

**Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna
and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI).**

The assembly opened with an address by Zuppi

We wish to express our gratitude to Pope Leo XIV for having accepted the invitation to be with us on Thursday, 20 November, for the conclusion of our Assembly. We prepare ourselves to receive his message, a precious opportunity to be strengthened in his magisterium of unity and peace.

In these six months of his Pontificate, beginning with his very first address to the Cardinals, we have identified several foundational pillars: the centrality of the proclamation of the Gospel; the unity of the Church; the exercise of collegiality within synodality; the promotion of a “disarmed and disarming” peace in a world that, by contrast, relies on force, fills its arsenals and, as a result, empties schools, hospitals, and granaries; and attention to the dignity of the human person, from beginning to end, wholly to be loved, cared for, and safeguarded, always and for everyone.

These same themes also inform the pastoral priorities he entrusted to us on 17 June. We feel encouraged by his invitation to look to the future with serenity, making courageous choices. I feel — and we all feel — both the responsibility and the opportunity this entails.

“No one will be able to prevent you from staying close to the people, from sharing their lives, from walking with those on the margins, from serving the poor. No one will be able to prevent you from proclaiming the Gospel; and it is the Gospel that we are sent to bring, because this is what everyone — we ourselves first — need in order to live well and be happy” (Leo XIV, Address, 17 June 2025).

In his address to the Diplomatic Corps, through the triad of peace, justice, and truth, he offered a global reading of contemporary crises: the protection of religious freedom; the renewal of multilateral diplomacy; a critique of the arms race; the centrality of the family as a “small but real society” (Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, 9); and attention to the vulnerable as a criterion for public policy.

As Churches in Italy, today we feel more strongly the compelling call to go out into the great harvest of this world: to respond to the many who wish to know the name of the unknown God; to share the Bread that satisfies; to proclaim the Gospel of eternal life to those who, groping their way forward, seek hope; to heal the sufferings of a crowd that is weary and

exhausted because it has no shepherd. Not to judge and thus inevitably condemn, but to look with the eyes of Jesus — the eyes of compassion — so as to be leaven of fraternity.

Our society has changed: those who are “near” are fewer than in the past, while those who are “far away” have increased. Distance, however, is no longer hostility as it once was, but increasingly indifference, or simply living naturally in a world that is different from ours — from the world of our language or our circles, which have narrowed. We are consoled by the faith of so many believers, yet we feel the wound of so many forms of distance. We would like our dialogue — that of priests, of the faithful, of all of us — to widen.

There is a spirit of searching, often suffocated in lives that are not easy, weighed down more and more by loneliness, by the absence of family support, by economic hardship and the struggles of daily life. At times, almost without reason, a habit takes root of living at a distance from the Church, focused on oneself and one’s own problems. We are the Church for everyone, and we would like to be so even more — respectfully, certainly — also for these people.

How beautiful is the program traced out by Saint Paul VI during the Council! “The Church becomes word; the Church becomes message; the Church becomes dialogue” (*Ecclesiam suam*, 67). And he went on to say that there is a disposition to be fostered among us: I would call it a friendly, missionary disposition, capable of listening, of fidelity over time, of waiting and of welcome. Not a resigned disposition, for history is full of surprises, and many signs of interest seem to me to be emerging.

Saint Paul VI said: “The disposition of one who feels within himself the weight of the apostolic mandate; of one who senses that he can no longer separate his own salvation from the pursuit of that of others; of one who continually strives to place the message of which he is the custodian into the circulation of human discourse” (*Ecclesiam suam*, 82). Let us not forget that for everyone this is a painful, chaotic, anguishing ‘change of epoch’, often recalled by Pope Francis.

When it is said that “Christendom is finished”, what is meant is that our society is no longer naturally Christian. But this must not frighten us! As Charles Taylor observes, “the change I wish to define and describe is the one that brings us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God to one in which faith, even for the most convinced believer, is one human possibility among others.” The end of Christendom does not in any way mark the disappearance of faith, but rather the passage to a time in which faith is no longer taken for granted by the social context but becomes a personal and conscious adherence to the Gospel.

Let us think of the society of Antioch at the time of the early Church: believers personally committed themselves to bearing and communicating their experience of faith. Thus, if Christendom has ended, Christianity certainly has not: what is fading is an order of power and culture, not the living force of the Gospel. For this reason, we must not be afraid, but renew our commitment to being joyful witnesses of the Risen One. We must not become mediocre, intimidated, fearful in exercising spiritual fatherhood and in assuming responsibility, but more evangelical and more truly Christian.

