



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Europe and history

The Christian roots of Europe: Why is the Church involved in European integration?

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Europe often gets bad press, at least in the public eye. It is seen as somewhat distant, somewhat technocratic, ineffective in its policies, and incapable of defining a certain number of common positions.

We are also seeing the rise in Europe of what is perhaps somewhat hastily referred to as populism or nationalism in certain countries. This also calls into question the very foundations and values of European integration. We often see, and this may be a French peculiarity, national self-interest that makes Brussels - we say "Brussels" - responsible for the difficulties or failures we may experience, without always taking into account the fact that, in the institutional architecture, the responsibility of states, governments or elected representatives in Parliament is paramount.

And then, of course, there is also the new situation that the war in Ukraine unfortunately represents. It is clear that, in terms of autonomy, defence and European sovereignty, we are still in the early stages. The outbreak of war and Russia's aggression against Ukraine have rather shaken NATO awake. The new American situation with the arrival of President Trump represents a new challenge for Europe and its understanding, both in economic and trade matters and in ensuring its defence and the balance of the continent. At the same time, we see the importance of military aid, but also of humanitarian aid to the country under attack and all the consequences that this entails.

There is no need to elaborate much on the energy implications, the sanctions policy and how public opinion may react in different European countries. All of this makes for a rather fragile situation. There are also elements of internal debate, for example,

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the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which joined more recently the Union (in 2004), have approaches that differ from those of Western Europe.

More recently, we must also highlight the departure of the United Kingdom. This is the first time that a member country has left the Union, with Brexit and its consequences for Ireland and then for peace. In Ireland, there is a lot of discussion. I have heard a lot about the famous Northern Ireland compromise.

In fact, it is important to understand that these are not theoretical issues at all, but extremely practical issues that affect the daily lives of people living in Ireland. To give you an example: the border between Northern and Southern Ireland, in terms of the Church, there is at least one diocese that straddles the border. With two countries, two currencies, customs issues... for people who work on the other side, in both directions, these are very concrete issues.

We must also highlight the countries knocking at the door, because Europe has many flaws, but at the same time it is very attractive. Especially for the Balkan countries, we are seeing progress, but slowly. The situation of those who were in the former Soviet sphere, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, is leading them to seek closer ties with Europe.

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All of this is somewhat of a general, political framework. One might wonder about the role, importance and interest of the Church in European integration and in relation to these political issues.

There are several approaches. I could cite, for example, a small excerpt from the closing speech of the Assembly of Bishops of France, delivered by Bishop Pontier, who was its president in November 2018, shortly before the European elections. I quote this because it is interesting and says something that we are not fully aware of:

Brexit marks the first time that a European country has left the Union. It is also undoubtedly the first time that the issue of European elections could become a real topic of debate in different countries. What kind of Europe do we want for tomorrow? It is not enough to criticise Europe's inadequacies, bureaucratic red tape or failures without asking deeper questions about what is at stake: in the migration crisis and its consequences, are European institutions that have failed, or the selfishness of Member States that has prevented the definition of a common policy and shared responsibilities?

In twenty years, the world has changed profoundly and is no longer centred on Europe. The Church has also changed a great deal and has become internationalised in its cultural references and mode of government.

[After all, we have an Argentine Pope...]. The question is whether what Europe has been able to bring to the world in terms of its understanding of human beings, their inalienable dignity, their fundamental rights, and their capacity for relationships and solidarity, can still be affirmed tomorrow and proposed as an ideal on other continents. As a Church, as Christians, will we be able to help the citizens of our countries discern the nature of the choices to be made, so that Europe can better respond to the expectations of the European peoples and to its own mission in the future of the world?²

I think that this aspect, the way Europe is viewed from outside on other continents, is something very important, which we are not necessarily fully aware of. Between the United States, which we see pursuing its own interests, Russia and its policy of expansion, including by force, and China, which is becoming a very powerful empire and does not promote freedoms and human rights, there are a number of countries around the world that are counting on Europe and looking to it to assert other values and other elements that are important to world peace.

