries to give its education policy a particular profile.

Currently, Germany's education policy is in a state of shock. Empirical findings, some of them international, have shown that school in Germany is much worse than many have thought; that it is not nearly good enough to prepare young persons for their future lives, to secure enough well-trained personnel for different kind of innovations, to secure the integration of diverse cultures in our society.

I have been working in a large department of the ministry of education and the arts in the *Land* Niedersachsen for 1,5 years. I joined the ministry after a change of government. This change in government was connected with the promise of reform in many areas of the political realm, especially in education policy.

Indeed, at first we worked on introducing large reforms. We quickly changed the school organisation and have shortened school-time. Now we are working on creating a new school system with a great autonomy level, which we also call 'the autonomous school'. At the same time we are creating a new school control system unheard of in Germany for which we are gathering experiences from Scotland, Canada, New Zealand and Holland. Finally, we would like to fundamentally renew our teacher training and the further vocational training. Our work is currently characterized by the desire for fundamental renewal in many realms of school and further education.

In the next few years a few fundamental questions will be at stake. As a Christian, the following questions are of concern to me:

First, one may ask whether we can even grasp the future and the needs of young people. For many years Germany's education and school policy is marked by very tight, mostly ideologically justified principles. At the same time, teacher lobbies and unions are defending the teachers' massive interests. But there are no pupil unions. Every teacher, every politician and public opinion would agree that school should serve the pupils' interests. But when concrete interests are at stake, children and youth are the weakest partners. Especially when the talk is of school and the children's future, political decision-making should be asked to really orient itself along those interests. As a Christian I see a special commitment to this.

In shaping reform politics we will be facing enormous resistance. Some interests, for example those of teacher associations, of persons who have held tight and important positions in our school system whose responsibilities we want to eliminate; trade associations, who claim an interest in the education level of young persons. Many interests are justified and must be taken into account by us. There is however increasing selfishness of individual groups who,

by means of massive pressure, want to retain the *status quo* for themselves and their jobs. Sometimes it is not so hard to tell that the real motives behind grandly presented goals are sheer egoism and ownership interests.

Especially here do I feel challenged as a Christian: am I ready to fight against mighty interests, in order to bring about claims that I see as being justified? Am I ready to endure some forms of pressure, to resist political tricks and to accept unpleasant consequences? I mean, in politics, one needs the courage for debating, and that is why I ask myself as a Christian: is civic courage a Christian virtue and should one exercise it in politics and in government?

Time and again one is bound to realize the complexity of decisive matters in politics. As much as there is an abundance of various analyses, attitudes and opinions about these issues, there are always new aspects that require conscientious inquiry. In doing this, one cannot simply reduce a political issue to a question of principle. Fundamental convictions are important but pertinent decisions require a great love of detail. Being a Christian, I feel especially committed to this love. Working in a government demands expert knowledge, a judging capacity that grows under great effort and commitment. Nonetheless we make mistakes, because that is part of being human. But I also believe that being a Christian implies the capacity to acknowledge those mistakes. But this is a great problem for the public realm. To publicly acknowledge mistakes is always considered a sign of weakness. And according to politicians and the public itself this should be avoided. Being a Christian, I consider this a paradox. My attempt at consolation stems from knowing that a government's public relations are always the minister's business, not the public servant's.

What I find especially important in my work is dealing with people. As part of my duties, I decide about people's promotions and employment. These decisions are especially difficult when one feels how much depends on them for the person in question. In my earlier job, I had to make difficult decisions about failing in exams. Sometimes these decisions carried grave material consequences for the person concerned as well as for their families.

However hard it is to take those decisions, one should not be scared of and avoid them. Because someone *must* decide. That is why I am meticulously applying principles of justice to those decisions. Justice needs a thorough definition first, and then one should strive for the principle of humaneness. When these principles are applied in reverse order, one runs the risk of not knowing who is affected in the decision-making process, what is being done exactly and to whom, and whether a given decision is really humane and sensible in the long run for the person in question.

