



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF COMECE

CARDINAL HOLLERICH

Conference “*Christian values and the Future of Europe*” – Rome, 22 September 2021

Dear friends,

I am very pleased as President of COMECE to have helped the EPP Group of the European Parliament to organize this conference that closes its Bureau Meeting in Rome, discussing together about **Christian values and the future of Europe**. We can see this conference as a follow-up to the event (*Re*)**thinking Europe** that took place in the Vatican in October 2017, organized by COMECE and the Secretariat of State and in which some of you participated. On that occasion Pope Francis, in his address, talked about the significance of **Saint Benedict** for Europe. “In the twilight of the ancient world”, he said, ‘his Rule and Monasteries promoted a new culture based on the dignity of man, created in the image of God’. Quoting the words of Pope Francis in his address to the participants:

“Person and community are the foundations of the Europe that we, as Christians, want and can contribute to building. The bricks of this structure are dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, development and peace”.

In these short introductory remarks to our Conference which has as main point the speech the Cardinal Secretariat of State, Pietro Parolin, will deliver, honouring us today with his presence today, I just would like to recall very briefly the letter that Pope Francis addressed to his Eminence last year on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of COMECE. At the beginning of his letter the Pope mentions the ‘central role that Europa has had, and, he believes, must continue to have, albeit with different accents, in the history of humanity’. This role is related to the rediscovery of the **path of fraternity and solidarity**,

which are fundamental Christian values. Europe is called to rediscover its identity, its shared values on which to base society, and to look towards the future. It is summoned to rediscover the thirst for truth, for justice and for eternity that are part of its identity and history. For Pope Francis the uniqueness of Europe rests “on its conception of the human being and of reality, on its capacity for initiative and on its spirit of practical solidarity”: With this in mind, Pope Francis in his letter to his Eminence, speaks about his **dreams for Europe**. I find this concept very powerful. Pope Francis has used it lately quite frequently, like in the book *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*. It is a concept that has to do with the future. It is related to the prophetic mission of the Church. Last week in Slovakia, in his encounter with the youth, he invited them to dream and said that dreaming is different from having an illusion or, worse, a delusion; a real dream directs us towards a better future that we envision and gives us energy and orientation to work for it.

Pope Francis dreams of a Europe that “**is a friend to each and all**” and is respectful of the intrinsic dignity of each human person. He dreams of a Europe “**that is a family and community**”, living in unity and treasuring differences. He also dreams of a Europe that is “**inclusive and generous**”, welcoming and hospitable, abiding by the virtue of charity and the principle of solidarity. And Pope Francis dreams of a Europe “**marked by a healthy secularism, where God and Caesar remain distinct but non opposed; a land open to transcendence.**”

This is the dream of Pope Francis for Europe. As Christians and members of the Church, each one of us according to his or her own specific mission and call, ought to serve as a leaven in reviving Europe’s conscience, generating processes that lead to the future we dream for our continent.

Dear friends, thank you again for inviting COMECE to help in the organization of this event and I look very much forward to hear what His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretariat of State, wants to share with us today.

Thank you.