I gladly recall once more Saint Paul VI, in the address delivered during the final public session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council — whose sixtieth anniversary will soon be commemorated (7 December 1965): “A time which everyone recognizes as oriented toward the conquest of the kingdom of the earth rather than the Kingdom of Heaven; a time in which forgetfulness of God becomes habitual and seems, wrongly, to be suggested by scientific progress; [...] a time, moreover, in which the expressions of the spirit reach heights of irrationality and desolation; a time, finally, that records even within the great ethnic religions of the world disturbances and declines not previously experienced.”

Let us therefore not fear this time, which seems to take space away from faith: perhaps the opposite is true. This is the moment when the proclamation of the Gospel must shine more brightly, like a lamp burning in the night. Today’s believer is no longer the guardian of a Christian world, but the pilgrim of a hope that continues to make its way into hearts.

In this horizon, the end of Christendom is not a defeat, but a **kairos**: the opportunity to return to what is essential, to the freedom of the beginnings, to that “yes” spoken out of love, without fear and without guarantees. The Gospel does not need a world that protects it, but hearts that embody it. It is precisely in this situation of “vulnerability” that the Church rediscovers her strength — not the strength of power, often presumed in reconstructions of the Church’s relevance, but the strength of love freely given, without fear. “A Church that places no limits on love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church the world needs today” (Leo XIV, **Dilexi te**, 120).

The priority is certainly to transmit the faith: to make it living and attractive, to help it be discovered as hidden within the expectations and desires of the heart, to assist people in rediscovering its language and its practice. This is our horizon and our passion. Looking at so many “spiritually homeless” people, we sense their condition — often marked by deep suffering — as a call to build homes of prayer and fraternity with God and neighbor, where the motherhood of the Church can be experienced and the listening to the Word that becomes life can be lived.

We have no political ambition whatsoever, nor any desire to gain positions of power. We do not need to please anyone or any political force, nor do we have any consensus to win. We can only ask for a great deal of political love, especially from those who draw inspiration from the beautiful and deeply human social doctrine of the Church. What animates us, with all our personal limitations, is love for the good of the Italian people and for the whole world. Our sole ambition — and may God help us to realize it — is to serve the Gospel of Jesus among these people. This is our freedom: dedication to the service of the Church and of the people.

The gift of a path: *Dilexi te*

As a gift, in this liturgical year now drawing to a close, on the threshold of Advent, we have received the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi te*. In these pages — which touched me deeply — the message of Pope Francis and the wisdom of Leo XIV converge, in a prophetic continuity that is essential for communion in the Church and that reveals her very essence. As always, the Pope’s words are to be received with great attentiveness and reverence, avoiding the risk of consuming them without reflection or quickly consigning them to forgetfulness.

If the Church does not walk with the poor, she betrays herself and loses her way. This text completes a story that began with the “unforgettable words” (as Leo XIV calls them) of John XXIII: “The Church presents herself as she is and as she wishes to be: as the Church of all, and especially the Church of the poor” (*Dilexi te*, 84). The Church is for everyone if she is for her poorest brothers and sisters. Universality is the desire to reach everyone and to communicate the Good News of the Gospel to all.

Pope Leo writes, analyzing the globalization of indifference: “It becomes normal to ignore the poor and to live as if they did not exist. It is presented as the reasonable choice to organize the economy by asking sacrifices of the people in order to achieve certain goals that serve the interests of the powerful. Meanwhile, for the poor there remain only promises of ‘trickle-down’ benefits, until a new global crisis once again returns them to their previous condition” (*Dilexi te*, 93).

We must ask all Christians — this is the Pope’s reasoning — to have the courage to demand a change of mentality and a transformation of what are called structures of sin. The Christian’s relationship with the poor is first and foremost personal, and from there it extends to social doctrine and beyond. “Therefore,” Leo XIV insists, “we must feel the urgency of inviting everyone to enter this river of light and life that flows from recognizing Christ in the faces of the needy and the suffering” (*Dilexi te*, 103).

The poor not only need support and assistance; they also have much to say to us and to give us, even if in ways that may seem unfamiliar. Leo XIV also defends almsgiving, which is rooted in Scripture itself and which a distorted form of efficiency had called into question: “It will always be better to do something than to do nothing. In any case, it will touch our hearts. It will not be the solution to poverty in the world, which must be sought with intelligence, perseverance, and social commitment. But we need to practice almsgiving in order to touch the suffering flesh of the poor” (*Dilexi te*, 119).

