



Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast

H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata - COMECE President

6 June 2023

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very pleased to be here with you today, to mark a highly symbolic and important sign of presence of Christian denominations in this place of democracy. I would like to welcome you all warmly!

This event was first launched by COMECE and CEC in January 2020. Unfortunately, soon after that, the Covid-19 pandemic erased any possibility of encounter, for a long and painful time. With this year's edition, we return physically in these premises and I am proud of being able to address you in my new capacity as President of COMECE.

My grateful greetings go - together with all of you gathered here - to MEP Jan Olbrycht, from Poland, who kindly receives us in this institutional space, and to Professor Tomáš Halík, who has accepted the invitation to speak and to whom I express ours, and my personal, esteem and high consideration. I also cannot forget our good friends and ecumenical partners of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) with whom we are co-organising this event. This is a concrete example of ecumenism in action.

The annual occasion of prayer and reflection we are sharing together today is very important. I hope that we can carry its message and energy forward and beyond this event, in our daily life at work - including in the political sphere, for those of you who are elected representatives.

This year it was the solemnity of Pentecost that gave us the opportunity to come together for a moment of ecumenical prayer. We cannot help but underline this circumstance, because it brings to our attention that unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We are here precisely for the

purpose of invoking unity thanks to the Spirit, and the gift of the Spirit to breathe new life into the path of unity.

Furthermore, we cannot help but observe that this initiative is in intimate harmony with our service, in various capacities, in favor of the European Union. The EU also needs a soul to find unity again and again. It needs a spirit that circulates among all and leads them towards a desire for understanding and communion. Unity among us Christians must be recognised as having primary importance among the contributions that can lead to a growing unity in Europe and the world.

Few words also on the specific theme of our meeting, which is linked with the Resources of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023. The main theme is beautifully chosen: "Do good; seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17). Our keynote speaker, Mgr. *Tomáš Halík* will have a lot more to say about it, I would like only to humbly suggest a few short inputs.

First of all, I would like to encourage the political representatives - as well as the stakeholders which interact with the EU institutions - to always ask themselves, in every initiative they are carrying forward: "*Is this just? Are we really instruments of justice?*". The question may be obvious, but in reality it requires deep self-reflection.

I understand that for Brussels-based actors (institutional and non-institutional ones) the word "justice" has a very concrete meaning. The European Commission has a Directorate General devoted to it. The European Parliament has a Committee explicitly working on Justice. Justice is also covered by a key portion of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Upholding the key reference of justice in every circumstance is an important mission, especially for the political representatives present here today and for all EU officers.

When I think of the word "justice", I also cannot escape the topic of the war in Ukraine. A just peace has been the incessant and urgent request of the Church and of COMECE. I am sure this House will continue to contribute to achieving this goal. Recalling the Encyclical Letter "*Fratelli Tutti*", let us not forget that "*Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. All three together are essential to building peace*" (§ 227).

Prayer for Christian Unity in the current war context has a particular meaning. Let us devote our fervent prayers for peace during this event.

Let me conclude by underlining that it is from the Holy Spirit that the shared acceptance of the invitation of the prophet Isaiah to "learn to do good and to do justice" can come. This is what we intimately desire and entrust to prayer and reflection this morning. In this spirit, let's dispose ourselves to listening and to prayer.

Thank you very much for coming!