Monsignor Pontier continued with his message of peace, as it was the centenary of the end of the First World War, and therefore the armistice of 11 November 1918:

Europe has experienced so many deadly conflicts in its history, and the centenary of 1918 reminds us of this, so that we know that peace is always fragile and needs to be consolidated - as we see today - while conflicts remain on the doorstep of the Union. After major conflicts, voices are raised to say: "Never again."

During his visit to the UN in 1965, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its founding, Pope Saint Paul VI said: "Here our message reaches its climax. First, negatively: it is the word you expect from us, and we cannot utter it without being aware of its gravity and solemnity: never again against one another, never, never again!"³

The Church, in fact, has historically been committed to its mission of promoting peace and reconciliation in Europe and throughout the world. I often see today, with the younger generations, that the three deadly wars in seventy years seem to them to be something extremely distant. They are probably not fully aware of what this meant in the memory of these two countries, in the millions of deaths that followed, the destruction, the weakening of economies. Peace seems to be a given for the younger generations, but it remains fragile, and ultimately, what has just happened with Ukraine reminds us of this in a tragic way.

For the Catholic Church, Europe and European integration have always been an

² MGR GEORGES PONTIER, *Closing speech of the Plenary Assembly*, 8 November 2018 - <https://eglise.catholique.fr/actualites/dossiers/assemblee-pleniere-de-novembre-2018/actualite-de-lassemblee-pleniere-de-novembre-2018/462998-assemblee-pleniere-novembre-2018-discours-de-cloture-mgr-georges-pontier/>

³ Ibid.

unavoidable horizon for our democracies, as well as the prospect of greater well-being for all. So it is not a question of taking a somewhat incantatory approach; everyone remembers de Gaulle's famous phrase: "It is not a question of shouting 'Europe, Europe!' while jumping around like goats", but there is a clear desire to implement the project that was that of the founding fathers and which enabled us to live in peace after the Second World War and to consolidate understanding, peace and fraternity in Western Europe; to enable reconciliation and welcome the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism in 2004.

If we look at the successive enlargements of the European Union (EU), after the six founding members of the Treaty of Rome, we have Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1973; Greece in 1981, which had just turned the page on the regime of the colonels; then Spain and Portugal in 1986, which had also returned to democracy; in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden, countries that had a tradition of neutrality; and then in 2004, the largest enlargement, which was heavily criticized but was undoubtedly intended as a political act, as a way of welcoming countries that had lived under communism for so long: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and then also Cyprus and Malta. More recently, in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined, followed by Croatia in 2013.

It is clear that the starting point was really the consolidation of peace between two hereditary enemies: France and Germany, and that a second objective was added over time, with the collapse of communism and the fact that a number of Eastern European countries regained democratic governments.

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We must undoubtedly return to the founding fathers. We can reread elements of Robert Schuman's declaration of 9 May 1950. It is also interesting to see the conditions under which this declaration was made, in relative secrecy to prevent it from being short-circuited from the outset. Very few people were aware of it and, it seems, even the French Prime Minister was not informed until the very last moment.

Here is what Robert Schuman said, and I think these words are really important:

World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it⁴

⁴ Robert Schuman, Declaration, 9 May 1950. european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950-en

So the primary objective is indeed the question of world peace, not just European peace. It is only five years after the war, and it is clear that everything is still fragile. We also have the experience of 1918 and the interwar period, which led to a new conflict.

He then goes on to say this about Europe:

The contribution that an organised and vibrant Europe can make to civilisation is essential to maintaining peaceful relations.

In other words, there will be no peace in the world without a specific contribution from an organised and vibrant Europe.

At the same time, there is realism, as the following sentence says:

Europe will not be built all at once, nor will it be built as a whole.

It is not enough to have a magnificent, highly detailed plan to apply and implement:

[Europe] will be built through concrete achievements, first creating de facto solidarity.

These concrete achievements will build genuine solidarity between member countries. That is what was done first. This seems surprising to young people who do not fully understand why we started with coal and steel, which are extremely symbolic, not only because they have specific economic weight, but also because they can be used to build weapons, guns and tanks... This is very directly linked to the objective of building peace.