When I was deciding on students' failings due to bad results in their final examination required for teacher qualification, I was always tempted to slightly disregard a weakness according to humane and indulgent principles. The consequence of my decision does not, however, affect solely this particular future teacher. One should always take into account thirty generations of pupils, parents and businesses who may suffer enormously under one single teacher. But inquiring about these consequences never takes an end. As humans, we are not to judge, since we cannot oversee all our actions' consequences. Hence, I consider it more honest and truthful to rely on the justice principle and to carefully ponder a person's performance and all aspects of her personality in order to try to decide as best as one can. I believe that the justice principle, in this case understood as expert justice as well as justice in individual cases is a fundamental Christian principle.

Finally, I would like to point to another aspect of outward appearance. I have gathered that it is important as a Christian to succeed in self-evidently appearing as such in the public. I do not mean to appear as an importunate missionary, but I would like to exercise my convictions and attitudes in public. I have a cross on my office desk, because this is important to me. From time to time I quote the Bible amidst other authors in my speeches and comments. I speak about politics but also about faith in God and about what follows from that and what it means to me. I consider it important that religious belief has a right to be mentioned as much as other convictions are, and I do not want to let go of this.

(Original: German)

## The influence of Christian values in shaping the European Charter and the European Constitution My experience as a member of the European Convention

### 0. FOREWORD

Allow me to start quoting an original source: "*Once, When Jesus was praying with the disciples, He asked them: Whom do the people say I am?*" (Luke 9, 18).

This is the question we face: then, today and forever. And, regardless of the cultural and historical context, our reply, as Christians, is the reply given by Peter: "*You are God's messiah*" (Luke 9, 20). This original question and this definitive reply encompass every derivation of today's theme, as they express God's spirit in dialogue with human Faith. All the rest are only circumstances in the history of the Peoples.

And here we are, historically and culturally situated in the Europe of the twenty first century, facing the same radical question put forward by Jesus Christ: *whom do we say He is?* And immediately afterwards: *what does He mean for our personal and collective life?*

In brief, we are facing the meaning of what we call "Christian Europe", a historical question that becomes relevant again today. In practice, Christian Europe is an odd mixture of sublime spirituality, fundamental concepts, trends of ideas, ideological interests, political passion, human achievements and human indignities. In all, it includes superficialities as well as some of the most profound elements of our life, as human beings and as societies.

### I. THE ANALYTICAL COMPONENTS

We can identify 7 essential components, as we reflect over Christian Europe:

#### First: the historical matrix

Amidst the elements of such a rich cultural heritage as the European, we may select the following 4 fundamental aspects:

- 2.000 years of Christianity consolidated in Europe and spread around the World, specially after five centuries of evangelization and cultural encounters;
- the action of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, in structuring Christianity over 2.000 years and for the future;
- the European historical roots, including the classical Greco-Roman heritage, the Judeo-Christian tradition and the German contribution;
- the "common cultural ground" of the European peoples.

## Second: the present context

Today, as always, there is an historical context that influences our social life. The most relevant, nowadays, is that we are experiencing the end of a seminal period (1989-2004) where European reality has shown a strong dynamic for transformation.

## Third: reading the signs of the time

The simple fact that there is a debate on the Christian character of Europe is a signal of dissonance that derives from the ideological combat of the last two and a half centuries.

As a result of that ideological evolution and of the materialism that has imbedded European societies, the socio-psychological relation between Europe and Christianity is plural.

In this sense, Europe:

- is intrinsically Christian, as this is its defining matrix;
- pretends that it isn't Christian;
- some have tried to forego this link with Christianity;
- it's ashamed of being Christian;
- knowing that it is Christian - and, sometimes, feeling the need to confirm this belonging - is still hesitating;
- and, finally, awaits any kind of internal re-composition of its references.

This is the context that helps us understand the worries, the willingness, the expressions of hope and the proposals for action from Pope John Paul II during the process that ended in "*Ecclesia in Europa*" and represents the central theme of the New Evangelization (*Ecclesia in Europa*, 7).