Entering the river of life that flows from recognizing Christ in the needy also leads us, as Church, to re-examine our institutions, works, structures, and associations, so as to avoid flattening them into merely humanitarian or corporate models. We must courageously rethink our way of acting, drawing inspiration from the deep spirituality taught by the Apostolic Exhortation and from the humanity to which the Gospel leads us.

This will help us to carry out the choices indicated in the many recommendations of the Synodal Path. The Church is renewed precisely when she chooses to say *dilexi te* to the poor, whom we always have with us but often fail to notice. “The preferential option for the poor generates an extraordinary renewal both in the Church and in society” (*Dilexi te*, 7). When we think we can renew the Church without choosing to be freely present with the poor, that renewal leaves Jesus outside.

“The Church is light only when she strips herself of everything” (*Dilexi te*, 67). Even amid the Church’s present difficulties, we will find the answer when we love the Word, break the *Verbum Domini* and the *Corpus Domini*, but also when we love with the same love the *Corpus Pauperum*, which is likewise the Body of Jesus. “The Gospel is proclaimed correctly only when it leads us to touch the flesh of the least” (*Dilexi te*, 48).

Saint Francis and the path to peace

Dear Brothers, it is no coincidence that we gather in these days in Assisi, in the city of Saint Francis, on the eve of the eighth centenary of his death. His lesson of faith and life appears strikingly relevant. In a time such as ours, marked by continuous and deepening fractures, Saint Francis stands out, with full legitimacy, as a man of peace and evangelical concord. At the center of everything is always Christ.

He lived in an age torn apart by civic struggles and discord, when towns and cities were theaters of violence often originating within their own walls. In that difficult context, Francis and his brothers proclaimed without hesitation and without pause the peace that comes from God, urging hearts not to give in to destructive violence and encouraging all to seek paths of peace. And not by chance, the first task was the rebuilding of the Church.

Giovanni da Spalato recounts his meditation in Bologna: “In that same year [1222], on the feast of the Assumption of the Mother of God, while I was at the Studium of Bologna, I saw Saint Francis preaching in the square before the communal palace, where, one might say, almost the entire city had gathered. This was the beginning of his sermon: ‘Angels, men, demons.’ He spoke so well and so clearly of these three kinds of rational spirits that many learned people present were greatly amazed at the discourse of an unlettered man. And yet he did not have the style of a preacher, for he seemed rather to be in dialogue. In truth, the whole substance of his words was aimed at extinguishing hostilities and laying the foundations for new pacts of peace. He wore a filthy habit; his appearance was contemptible, his face without beauty. And yet God bestowed such power upon his words that many noble families, among whom the irreconcilable fury of long-standing enmities had flared up even to the shedding of much blood, were bent toward counsels of peace.”

Saint Francis, with his **Gospel sine glossa** — what additions of ours must we shed? — taught us that peace begins with us, with our choices. As Benedict XVI often repeated, it spreads by attraction. When faith is supported by coherent, sober, and essential ways of life, when it is accompanied by a serene and joyful existence, it becomes contagious — just as Francis’s choice of the Gospel proved contagious in his own time and in the centuries that followed. As **bonum est diffusivum sui**, so too we may say of peace.

Let us not take refuge in the globalization of impotence, which often means settling for mediocrity and leads us to stop imagining great things — things that only the humble and those in love with God are able to accomplish. On Wednesday evening we will gather in prayer to invoke once again, together, the gift of reconciliation and to raise our heartfelt appeal for peace.

The Churches in Italy after the Third Synodal Assembly

As is well known, we are celebrating this General Assembly in November rather than in the traditional month of May, because we wished to wait for the conclusion of the Synodal Path of our Churches. On 25 October, the delegates — including the bishops — voted on the Final Document. In this way, an important phase came to a close, one that had begun four years ago in response to the invitation of Pope Francis and that saw the participation, in various forms, of at least 500,000 people.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Presidency, to the National Committee, to the delegates, and to all those who, in different ways, were involved in this journey and who contributed with such passion. In particular, our thanks go to Monsignor Erio Castellucci for the patience and care with which, together with Monsignor Valentino Bulgarelli, he guided the synodal process throughout this long journey. We also offer our heartfelt thanks

to the three bishops who supported them and worked alongside them: Monsignor Claudio Giuliodori, Monsignor Antonello Mura, and Monsignor Antonino Raspanti.