I also think we need to reflect on Franco-German reconciliation. It does not mean that we agree on everything all the time; there are a number of interests that may diverge. But this reconciliation is almost unique in history. How, after three successive wars in less than a century, with the scale of destruction and death that they caused, how did these two countries manage to build a future that they share? This is something that strikes people, here too, beyond borders. Sometimes, we see hereditary enemies wondering how they got to this point. Once again, this does not eliminate misunderstandings or differences of interest, but it remains the foundation of peace in Europe and of European integration.

Beyond the differences in approach to European integration – economic and political differences that are legitimate between the countries that make up the Union – it is normal that not everyone thinks the same way about everything, just as there are differences between the parties that express the demands of the people. There are also lively debates in the European Parliament, and that is a good thing. I believe that the important thing is always to be able to return to the origins, to the foundations of the European project, to base it on peace and reconciliation, to give soul and meaning to

what we are trying to achieve in this European construction, which is often laborious, difficult and disappointing, and that we Christians, it seems to me, should commit ourselves to it with both generosity and realism – both.

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I was saying that the Church has always taken an interest in European integration, and successive popes have spoken extensively on the subject. Two examples come to mind. First, Saint John Paul II, because he became pope while coming from a country, Poland, which was still under communist rule and was not a member of the European Union at the time. And then Pope Francis, because he has spoken out many times on the European question and also has the advantage of not being European, even though he has some Italian ancestry, but is above all a South American.

From John Paul II, I remember the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. It was published in 2003 after the continental synods, the last one being on Europe. Following this, the document was published, the main focus of which is, of course, directly pastoral issues concerning evangelisation in Europe. However, it also touches upon the vocation and role of Europe and European institutions:

The history of the European continent has been marked by the edifying influence of the Gospel. If we look back over the centuries, we cannot fail to give thanks to the Lord for the fact that Christianity has been, for our continent, a fundamental factor of unity between peoples and cultures, and of the integral promotion of man and his rights.

There can be no doubt that the Christian faith is a radical and decisive part of the foundations of European culture. Christianity has indeed shaped Europe, instilling certain fundamental values. European modernity itself, which has given the world the ideal of democracy and human rights, draws its values from its Christian heritage. More than a geographical area, this heritage can be described as "*a predominantly cultural and historical concept*", characterising a reality that emerged as a continent thanks, among other things, to the unifying force of Christianity, which brought together different peoples and diverse cultures and is closely linked to European culture as a whole".

However, at the very moment when today's Europe is strengthening and expanding its economic and political union, it also seems to be suffering from a profound crisis of values. Although it has increased resources at its disposal, it gives the impression of lacking the momentum to nurture a common project and to give its citizens new reasons for hope.⁵

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 108.

For John Paul II, the reference to human rights is always present, and even more so in those years. He goes on to say:

In the process of transformation it is currently undergoing [this was the moment when the countries of Eastern Europe were knocking on Europe's door before being admitted in 2004], Europe is called upon above all to rediscover its true identity. Indeed, although it has succeeded in creating a highly diverse reality, it must build a new model of unity in diversity. - [This is the motto of the EU, as] a community of reconciled nations, open to other continents and committed to the current process of globalisation.⁶

Europe is not a separate fortress. To give new impetus to its history, it must:

recognise and rediscover, in creative fidelity, the fundamental values to which Christianity has made a decisive contribution, and which can be summarised in the affirmation of the transcendent dignity of the person, the value of reason, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the distinction between politics and religion.⁷

"The value of reason": this is something worth remembering today, when we see so many positions being taken that are not based on reason, but rather on expressions, feelings or emotions.

"Democracy": it is a way of getting directly involved! Not all political systems are equal. With some member countries of the European Union, there are heated discussions about the rule of law. St John Paul II already cited it as the foundation of European values and the distinction between politics and religion. He does not use the word secularism, but the distinction is there.

