
International Eucharistic Congress. Bagnasco and Hollerich: Europe is called to be "heritage and gift for the entire world"

"Our beloved Continent needs to rediscover itself" and "reconcile with its history." "So does humanity, which views Europe as the land where different cultures have been brought together by the Gospel, culminating in a lofty vision of human dignity and law, a vision that is heritage and gift not only for Europe but for the whole world." Europe and its vocation in the world is an overarching theme on the agenda of the International Eucharistic Congress ongoing in Budapest. Card. **Angelo Bagnasco**, president of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and Card. **Jean-Claude Hollerich**, president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), animate the debates. What emerges is a snapshot of Europe struggling with a form of secularism that has stripped Christians of the joy of faith, leaving them with a sense of "inner weariness" and "underlying mistrust", said Card. Bagnasco. Europe is confronted with various crises, and it attempts to resolve them by imposing "the same ideology for all", remarked Card. Hollerich, thereby undermining, he said, the very core of the European project centred on the motto "unity in diversity." **"Christian conceptions of civil society are viewed with suspicion in our contemporary world**, as if the Gospel had nothing to say about democracy, justice, rights, peace, economics, etc." **Cardinal Bagnasco** said. To this regard, the CCEE president underlined three points. The first is that "all believers, regardless of their religious affiliation, have the right to participate in public debate." Secondly, the Cardinal recalled, "the Gospel encapsulates supernatural truths as well as the natural reality". Thirdly, Christians are invited to uphold and promote in public life not only the values that are good for humanity, but also "their very foundation, without which the edifice stands on sand." Card. Bagnasco offers a basic recommendation: no page of the Gospel should be ignored", selecting only those that resonate most with the general consensus. *It would mean reducing it to a set of uplifting exhortations that are removed from life because they "don't change people's hearts, a code of good living, a philanthropy handbook."* In his address, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich said that Europe is facing three crises. "The first," he said, "is the migratory crisis, a crisis of people - brothers and sisters - reaching our borders, fleeing circumstances which for us are often unimaginable, wars, persecution, violence and hunger. *They knock at our doors in search of a better future, a better life for themselves and their families. But what they find is a closed Europe that is afraid of losing its identity; a selfish Europe, eager to maintain its welfare, its standard of living, even at the expense of others; a Europe that, deep down, does not recognise these people as brothers and sisters.* A Europe that ultimately has no intention of sharing with them the loaf of fraternity and closes the doors of the cenacle out of fear." His Eminence then made an appeal to the **Glasgow Climate Conference (COP26)** on the ecological crisis, calling upon "the nations to firmly commit themselves to ensuring the sustainability and safeguarding the future of our common home, especially for the benefit of future generations." Speaking about the identity crisis in present-day Europe, the cardinal warned European institutions against the risk of "imposing a common ideology on all." He explained: "Some European leaders are openly stating that those who do not accept gender ideology and its understanding of the human being - which according to them is inseparably linked to the rights of the LGBT community - must no longer be part of the European Union. This is unacceptable and it runs counter to the very notion of respect for different cultures, of unity in diversity, which lies at the roots of the European Union." Card Hollerich concluded: "I don't believe that a partisan logic is the way forward, in an 'us against them' approach, of Christians against secularists, of pro-life advocates against the defenders of the culture of death. Instead, we should work towards a more fraternal and welcoming Church, one that is more merciful and more open to those seeking help, even if they belong to a different culture."

