

Rome, March 25 2017

A call from the European Network of Church on the Move

"Determined to lay the foundations for an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, determined to ensure the common economic and social progress of their countries by eliminating the barriers which divide Europe, aiming at a constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their people", the six founding countries of Europe signed on March 25, 1957, 60 years ago, the Treaty of Rome at the origin of the European Union. What about Europe today? Can we celebrate its sixtieth anniversary, with festivals and commemorations as for its fiftieth anniversary? We must make a serious analysis of the situation and the crises of Europe, as citizens of Europe and as Christians.

Our Europe is confronted with major changes in the global geopolitical structure of the world, the financierisation of economic and political relations between countries of the world. A radical paradigm shift has been made: instead of putting finance at the service of the people of Europe, people are put at the service of finance, and fail to organize themselves effectively to oppose this domination.

It is also confronted with a "third world war" distributed in different parts of the world, notably in the Middle East where the situation, partly the result of Western European decisions, is more serious, with a new President of the United States who generates fears and anxieties in Europe and the world, with large-scale migrations, with blind terrorism that seeks to use religion to impose its retrograde worldview, with an economic crisis which became social because of the mass unemployment it produces and which affects particularly young people and destroys old solidarities, with finance, increasingly protected to the detriment of the weakest, which increases more and more the inequalities in the world, and even within individual countries.

Europe is confronted with other (Latin America) or persistent (sub-Saharan Africa) crises, with the criminal organizations that use globalization to globalize and thrive. In the East, the prospect is not relaxation, but the creation of new rearmed barriers leading certain countries to maintain and modernize their existing nuclear arsenal while developing conventional weapons: the weapons market prospers and the military continues to maintain and impose their presence in many places. In addition to this, there is the continuing deterioration of the global environmental situation, despite the positive decisions of COP21.

Confronted to these changes and crises, Europe is increasingly "abandoning" the values that were at the origin of its creation and its dynamics. What about, the protection of human rights without discrimination, what about peace within each country as the premise of a new and more equitable relationship between all people and between the North and the South? What about economic and social justice, solidarity and the protection of the weakest? What about the involvement of European citizens in the preparation of decision-making that concerns them, what about structures and spaces for dialogue and consultation? Citizens are becoming increasingly distant from decision-making centers and less and less consulted. They are increasingly suffering from the very heavy and prolonged economic crisis that makes their lives increasingly difficult. They feel that they are invaded by migrants of different cultures and religions, thus losing their socio-cultural benchmarks. The loss of sense and the feeling of insecurity that result from it lead a lot of people to take refuge in a falsely reassuring fundamentalism and to fall into the worst populism. Democratic and pro-European forces are in difficulty and do not know or do not want to treat these problems equitably between the different countries and in particular to address the wave of migrants

This crisis in the incomplete construction of a political Europe is so profound and difficult that, despite its important success that lead, in particular, to the awarding of the Nobel Price for Peace, it loses its attractiveness, causing a growing disaffection among European citizens, making it run the risk of gradually ending in disunity. Some people are already talking about its dissolution. The Brexit is a first negative signal that strengthens the separatist forces of the different countries.

Europe has not been able to seize the unique opportunity of the fall of the Berlin Wall to establish a more balanced and equitable relationship between states and continents allowing for a policy of disarmament. Will it seize the opportunity of these internal and external crises to renew with the spirit of the founding fathers, to organise itself in order to respond more efficiently to the needs and the calls of its people, and thus to meet the challenges that it is facing?

This question is challenging us as Christians and citizens of Europe. That is why, relying on the Gospel and the intuitions of the Second Vatican Council, referring to the magisterium of Pope Francis, driven to act politically by our faith in Jesus and inspired by His Spirit, having faith in the salvation of creation, as St. Francis sings in the Song of Creatures, we appeal:

- for a united Europe, enriched by the diversity of its traditions, its languages, its history, the currents of thought and the religions that shaped it, and practising dialogue and exchanges so that all its citizens recognize themselves mutually;
- for a Europe which has, as its soul, the concern for the material and spiritual well-being of each citizen, without any discrimination in respect of human rights, solidarity, social and economic justice, reception of foreigners, the sword that turns into a plough, the desire for peace, joint actions and fraternal relations among all people, regardless of religion or philosophy.
- for a "new deal" for Europe, so that new European institutions are opposed to the power of money and place people at the centre of their concern, as Pope Francis pointed out; for implementing, in a coordinated way, the political and economic reforms leading to a solidarity-based economic recovery between the countries of Europe, in order to revitalize them equitably, and to reduce unemployment in each of them, particularly that of the young people who have to be welcomed into the world of adults.
- to oppose everywhere, as in the Christian communities and in the churches, the destructive fundamentalist and identity wave that travels throughout Europe. This wave, which refers, among other things, to an ancient and anti-evangelical idea of "Christian civilization", is contrary to the spirit of Jesus because it contains within it the germs of racism, exclusion and violence. Everywhere we must strongly say no to this return to the past, near or far, which should be rethought with feelings of humility and repentance.

Let us act together without delay and with great energy to build an "other Europe", thereby contributing to transforming the world into a world of peace, social and economic justice, a world of brotherhood and solidarity in which every persons can flourish whatever their convictions, their religion or their philosophy, while respecting those of others.

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