## Fourth: the circumstantial point of accumulation: the European Convention

In the natural sequence of events from 1989, the *Laeken Declaration* decided, in December 2001, on setting the *Convention on the future of Europe*. All the political and ideological tensions, as well as the geopolitical and sociological questions opened by the perspective of an enlargement of the EU to the East converged in this European Convention.

During the period of the bipolar system of International Relations that brought stability to our Continent from 1945 to 1989, three original communities were created: ECCS (European Community of Coal and Steel), EEC (European Economic Community) and EURATOM (European Community of Nuclear Energy).

The sustained advance of European construction resulted from two complementary influences: on one side the role of the "two federators" (the USA and the USSR) and on the other the effect of the strong economic growth in the period from 1947-48 to 1973-74 (annual average of 5%, in real terms). The European integration was, after all, a product of the "*cold war*" and of the economic expansion and structural transformations during the "*second belle époque*".



### Fifth: touching the bottom of the question

From the preceding references we can conclude that Europe has a serious identity problem. This problem can be framed in the classical trilateral way of *Understanding / Assuming / Acting* that applies to every basic element of individual and social life.

Understanding means that we - Catholics - have the necessity (and even the exigency) to look into the sociological, economic, cultural and political mechanisms of the evolution of human societies, avoiding superficial conclusions that would be nothing more than the unduly resignation to the de-Christianization of European societies.

Assuming means probably the essential step: placing Christianity in the centre of our lives and so inducing, through the example of the Faith of all the Christians, the effects on daily life. All in all, exactly the opposite of the non-assuming attitude of today's Christians.

Acting means to apply the conclusions into concrete action. It requires the necessary wisdom, will and capacity. So, the consequent question is: *what are we waiting for?*

### Sixth: the positioning of Catholics

Catholic is the follower of Jesus Christ and His Church. The defining factor, the one that generates a specific difference, is the combination of Faith and Conscience. This is the double key to everything that, following in Faith and with Hope the path of life into the Life, ends in Charity, and Charity "never ends" (1 Cor 13,8).

We can ask ourselves if we have assumed this and if we are aware of the essential: that the objectives of the Church - including each and every one of us - in its salvation mission under the assistance of the Holy Spirit, are to teach and to heal, praising and serving the Father, by the redeeming effect of Jesus Christ.

### Seventh: the perspective from the Christian evaluation of the historical process of European integration

A Christian is not supposed to place the political, economical, social, strategic or cultural aspects of a given historical period in the centre of his or her perspective. To him or to her, what is really important is the double perspective of the Christian cultural matrix of Europe and how Christians have (or not) influence the course of events and if Christian values are guiding the leaders' decisions (that's why it is understandable the emergence of the theme of "New Evangelization" in recent times).

To sum up, the essential is to know if Christians, now and in the future, act as to vivify human and social life and to turn it meaningful.

## **II. THE EXPERIENCE AS A MEMBER OF THE CONVENTION**

In my opinion, three aspects of the Convention experience are to be underlined:

- the political and sociological reality of the Convention as a forum where basically all the currents of the political and institutional life of the European Union were participating in the debate;

- the substantial and difficult discussion on the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution's text;
- the culminating point that concentrated on the reference to Christianity in the preamble.

Having these three aspects in mind, I will sum up my evaluation of the Convention's experience in seven points:

1. The permanent **presence** of the indirect cultural impact of Christianity, reflected in Christian values like the essential dignity of the human being, the social-professional dialogue, subsidiarity and some of the leading philosophical aspects that we can find in the initial part of the text and in the Charter's inclusion.
2. The **absences**, more or less intentionally guaranteed all over the Convention work. Two of those absences deserve to be underlined: the first is the suppression of explicit spiritual references in the political, economic and social matters (this expresses the dominant secularisation of European societies, leaving the doctrinal aspects in a sort of limbo of indirect perception); the second is the inexistence – or, at least, the insufficiency – of a systematic and sustainable Catholic approach on the European integration.
3. The **tension accumulation point that the preamble represented**: the discussion on the explicit reference to Christianity became, with no special surprise, a factor of division in the general debate as well as in the parallel informal negotiations. The discussion on the preamble turned into a substitution of the global debate and the political excitement of the later wiped out the higher topic of how to recognize the importance of Christian values in European life (this was reduced to the indirect **presence** and mainly to the **absences** mentioned above).
4. Consequently, some significant **ideological conflicts** arise between the currents of dominant laicism – strongly and arrogantly affirmed as a matter of non-discussion supposedly to avoid a “religion war” – and the prudent defence of the Christian matrix of Europe, thoughtful and indirectly brought in the debate, in the informal negotiations and specially in the external environment of the Convention (in this case, mainly by the Vatican and the Pope himself).
5. In pure political terms, a collective **attitude of compromise** emerged, in an attempt to erase difficulties and eliminate a divisive subject, in order to secure the main political objective of European integration. Here we can point to a clear conjugation of three important components of today's European political reality:
  - the preoccupation to preserve the European integration process;
  - the separation between States and Churches as a political-institutional base; and
  - the fragile stimulus and fragile social support to a strong positioning of the Convention members that favoured the inclusion of a specific Christian reference in the draft treaty text.

These three components demonstrate the political and sociological reality of today's Europe that induces two direct implications for all the responsible Christians (referred to in points 6 and 7).

6. The first implication is the **pressing need for a new cycle of development of the Social Doctrine of the Church**, in order to deal with the questions of European endeavour and with the realities inescapably brought to our daily life by the scientific and technological revolution and by competitive globalisation.
7. The second implication, mainly instrumental but also relevant, is the **necessity to overcome the mechanism of “christophobia”**, latent in European societies and very clearly explained by J.H.H. Wailer. The debate in the Convention was only one more sign – although very mediatic – of this reality.

### **III. SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR THE XII CENTURY**

When we question ourselves on the role of the Catholics in Europe, we have to go beyond the historical perspective and to focus the attention on our capacity to interpret, as Christians, some of the fundamental questions of the future; this is the right dynamic dimension of the evangelical message and of our action as Christians, who are in the world but do not belong to the world (John 17, 15-16).

From the multiple challenges that we, Christians, are facing, I think that the following seven deserve to be emphasised:

1. The **“New Evangelisation”**, question of central importance in the coming decades in Europe, especially important as regards the role of the Family and of the School.
2. The expansion of Christianity **outside Europe** and the need to be attentive to the specificities and the pastoral solidarity to the Christian communities of America, Africa and Asia.
3. The spiritual and moral foundations of questions like wealth versus poverty and peace versus war in our world (that is to say, the essential questions of **Justice and Peace** and of **Peoples Development**. [Justitia et Pax; Populorum Progressio]).
4. The systematic support to the human problem of **migrations**, including the integration of immigrants in European societies.
5. The doctrinal approach to **abortion, euthanasia and eugenics**.
6. The development of the doctrinal answer to the ethical questions of **biotechnology, medicine and scientific research** in general.
7. The doctrinal point of view and the ethical framework of the **power structures** - including the State – **in the “knowledge society”** that is surging in this transition period from industrial capitalism to some sort of informational capitalism.

All these subjects are:

- facing us today;
- forming part of the present and future of European societies; and
- demanding answers (or, at least, to be provided with some clues).

Beyond the scientific, sociological and theological specificities of how to approach those seven challenges, I believe it is possible to identify three permanent and decisive lines in the reply of the Church:

1. Firstly, to teach and to heal, assuring the achievement of its perennial role.
2. Secondly, to consequently deduct from the Christian doctrinal foundation the solidarity to attend and to care about the unprotected and the ones that the technological and economic progress left “in the margins”.
3. Finally, and chiefly, to revivify the action of the Church in society.