Through the Synodal Path we have learned to refine certain elements that were probably already present but in need of renewal: listening, discernment, prophecy. Above all, we sought to internalize this process as a permanent ecclesial style. A new phase now opens, one that particularly challenges us Pastors in the exercise of collegiality and in that presiding over communion which is so decisive if synodality is to become form, style, and practice for a more effective mission in the world.

In accordance with the indication of the Permanent Episcopal Council meeting in Gorizia last September, the Presidency of the Italian Episcopal Conference has appointed a group of bishops who, assisted by the statutory bodies, will support our journey until May 2026. We thank them in advance: Cardinal Roberto Repole, Monsignor Gherardo Gambelli, Monsignor Guglielmo Giombanco, Monsignor Corrado Lorefice, Monsignor Andrea Migliavacca, and Monsignor Michele Tomasi.

I draw inspiration from the passage from the Acts of the Apostles that was offered for our meditation precisely on 25 October: the so-called Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–15). The narrative is set in motion by a crisis that arises within the Church of Antioch concerning what should be required of converts from paganism. On the surface, this appears to be an organizational question. In reality, it is about understanding the salvation accomplished by Jesus.

Those who take the floor are, in fact, above all those who had experienced the grace bestowed by the Risen One: Paul, who had been suddenly reached on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:1–19; 22:3–21; 26:4–23); Peter, who had grasped the boundless love of Christ in the house of a pagan (cf. Acts 10:44, 46); and James, who interprets Scripture in a universalistic key (cf. Amos 9:11–12). We might put it this way: only those who have experienced the Risen Lord and his grace in their own lives can speak fully about the Church.

This, too, has been the very reason for the believing community from its beginnings: to bear authoritative and trustworthy witness that Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead, the first fruits of all humanity called to share in his very life. We may develop different techniques, ever more effective and attuned to the times, but always in service of proclaiming an experience of faith that has already been lived.

Synodality and collegiality

I have mentioned Paul, Peter, and James. But we must not forget the others who do not speak yet whose presence is nonetheless fundamental to the dynamics of the Council of

Jerusalem: Barnabas, Judas, Silas, the other apostles, the elders, the faithful of Antioch, and even some members of the party of the Pharisees. Each has a role, and the author of Acts seeks to highlight it.

This is what synodality means: there is a question around which people reflect together — at times even clashing — and everyone can make their voice heard, in the awareness that the will of God can be discerned in this way as well. One walks together, addressing together the issues that concern everyone. At the same time, one entrusts oneself to the wisdom of the apostles. The speeches of Paul and Peter are immediately the most attentively received; people hang on their words in order to gain interpretive keys to what is happening. The final word, however, belongs to the apostle who presides over the Church of Jerusalem: James. He gathers up the witness of the other apostles and, by citing the Word of God, dispels every doubt.

In these few verses we find the account of a successful dialogue between synodality and collegiality, between the participation of the People of God and the responsibility of the apostles.

Dear Brothers, now it is our turn. The collegiality we express in the form of our Episcopal Conference calls us first and foremost to exercise our precious ministry within a Church that is synodal, constituted by a people who walk together — all together. Indeed, to imagine our episcopal ministry in a collegial sense as something other than, or separate from, the synodality of the whole Church would amount to depriving communion within our Churches and among our Churches of the guarantee represented by episcopal communion.

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, also from this perspective, remains for us a sure path not to be lost. We are called to take up the entire journey that the Churches in Italy have undertaken in these years, in order to orient future steps through our discernment and through the resolutions we recognize as necessary. The task entrusted to us is demanding, and we must honor it in the best possible way, so that within our Churches the prophecy may take shape of a Church that continues to allow herself to be shaped by the breath of the Spirit.

I believe that decisions are necessary, beginning with those that are possible and long awaited. The resolutions that we decide to entrust to the competent bodies are intended to offer our response so as not to lose any more time, to equip ourselves courageously with the necessary instruments, and to guarantee the Synodal Path clear and timely answers. I believe it is necessary to initiate a reflection on the possible revision of the Statute of the Italian Episcopal Conference itself, so as to incorporate swiftly what will be indicated by

the working group established by Pope Leo XIV precisely on the theme “The statute of ecclesial assemblies and particular councils,” within the framework of the General Secretariat of the Synod.

