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## Msgr. Aldo Giordano: always practising a culture of dialogue and encounter

Msgr. Aldo Giordano, who has left us so soon, was a true European Christian, and a truly Christian European. His great love was Jesus, and he gave his life for love of the Church. At the same time, this love led him to love Europe wholeheartedly: its people, nations, culture and history. He was a deeply realistic person, who never succumbed to pessimism or defeat. He was dedicated to working towards a new Europe that he believed to be attainable. As he often said, the Church looks at the Greater Europe, that is, all the countries in this region that he visited and came to know, with concern but also with hope. His was a realistic hope because it was rooted in the faith and in the relationships he nurtured with the people he met on various occasions and whom he befriended. An outstanding aspect of his personality recognised by all, in Europe and later also in Venezuela, where he served as Apostolic Nuncio (2013-2021), was his **unrelenting commitment to advancing dialogue**. This required time and creativity. *Msgr. Aldo Giordano spared no efforts of his own and knew how to establish a dialogue not only between individuals but also between Churches and institutions.* First as General Secretary of the CCEE (1995-2008) and then as Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe (2008-2013), he consistently sought to bring Christ to Europe through human interaction. **He worked hard to build networks for people to meet and jointly develop common paths.** His first concern in the CCEE was to establish, strengthen or expand relations within the Catholic Church in Europe, as well as with the bishops of other continents. Yet his sensitivity and his faith extended beyond the life of the Catholic Church. We are most grateful to him for the relations with other Christian Churches in Europe. His dream was the full unity of the Church. The Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997 and in Sibiu in 2007, as well as the signing of the Ecumenical Charter in 2001, were made possible mostly through his efforts. Alongside these two major events, he planned many other ecumenical meetings, notably in conjunction with the Conference of European Churches (CEC), with care and wisdom: the virtues of the person who knows that Church unity is a mission that should never be neglected or overlooked. *We can safely say that Msgr. Aldo remains a permanent and clear source of inspiration for Europe's ecumenical journey.* **His commitment for the promotion of dialogue, however, extended beyond the realm of Christianity.** His religious sensitivity as a prayerful man enabled him to feel the human concerns of all. Thanks to that humane sympathy so characteristic of him, he perceived the hardships of suffering people as his own. He understood that European culture was forgetting its roots and that because of this, many people today feel lost in their search for their true selves. With this in mind, he strove to bring good proposals to the hearts of those he encountered. *He valued all that was good and true in persons from other faiths and in those who professed no faith but had an open heart and were willing to engage in dialogue.* **He put into practice the culture of encounter in his activities with politicians and officials of the Council of Europe.** His dinners at home, or the Holy Mass he celebrated at the nunciature in Strasbourg - to which he invited people from different countries to promote forms of encounter - were widely recognised, and I trust that they have borne much fruit. **He had returned to Europe this year as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union and we were full of hope for the things he would accomplish.** But God saw that he had worked hard enough and gave him peace. He will be dearly missed by us friends, by the Church in Europe and by Europe. *We now have the responsibility to ensure that his spiritual legacy lives on and that Europe grows into a place of unity and faith. (\*)* *General Secretary of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) from 2008 to 2018.*