I reread these values, which say something about what Europe wants to build:

the transcendent dignity of the person, [...] the value of reason, freedom, [...] democracy, [...] the rule of law and [...] the distinction between politics and religion.⁸

Next, an important point:

'Europe' must mean 'openness'. Despite experiences and signs to the contrary, which have not been lacking, its very history demands this: "Europe is not really a closed or isolated territory; it has been built by going beyond the seas to meet other peoples, other cultures, other civilisations".⁹

This encounter has not always been easy or happy, but Europeans have indeed set out to discover the world.

⁶ Id., no. 109.

⁷ Id., no. 109.

⁸ Id., no. 109.

⁹ Id., no. 111.

That is why Europe must be an open *and welcoming* continent that continues to practise, in today's globalised world, forms of cooperation that are not only economic but also social and cultural.

There is one requirement that the continent must meet in order to truly present a new face: 'Europe cannot turn in on itself. It cannot and must not lose interest in the rest of the world; on the contrary, it must remain fully aware that other countries and continents are looking to it to take bold initiatives to provide the poorest peoples with the means for their development and social organisation, and to build a more just and fraternal world'.¹⁰

Europe as an open continent... And therefore:

Europe must take an active part in promoting *and implementing a form of globalisation* 'in solidarity'.¹¹

There is a phrase that echoes this, spoken by Pope Francis in Lampedusa at the very beginning of his pontificate. He spoke of the "globalisation of indifference". Twenty years earlier, St John Paul II had called for a globalisation of or in solidarity.

The Europe that history has bequeathed to us has seen, especially in the last century, the rise of totalitarian ideologies and heightened nationalism which, by robbing the people of the continent of their hope, have fuelled conflicts within and between nations, culminating in the terrible tragedy of two world wars. More recent ethnic struggles [here he refers to the former Yugoslavia], which have once again bloodied the European continent, have also shown everyone that peace is fragile, that it requires the active commitment of all, and that it can only be guaranteed by opening up new prospects for exchange, forgiveness and reconciliation between individuals, between peoples and between nations.

Faced with this situation, Europe, with all its inhabitants, must work tirelessly *to build peace* within its borders and throughout the world. In this regard, it should be remembered, on the one hand, that national differences must be maintained and cultivated as the foundation of European solidarity; and, on the other hand, that national identity itself can only be achieved through openness to other peoples and solidarity with them.¹²

I believe that what St John Paul II says is a fine charter for what Christians' position in European integration might be today.

Pope Francis has given five major speeches on Europe. Two were given on the same day, 25 November 2014, in Strasbourg, at the Parliament and the Council of Europe. He then received the Charlemagne Prize, Europe's highest award, in 2016, with a grand speech. Then, in 2017, there

¹⁰ *Id.*, no. 111.

¹¹ *Id.*, no. 112.

¹² *Id.*, no. 112.

was an event that went somewhat unnoticed in France: the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

A summit was held in Rome to celebrate this anniversary, at the invitation of the Italian government. And during this European summit in Rome, the Pope received all the heads of state and government. He reiterated his commitment to European integration. Finally, the last speech was given at a conference held in Rome in October 2017, organised by the Secretariat of State and COMECE, on the theme of *Rethinking Europe*.

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I would like to highlight the institutional presence of the Church in Europe. In 1970, the first nuncio was appointed to what was then known as the European Economic Community (EEC). From the Holy See's point of view, Europe is not seen merely as an international institution; it does not send an observer, as it does to the UN or the Council of Europe, but a nuncio, an ambassador.

In recent times, it was for a long time a Frenchman, Alain Lebeaupin, who died shortly after his retirement. The person appointed next, Aldo Giordano, had been a member of the Council of Europe and president of the Council of European Bishops, i.e. Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals", some forty countries. - His role is pastoral, with no involvement in the political aspects of European integration. Unfortunately, he died of Covid in 2021.

Then, after a short while, Noel Treanor was asked to be the new EU nuncio. He is Irish. This is a very significant appointment, beyond the individuals involved. For fifteen years, he was the permanent secretary general of COMECE in Brussels, then bishop of Belfast. The Irish question was very important to him. He was from the south; Belfast is in the north. The fact that he has been asked to leave his diocese was a very strong sign of the Holy See's commitment to this representation to the EU. He also sadly passed away suddenly in August 2024, a great loss for the church in Europe.