Builders of community

We are called to commit ourselves to building Christian community wherever we are. Only this will give flesh to our faith and provide a home for our brothers and sisters. The Church is always the **Familia Dei**. Certainly, this is not the historical moment of “us,” of living together, as can be seen in the fragility of the family and of many associations. Yet the very nature of the Church drives us toward a pastoral and communitarian commitment to building the community of believers: “God willed to sanctify and save men not individually and without any bond among them, but willed to constitute from them a people who would recognize him in truth and serve him in holiness” (**Lumen gentium**, 9).

Making this a priority of our pastoral work is in harmony with the synodal choices, which do not concern institutions or structures but living communities, a subject, a “we” (in which the presence of the Lord is found, as he himself assures us). A living community is always a prophecy in our individualistic age.

More than ten years ago, in **Evangelii gaudium**, Pope Francis wrote:

“Today, when networks and tools of human communication have reached unprecedented development, we feel the challenge of discovering and transmitting the ‘mystique’ of living together, of mixing, of meeting, of embracing one another, of leaning on one another, of participating in this somewhat chaotic tide that can be transformed into a true experience of fraternity, into a solidarity caravan, into a holy pilgrimage. In this way, the greater possibilities of communication will translate into greater possibilities of encounter and solidarity among all. If we could follow this path, it would be so good, so healing, so liberating, so generative of hope! Going out of ourselves to join others does us good. Closing in on ourselves means tasting the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will suffer the worst in every selfish choice we make” (**Evangelii gaudium**, 87).

This passionate passage applies to every kind of community. Let us think of our parishes, which must always remain open to every kind of believer and to every search for God: they are like the public square of the Church, where there must be no limited or conditioned access, because often people from many different backgrounds arrive here. And to the fountain come the thirsty, even if we do not know them!

All forms of community, including those of movements, must be encouraged in the dynamism of communion and fatherhood, as must associations of every kind that the genius of faith and Christian friendship sows in our ecclesial fabric. I think of communities that gather around men and women religious, or around places of prayer, sanctuaries, and many other realities. In **Caritas in veritate** (cf. 53), Pope Benedict reminded us that one of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is loneliness. In truth, even other forms of poverty, including material ones, arise from isolation, from not being loved or from the difficulty of loving.

We need not fear diversity if everything takes place within the motherhood of the Church and in communion. The passion for building community must be rekindled — the desire to think together, which is also difficult and demanding, like all challenging things — also because it involves sharing fraternity in a world of people accustomed to living alone, speaking remotely, and turning everything around the self. Supporting a community, fostering its growth and development, is a pastoral art, but it is above all the fruit of the Eucharist, of common prayer, and of service to the poor. All our ministries gain meaning when they relate to a community. This communal passion — evangelical and rooted deeply in the human heart — must be rekindled and accompanied. In a society that atomizes, may the Church never cease to be a people! Even in a small community — as we know from the Gospel — there is great strength: attractive and missionary, consoling, liberating from evil.

Ignatius of Antioch writes to the Ephesians, after recommending that they gather often, especially for the Eucharist: “When you gather often, the forces of Satan are defeated and his scourge dissolves in the harmony of faith. Nothing is more beautiful than peace, in which every war of heavenly and earthly powers is frustrated.” I think of the meaning of these words in the life of cities, in the suburbs, in villages, in the so-called internal areas: life is revived through faith and fraternity; evil retreats and is challenged by good. May the Church help Italians feel less polarized (the risk of polarization in many areas has been repeatedly highlighted by Pope Leo), less isolated and alone — in short, more a people!

The culture of prevention and protection

Finally, thinking of a wounded world, we cannot fail to speak of the dramatic reality of abuse, against which we must never lower our guard. The data already published and the analyses that will come from the pilot study give us a detailed and meaningful picture of the path traveled and the challenges that remain. They represent a concrete tool for continuing to improve, to ask questions, and to walk together. Much progress has been made in these years, and we have not been afraid either to begin or to continue this journey.

We can rely on an effective network rooted in the territory, where the oversight of diocesan and interdiocesan services, together with listening centers, reflects a welcoming and solid presence of the Church that knows how to humbly bend down to hear the pain of victims. Tomorrow, 18 November, marks the Fifth National Day of Prayer, firmly established by the Italian Episcopate to acknowledge past mistakes and commit to healing the wounds of those who have suffered and continue to suffer because of abuse. We, too, will celebrate this prayer together during Vespers. Tomorrow also, Monsignor Thibault Verny, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, will bring his greeting, to whom we express our gratitude.

