



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 10th SYMPOSIUM
PROMOTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE BISHOPS'
CONFERENCES OF EUROPE (CCEE)**

Thursday, 25 April 2002

Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. I am happy to greet you on the occasion of your 10th Symposium, and I cordially welcome each of you. I greet in particular Bishop Amédée Grab, President of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), and I thank him for his sentiments of deep communion with the Successor of Peter, which he has expressed on your behalf.

As I have recalled on other occasions, the role of the European Bishops' Conferences in the Church is a providential fruit of the Second Vatican Council and seems to be a special gift of communion for our time. In past decades, these meetings have provided an opportunity to intensify among the different Catholic communities of Europe the bonds of evangelical charity that make them authentic homes and schools of communion.

In meeting you, I recall the different symposia in which God granted me to take part as Archbishop of Krakow. I especially remember the one in 1975, when I had the honour of being one of the relators.

Every meeting was another opportunity to deal with the aspects and plans of the new evangelization, a great apostolic undertaking that involves the entire Christian people.

2. The theme chosen for this 10th Symposium is: Young People of Europe In Change. Laboratory of Faith.

Every pastor knows that his first responsibility is to bring the faithful to meet Christ. In the course

of two millenia this meeting has transformed the lives of persons and of entire generations of Europeans. How can we fail to feel a strong responsibility to safeguard these Christian roots?

Indeed, today it is the young themselves who ask for the Gospel to be sown in their hearts in a new way. It is they who repeat to us, at times very insistently, their impatient desire to hear the "Good News". Yes, dear Brothers, we feel the urgent need to present to the new generations the only Redeemer of humanity, Jesus, who, being God, out of love willed to enter into the wounds of history even to the point of experiencing abandonment on the Cross.

As we face the absence of values and the profound existential questions that challenge contemporary society, we must proclaim and witness that Christ took upon himself the questions, expectations and even tragedies of humanity in every age. With his Resurrection, he made completely possible the realization of that desire for life and for eternity that lies deep in the heart of every human being and especially the hearts of the young.

Europe urgently needs to meet this God who loves mankind and is present in every human trial and hardship. For this to happen, it is vital that believers be ready to witness to the faith with their lives. Mature ecclesial communities will then develop who are ready and willing to use every instrument for the new evangelization.

3. Dear young people, I greet you with affection. I find it very important that you, the hope of the Church and of Europe, have come to this Symposium. It closely concerns you, for in today's society, it is to you that the Church looks with special attention. She expects of you the gift of a life that is fully faithful to Christ and his message of salvation.

I hope in this liturgical season that shines with the light of the Risen One, that he may give you his peace. May he be a Teacher for each one of you, as he was for the disciples of Emmaus. And you, dear friends, follow him confidently with enthusiasm and perseverance. Do not let him be pushed aside. The Gospel is indispensable for the renewal of culture; it is indispensable for building a future of true peace in Europe and in the world. It is up to you, dear young people, to make this contribution. So do not hesitate to say "yes" to God who is calling you.

4. I also greet the delegates of the other Churches and ecclesial communities who are present. It is becoming ever clearer that reconciliation among Christians is crucial for the credibility of the proclamation of the Gospel, as well as for building Europe. In this regard, the *Ecumenical Charter for Europe*, signed in Strasbourg in April 2001, marks an important step in increasing collaboration among Churches and Christian communities. I pray God that people may journey in this direction with ever greater confidence and determination.

I also address my best wishes to those in charge of Bishops' Conferences in Africa, Asia and America who are taking part in the work. Thanks to your presence, dear friends, the Church's

perspective is broadened and Europe acquires a deeper awareness of its responsibility to other lands and peoples, to build the hoped-for universal solidarity. I hope that each one of you will contribute to the total success of the symposium.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, during these days and at every moment of your lives, may Our Lord, with the power of the Holy Spirit, crown you with his gifts of love, joy and peace. May Mary, Mother of the Church, accompany you, and may St Mark the Evangelist, whose feast day we celebrate today, protect you all.

As I assure everyone of my remembrance in prayer, I warmly bless you and the ecclesial communities to which you belong. I wish your Symposium every success.