

CHRISTLICHE BEWEGUNGEN UND GEMEINSCHAFTEN **MITEINANDER FÜR EUROPA**  
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER FOR EUROPE**  
COMMUNAUTÉS ET MOUVEMENTS CHRÉTIENS **ENSEMBLE POUR L'EUROPE**  
MOVIMENTI E COMUNITÀ CRISTIANI **INSIEME PER L'EUROPA**  
WSPÓLNOTY I RUCHY CHRZESCIJANSKIE **RAZEM DLA EUROPY**  
ХРИСТИАНСКИЕ ОБЩИНЫ И ДВИЖЕНИЯ **ВМЕСТЕ ДЛЯ ЕВРОПЫ**  
MOVIMIENTOS Y COMUNIDADES CRISTIANOS **JUNTOS POR EUROPA**  
MOVIMENTOS E COMUNIDADES CRISTÃS **JUNTOS PELA EUROPA**  
ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΕΣ ΚΙΝΗΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΕΣ **ΜΑΖΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΥΡΩΠΗ**



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## **Build on sure foundations - Christian faith in Europe**

Thomas Römer - Munich

Your Eminences, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends!

Europe is a beautiful continent. I am happy to be a European and I am glad that we can work together for a human Europe in which we can live together in peace.

1. As members of communities and movements, we have something we aspire to – the Gospel. The Gospel shows us who Jesus is. His words and life attract us and are the very foundation on which we can build our life together.

Before us, many women and men in Europe lived the Christian faith. I will mention only Benedict of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Elizabeth of Thuringia and many others. Their example still encourages us. They had faith in Jesus Christ and lived according to the Gospel, the Gospel that was brought to Europe from Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Throughout the many events in Europe's history, they gave witness to communion and to a "culture of reciprocity," which respects and values every person. They experienced their own weakness but the Gospel gave them the courage to act responsibly and in solidarity.

Today we want to recall the values of the Gospel, reconsidering them again - all against the backdrop of Europe's current crisis, which demands new and decisive thinking and action.

The Gospel shows us that freedom, mercy and love are the foundation of human co-existence.

2. Jesus always helped people to find their freedom. This fascinates us. He never judged them according to where they came from or for what they did or did not do. Even those who were guilty were not discarded by Him. He forgave the sins of these people and so opened up a reconciled future for them. Reconciliation does not cover up the past, but brings it to the surface. In the same way, it also brings the injustices of

the past to the surface. But it is forgiveness that removes the disastrous power of the past, which could poison the present and future. To live in freedom today, we all need to forgive others and to reconcile with them. Forgiveness makes life together new, creates a life that is free from the "structures of sin" and evil, from every entanglement of guilt. This applies to individuals, as well as to families, cities, and even States and nations. Reconciliation makes us free, one for the other, free also to share goods. This freedom that comes from forgiveness is the basis for the co-existence of humankind.

3. Our "*Togetherness*" should be characterized by mercy. Jesus says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."<sup>1</sup> Jesus is merciful, he cares for the weak, the sick, the poor, the destitute and the children. He lets himself be touched by the misery of men and women, and takes it on himself. We would want that mercy imbue our culture, our common living and also European politics and the economy. Mercy must also influence our relationship with money. In this way, society would not be determined by money, but would take the person into consideration first. And money could be what it should be: it remains a gift. The needs of our neighbours must reach our hearts and move us to help them. We are committed to this, with all the limitations, but with confidence that small efforts can bring about something great.

4. Jesus says in the Gospel: "Love one another as I have loved you."<sup>2</sup> He calls it the new commandment. This is what we want to live. We want to welcome everyone with respect and friendship. But love goes even further. Love is the fulfilment and the meaning of all the commandments, even God's Ten Commandments; all the Churches in Europe have always reminded us of them, they are part of our European cultural heritage. Love is more than a feeling; it is concrete and consists of deeds.

- Love means honouring and respecting the generation before us.<sup>3</sup>
- Love means to promote and protect life, to say Yes to life at every stage of its development. It means do not kill.<sup>4</sup>
- Love means to love your husband, your wife, and to be faithful.<sup>5</sup>
- To love is to respect the property of others and manage one's own money and assets in order to be helpful to our neighbours.<sup>6</sup>
- Love means to honour the truth, not to deceive others, slandering or ruining their good name, but to honour them.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 5:7

<sup>2</sup> See Jn 13:34 and Jn 15:12-13, 17.

<sup>3</sup> "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12)

<sup>4</sup> "Do not kill" (Exodus 20:13)

<sup>5</sup> "Do not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14)

<sup>6</sup> "Do not steal" (Exodus 20:15)

<sup>7</sup> "Do not bear false witness against your neighbour" (Exodus 20:16)

5. Jesus lives this concrete love. He is source of our freedom, mercy and love. On the night before he died on the cross, he said a word to his friends, which gives a special meaning to his death. He said: I will go through this “for you.”<sup>8</sup> It is the expression of God's love for us men and women. His death brings this love and bridges the distance between human beings and God. Wherever God's love arrives and people are open to it, He brings about forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy and freedom.

This love has even overcome death. This is the Gospel message that has shaped Europe since the time of the Apostles: Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And we want to live with him in Europe, and to listen to his words and live them. We want to ground our life in Europe on the culture of life; on freedom, mercy and love.

Together for Europe – this is an invitation to live the Gospel of Jesus and it is our hope: that on the foundation of these Christian values, we can build up our societal life in Europe.

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<sup>8</sup> See Luke 22:19-20