Allow me, then, a personal thanks — and that of the Presidency — to our dioceses, which are actively involved in a large number of initiatives on the ground aimed at prevention: from awareness-raising to training, they involve the active participation of laity, clergy, men and women religious. In particular, formation remains a rigorous and constant commitment: numbers speak for themselves — in the two-year period 2023–2024, around 43,000 people were reached and trained. Certainly, shadows and resistance remain, but we have concrete awareness of a constant movement aimed at strengthening trust, amplifying respect, welcoming and listening to victims, and safeguarding the dignity of every member of the People of God.

Europe and the Mediterranean: for a visible hope

Dear Brothers, in our time — marked by countless conflicts and immense suffering, in which we have seen walls of division reappear and experienced attitudes of closure and exclusion often directed against the poor, migrants, prisoners... — this very time requires signs of renewed fraternity, as Pope Francis taught us in his encyclical **Fratelli tutti**. The fraternity we dream of, await, and desire requires visible projects and actions to put equality at the center for all women and men today, and to renew a season of rights and true justice for every people and nation.

We need to return to supporting decisive and generous forms of development cooperation: mutual development, material and moral, which in turn expresses solidarity and fraternity. This is what we are trying to pursue, as the Church in Italy, in the Holy Land, in Gaza, and beyond.

A humble yet strong sign in this direction could also come from relaunching a project of encounter and cooperation in the spirit of solidarity between Europe and the Mediterranean, following the inspired intuition of Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti. The meetings

promoted in 2020 in Bari and in 2022 in Florence — later continued in Marseille in 2023 — taught us much, defining the Mediterranean as the “sea of fraternity.”

Accepting the invitation of Pope Leo XIV during the audience with the Council of Mediterranean Youth (5 September 2025), we would like to continue this emblematic journey, which springs from a shared memory and aims to contribute to virtuous relations, to the embrace between generations, and to dialogue between faiths. A path in which we can engage as a Church, while also calling on a plurality of actors — cities, universities, NGOs, expressions of traditions and cultures — who all together care to give this age an unmistakable sign of hope. In this sense, the Council of Mediterranean Youth itself is an example of what dialogue and formation can accomplish.

Europe

Finally, when thinking about the architecture of peace, one cannot overlook Europe, which can guarantee peace by resolving conflicts through dialogue and by thinking together. Many Christians played a great role in the reconciliation of Europeans after the Second World War. Think of the abyss between Germans and French: today it is a chapter of history, but not so many decades ago it was a painful and worrying reality. I think of how Christians were at the heart of the beginning of the European unification process. And I am convinced that Christians and our Catholic Church have an important service to live today.

In a complex world tempted by the logic of force, Europe represents an important refuge, and we, European Christians, have a responsibility. It is not just a matter of pooling problems internally, but of engaging — in the light of faith — in long-term thinking about our Continent and its relationship with others. For this reason, attention must not lapse regarding war-torn Ukraine.

In a world that is being reshaped, where Europe risks becoming peripheral or assuming a different position relative to emerging or already emerged countries, and also relative to North America, the Europe of Christian Churches exists and lives. There is a European Catholicism and a vast field of experiences and achievements. We have something to say: the human person, even if fragile, weak, dying, or unborn, is central to our humanism. Our Europe has always played an important role in thinking about the human, the person, and the community — a thought that has extended outward to other continents. This cannot be absent.

Let us think of a forthcoming moment of encounter about Europe, to be properly prepared, that will move in the direction desired by Romano Guardini, reflecting on **Europe: Task and Destiny**: “The task reserved for it, I think, does not consist in increasing the power of science and technology — though it will naturally do that too — but in taming that power.”

Beyond this thought, which seems so timely, the German theologian suggested another that outlines the task of the Churches in the vision of Europe: “Europe is a political, economic, technical fact — but above all a disposition of the spirit, a feeling.” Ultimately, all the processes of rapprochement or globalization that we have witnessed between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have displayed a deficit of spirit. Christian Europe has much to say and much to think about in this regard.

Dear Brothers, I thank you for listening to me and for what you will wish to observe and propose. Let us entrust these days of shared work to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Saint Francis, and Saint Clare.