#### **IV. FINAL REFLECTIONS**

In every of the topics referred as important to our future, the Catholics of Europe, in communion with the Pope and the Universal Church, are called to assume an important, even decisive, role. In the face of this evidence, the European Convention was nothing but a marginal and irrelevant happening.

Let me end up by pointing two dominant themes that are, at the same time, two requirements that apply to each and every one of us:

- the responsibility of every lay in deepening the approach of European Affairs at the light of historical interpretation and at the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church; and
- to soundly understand the meaning of the Gospel lecture of today’s Mass: “*So Jesus said to His disciples: the harvest field is large but the workers are only a few. Ask the Lord of the field to send workers to his field*” (Mt 9, 37-38).

Today, perhaps more than ever, there’s a need for more and better workers in the Church, to build a more human future world, simply because it will be more Christian.

(Original)

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## **Origin, objectives and running of the European Forum of National Laity Committees**

The European Forum seeks to create opportunities to organise meetings and exchanges between national laity committees and/or between European consultative bodies existing in the Church in which the promotion of the layperson and his co-responsibility in the Church is placed in the foreground.

From the very beginning, much attention has been paid to include all European countries, from Eastern and Western Europe as well as from North and South.

The Forum is not in itself an international Catholic organisation recognised as such by the Vatican. The Council for the Laity in Rome has, however, followed and encouraged this initiative from its beginning. At each meeting of the Liaison Committee (7 members who take care of the initiatives) and of the biennial Forum itself, some representatives from the Office of the Council of the European Bishops' Conferences and from the European Council of Priests, were always present.

The European Laity Forum wishes to be a free meeting place for collective contact and for exchanging ideas of purpose and experiences, but it never binds any member or country; nor can it take decisions, which would oblige the national committees to take action or to adopt a position. However, the Forum is really unique in that nowhere else in Europe can national consulting or co-ordinating laity bodies in the Church meet each other as such.

## Themes, which have been treated since the foundation in 1970

- \* **1970 Innsbruck / Austria**  
Hope as a force for Christians: invitation to commitment and presence at the construction of the community
  
- \* **1972 Luino / Italy**  
Liberation and evangelisation
  
- \* **1974 London / England**  
Migration in Europe and the question of the situation of the laity since Vatican II
  
- \* **1976 Louvain-la-Neuve / Belgium**  
The responsibility of the Christians in Europe
  
- \* **1978 Luxembourg / Luxembourg**  
The responsibility of Christians in economy, culture and marginalization in an European context
  
- \* **1980 Madrid / Spain**  
A new lifestyle concerning developing countries, the working environment and the family
  
- \* **1982 Vught / The Netherlands**  
The work of the laymen in different local Churches and more especially, their task in a secularised society
  
- \* **1984 Dublin / Ireland**  
The causes of existing conflicts between individuals, society and different ideologies

- \* **1985 Zagreb / former Yugoslavia**  
Vocation and mission of the laymen in the Church and in the world – 20 years after Vatican II
- \* **1986 Paris / France**  
The Church as a place of dialogue in every significance
- \* **1988 Freising / Germany**  
After the synod: reflections and perspectives
- \* **1990 Vienna / Austria**  
Towards a more human Europe – a challenge for the Churches
- \* **1992 Antwerp / Belgium**  
Living in a multicultural society
- \* **1994 Ljubljana / Slovenia**  
Christian vision on solidarity – challenge to the social-economical system in Eastern and Western Europe
- \* **1996 Twickenham / England**  
Media today: A challenge for Christians
- \* **1998 Bratislava / Slovakia**  
Reconciliation: Socio-economic tensions and the response of the Church
- \* **2000 Alcalá de Henares / Spain**  
Live, so that others may live
- \* **2002 Erfurt / Germany**  
Building a Europe of values – the contribution of the Catholic Laity
- \* **2004 Fátima / Portugal**  
The spiritual and ethical roots of our commitment in European societies



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