1971 saw the creation of the CCEE, the Council of European Episcopal Conferences; 1980 saw the creation of COMECE, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU. The system is quite simple: there is one representative per episcopal conference of each member country (there are not quite 27 because the Nordic countries have a single episcopal conference. Previously, our British friends had three. In Ireland, there is only one for the North and South.

The European treaties form the basis of COMECE, Article 17 of the current Treaty of Lisbon: "The European institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with the Churches." The Churches are not a lobby, but they have an institutional presence provided for in the treaties.

In 2020, it was the 40th anniversary of COMECE, the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the EU and the 50th anniversary of the Holy See's presence as a permanent observer at the Council of Europe. Cardinal Parolin was supposed to come. The Pope had sent him a letter (dated 22 October 2020), which went somewhat unnoticed, reiterating what he expects from Europe.

The European project appears to him, in fact,

as a desire to put an end to the divisions of the past. It arises from the awareness that together and united we are stronger, that "unity is superior to conflict"¹³ and that solidarity can be "a way of making history, a vital domain where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a multifaceted unity, a unity that generates new life".¹⁴ In our era, which "ly shows signs of decline"¹⁵ where the idea of going it alone is increasingly prevalent, the pandemic presents itself as a turning point that forces us to make a choice: either we continue on the path taken in the last decade, driven by the temptation of autonomy, facing growing misunderstandings, opposition and conflicts; or we rediscover the path of fraternity, which undoubtedly inspired and animated the founding fathers of modern Europe, starting with Robert Schuman.¹⁶

Today, the words of Saint John Paul II in the European Act of Santiago de Compostela remain as timely as ever: Europe, "find yourself, be yourself".¹⁷ An age of rapid change can bring with it a loss of identity, especially when there is a lack of shared values on which to base society.

To Europe, then, I would like to say: you, who for centuries have been a seedbed of high ideals and now seem to be losing your élan, do not be content to regard your past as an album of memories. In time, even the most beautiful memories fade and are gradually forgotten. Sooner or later, we realize that we ourselves have changed; we find ourselves weary and listless in the present and possessed of little hope as we look to the future. Without ideals, we find ourselves weak and divided, more prone to complain and to be attracted by those who make complaint and division a style of personal, social and political life.

Europe, find yourself! Rediscover your most deeply-rooted ideals. Be yourself! Do not be afraid of your millenary history, which is a window open to the future more than the past. Do not be afraid of that thirst of yours for truth, which, from the days of ancient Greece, has spread throughout the world and brought to light the deepest questions of every human being. Do not be afraid of the thirst for justice that developed from Roman law and in time became respect for all human beings and their

¹³ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 228

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Fratelli tutti*, no. 11.

¹⁶ Letter from Pope Francis on Europe, 22 October 2020. [vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201022_lettera-parolin-europa.html#ftn2](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201022_lettera-parolin-europa.html#ftn2)

¹⁷ European Act of Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982.

rights. Do not be afraid of your thirst for eternity, enriched by the encounter with the Judeo-Christian tradition reflected in your patrimony of faith, art and culture.

Today, as many in Europe look to its future with uncertainty, others look to Europe with hope, convinced that it still has something to offer to the world and to humanity. The same conviction inspired Robert Schuman, who realized that “the contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations”.¹⁸ It is a conviction that we ourselves can share, setting out from shared values and rooted in the history and culture of this land.

What kind of Europe do we envision for the future? What is to be its distinctive contribution? In today’s world, it is not about recovering political hegemony or geographical centrality, or about developing innovative solutions to economic and social problems. The uniqueness of Europe rests above all on its conception of the human being and of reality, on its capacity for initiative and on its spirit of practical solidarity.

