



Message of Rome

COMECE European Congress *Values and Perspectives for Europe* *50 years of the Treaties of Rome*

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, more than 400 delegates of Bishops' Conferences, religious orders and congregations, Catholic organisations and movements, and members of other Churches met in Rome from 23 to 25 March 2007. At the invitation of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community they took part in a European Congress, "Values and Perspectives for Tomorrow's Europe – 50 years of the Treaty of Rome". Congress participants send the following message to the European Union heads of state and government, to the President of the European Parliament, and to the President of the European Commission, who will meet on 25 March 2007 in a formal meeting of the European Council to commemorate the same event.

1. In the light of the history of the European Community, we consider the treaties of Rome to be an important step on the way to bringing together European states and peoples. We are grateful for all that was done by many of those who represented our peoples in terms of their commitment to peace and European reunification, which is, nonetheless, not yet complete. Those European leaders were able to draw the right lessons from the aberrations of excessive nationalism and extreme totalitarian ideologies which led to war and to the destruction and denial of liberty. The achievements of this past half century are set out in the report "A Europe of Values" of which this Congress has taken note. We consider it to be our duty to carry on the work of European construction, bearing in mind that it is a century-long task. It took our forebears more than a hundred years to build a new cathedral for just a few people. In fifty years we have built a new "cathedral" for all Europeans.
2. We recall that all member states freely joined the process of European integration when they signed and ratified the Treaty of Rome and successive European treaties. At present, in March 2007, the European Union faces significant new challenges which it must face if it is to safeguard its future. It must develop its international cooperation so as to fight poverty, especially in Africa. It must combat the exploitation of women and children and the violation of human rights. It must face up to the causes and consequences of climate change. In this context, we must bring together the experiences of a greater number of member states. We must meet the rising expectation of our citizens in respect of the European Union's response to globalisation. We must maintain an adequate level of social protection. It becomes ever more necessary to bring our citizens back into touch with political institutions which seem ever more remote and hard to understand. All this urgently requires that the path already taken is strongly confirmed by a new and more broadly based justification for the European Union. This will allow it to rediscover its early dynamism so that, indeed, young Europeans, in ever growing numbers, will become Europe's greatest resource.

3. We follow with great interest the dialogue between the heads of State and Government, the President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission, seeking a shared solution which will allow us to come through the present period of reflection in Europe. We hope that whatever the institutional solution that is found, it safeguards human dignity and the values which flow from it, such as freedom of religion in all its aspects. It must protect the institutional rights of Churches and of faith communities. It should also explicitly recognise the Christian heritage of our continent. It is through a dialogue on and for the common good of our citizens that we shall best contribute to that strong social cohesion which, today, is so important and so necessary for Europe.
4. We ask that the EU be guided by the values and principles which have motivated European unification since its beginning. These are human dignity, equality of man and woman, peace and freedom, reconciliation and respect, solidarity and subsidiarity, the rule of law, justice, and the pursuit of the common good. They are indispensable, particularly in the light of the return of nationalist, racist, xenophobic and selfish tendencies in our countries. The European institutions should only act in matters which fall within their competence and not in matters that are of national competence. We therefore call on the member states in the framework of their democratic legislatures to respect life from its conception to its natural end and to foster the family as the natural union between man and woman in marriage. Respect for the legal and civil rights of individuals must not be allowed to undermine the institution of marriage, and the family as the basis of society.
5. As Christians, in our communities, in our associations and movements, we will contribute with our commitment to promote those initiatives which authentically respect human nature created in the image and likeness of God, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, and thus promote authentically reconciliation, freedom, peace, solidarity, subsidiarity and justice. In the process of the continent's integration, as recalled by Pope John Paul II, "it is of capital importance to remember that the union will lack substance if it is reduced to its merely geographic and economic dimensions; rather, it must consist above all in an agreement about the values which must find expression in its law and in its life" (*Ecclesia in Europa*, 110).

May God Bless Europe and May the Blessed Virgin Mary Protect Europe