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At a time of profound geopolitical change and growing global uncertainty, the European Union is facing one of the most challenging periods in its history. Yet it is important to remember that Europe's relationship with the Mediterranean is not only deeply rooted in history; it is also of great importance for our present and our future. This relationship is marked by many difficulties, but it is not without hope.

The Mediterranean gives the European Union a particular responsibility. It also offers Europe an opportunity to renew its vocation as a community of solidarity among peoples and as a force for peace, both within and beyond its borders.

The countries of Southern Europe are linked by the Mediterranean Sea. Throughout history, this sea has enabled communication, exchange and encounter among peoples and cultures. It has connected societies, fostered cooperation and encouraged mutual understanding.

Yet the Mediterranean is much more than a link between the countries of Europe. Through it, Europe is connected with Africa and the Middle East. It is a meeting place between continents, cultures and religions. For this reason, the European Union bears a special responsibility towards the wider Mediterranean region.

Despite its limitations and internal tensions, the European Union continues to possess significant economic, cultural and technological resources. It also carries a humanistic heritage that remains one of its distinctive strengths. Europe must become more aware not only of its possibilities but also of the responsibilities that arise from them.

If Europe fails to assume these responsibilities, it risks weakening its moral and cultural credibility. More fundamentally, it risks losing sight of the values upon which the European project itself was built.

Within this context, the Church also has an important responsibility. This responsibility is civic and moral, and it is inseparable from the Church's evangelising and pastoral mission. In many respects, the future of the Church in Europe is linked to the future of Europe itself. What affects one cannot remain entirely foreign to the other.

This concern does not arise from any institutional interest. Rather, it springs from a concern for the common good and for the welfare of peoples. A weakening or fragmentation of the European Union would have serious consequences for social cohesion, solidarity and peace. The Church cannot remain indifferent to such a prospect.

The dignity of every human person, respect for the identity of peoples, the preservation of Europe's shared cultural heritage, and the promotion of solidarity and subsidiarity remain essential tasks for our present and our future. These are not only political objectives. They are moral responsibilities.

As Church, we are called to be a vigilant conscience and a voice for dialogue and peace in the Euro-Mediterranean region. We are called to encourage encounter among peoples and cultures, especially at a time when so many continue to suffer the devastating consequences of war and violence across the lands and shores of the Mediterranean.

We must also keep before our eyes the tragedy of migrants who continue to lose their lives in its waters. Their suffering challenges the conscience of Europe and of the international community. It calls us to renewed commitment, greater solidarity and a deeper sense of our shared humanity.

The Mediterranean must not become a frontier of division or a graveyard of hopes. It must once again become a place of encounter, dialogue and cooperation among peoples.

As Christians, and as Europeans, we are called to work for this vision with courage, responsibility and hope.