I dream, then, of a Europe that is a friend to each and all. A land respectful of everyone’s dignity, in which each person is appreciated for his or her intrinsic worth and not viewed purely from an economic standpoint or as a mere consumer. A land that protects life at every stage, from the time it arises unseen in the womb until its natural end, since no human being is the master of life, either his or her own life or the lives of others. A land that promotes work as a privileged means of personal growth and the pursuit of the common good, creating employment opportunities particularly for the young. Being a friend to others entails providing for their education and cultural development. It entails protecting the weakest and most vulnerable, especially the elderly, the sick in need of costly care, and those with disabilities. Being a friend to others entails defending their rights but also reminding them of their duties. It means acknowledging that everyone is called to offer his or her own contribution to society, for none of us is a world apart, and we cannot demand respect for ourselves without showing respect for others. We cannot receive unless we are also willing to give.

I dream of a Europe that is a family and a community. A place respectful of the distinctiveness of each individual and every people, ever mindful that they are bound together by shared responsibilities. Being a family entails living in unity, treasuring differences, beginning with the fundamental difference between man and woman. In this sense, Europe is a genuine family of peoples, all different yet linked by a common history and destiny. The experience of recent years and that of the pandemic in particular have shown that no one is completely self-sufficient, and that a certain individualistic understanding of life and society leads only to discouragement and isolation. Every man and woman aspires to be part of a community, that is, of a greater reality that transcends and gives meaning to his or her individuality. A divided Europe, made up of insular and independent realities, will soon prove incapable of facing the challenges of the future. On the other hand, a Europe that is a united and fraternal community will be able to value diversity and acknowledge the part that each has to play in confronting the problems that lie ahead, beginning with the pandemic and including the ecological challenge of preserving our natural resources and the quality of the environment in which we live. We are faced with the choice between a model of life that discards people and things, and an inclusive model that values creation and creatures.

¹⁸ Schuman Declaration, Paris, 9 May 1950

I dream of a Europe that is inclusive and generous. A welcoming and hospitable place in which charity, the highest Christian virtue, overcomes every form of indifference and selfishness. Solidarity, as an essential element of every authentic community, demands that we care for one another. To be sure, we are speaking of an “intelligent solidarity” that does more than merely attend to basic needs as they emerge.

Solidarity entails guiding those most vulnerable towards personal and social growth, enabling them one day to help others in turn. Like any good physician, who not only administers medication, but also accompanies the patient to complete recovery.

Solidarity involves being a neighbour to others. In the case of Europe, this means becoming especially ready and willing, through international cooperation, to offer generous assistance to other continents. I think particularly of Africa, where there is a need to resolve ongoing conflicts and to pursue a sustainable human development.

Solidarity is also nurtured by generosity and gives rise to gratitude, which leads us to regard others with love. When we forget to be thankful for the benefits we have received, we tend increasingly to close in upon ourselves and to live in fear of everything around us and different from us.

We can see this in the many fears felt in our contemporary societies, among which I would mention uneasiness and concern about migrants. Only a Europe that is a supportive community can meet the present challenge in a productive way, since piecemeal solutions have proved to be inadequate.

It is clear that a proper acceptance of migrants must not only assist those newly arrived, who are often fleeing conflict, hunger or natural disasters, but must also work for their integration, enabling them “to learn, respect and assimilate the culture and traditions of the nations that welcome them”.¹⁹

I dream of a Europe marked by a healthy secularism, where God and Caesar remain distinct but not opposed. A land open to transcendence, where believers are free to profess their faith in public and to put forward their own point of view in society. The era of confessional conflicts is over, but so too – let us hope – is the age of a certain laicism closed to others and especially to God, for it is evident that a culture or political system that lacks openness to transcendence proves insufficiently respectful of the human person.

Christians today have a great responsibility: they are called to serve as a leaven in reviving Europe’s conscience and help to generate processes capable of awakening new energies in society.²⁰ I urge them, therefore, to contribute with commitment, courage and determination to every sector in which they live and work.²¹

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What is interesting is this ability to see Europe as a project that the Church encourages and to which it gives significant support. In this way, it reaffirms its understanding of the Christian roots of Europe, not as a desire to return to a bygone past but as an

¹⁹ *Schuman Declaration*, Paris, 9 May 1950.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Letter from Pope Francis on Europe, 22 October 2020.

encouragement, a push for Europe to fully play its role, its part, in the multipolar world which is now ours. ■