

2024

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE « EUREGIO BISHOPS »  
FOR THE ELECTIONS OF 9 JUNE 2024



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*A new lease of life*  
for Europe

Layout: Communication department of the diocese of Metz



# *A new lease of life* for Europe

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**1** As bishops of various border dioceses in Western Europe, members of a group that we have named "Euregio", we are aware of what is at stake for the future of the European Union in the elections that will take place on 9 June 2024. That's why we wanted to address you, our European brothers and sisters, to share our convictions and concerns. Starting with Europe's history, its strengths and its crises, we will highlight some of Europe's essential values and formulate a European project to be developed to breathe new life into Europe. We will then look at the means to be implemented and how to apply them to the forthcoming elections.

## **I. European history: diversity and unity**

**2** Europeans must consider what they have received from their history and what they have made of it, in order to make the best use of the resources and capacities available to them today.

### **A diversity of peoples**

**3** Throughout history, the peoples of Europe have been endowed with remarkable

qualities. The Romans gave us their language and with it their written laws and the treasures of a civilisation imbued with the intelligence of the Greeks. Judaism created a network of cultural and spiritual solidarity that opened its doors to the East and Africa. The migration of Germanic peoples into the Roman Empire in the 4th century led to the superimposition of two cultures in Europe, Latin and Germanic, and their mutual integration through Christianisation, particularly that of the Franks after the baptism of Clovis (498). This led to the introduction of a new political order, the basis of today's states, following the Treaty of Verdun (843), which divided the empire of Charlemagne, the "father of Europe", as it was known, into three. The arrival of the Slavs in the 9th century gave rise to a new cultural pole in Eastern Europe and helped to create a Europe with two lungs, as Pope S. John Paul II. The Gospel of Christ brought a spiritual bond to the Middle Ages between these diverse cultures and opened people up, with a new sense of urgency, to respect for each person, service to the weak and unlimited hope. Islam brought algebra, Arabic numerals, openness to Arab culture and links with Asia via the Silk Road. What can we do with all this to give Europe a breath of fresh air today?

## A European culture

4 Europe has created a spiritual and cultural unity in many different ways. Think of the abbeys inspired by the rule of Saint Benedict and established throughout the continent, the great fairs of the Middle Ages that brought together many men and women to offer their wares in other parts of Europe, the universities between which students and teachers moved easily ; Think of the Gothic cathedrals that mark the European landscape, testifying to the great architectural familiarity between the various countries, the polyphonic and symphonic musical works that spread across borders, and the widespread use of Latin as the language of intellectual and religious communication: these are all markers of a unity that has endured through time and history. Even if it is sometimes with difficulty, they transcend the history of rivalries between peoples, the ambitions for expansion around the world, and the exploitation and colonisation triggered in particular by the Industrial Revolution.

## Establishing peace

5 The two World Wars, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, brought ruin and desolation to Europe and the rest of the world. The genocide of the Jews, the Shoah, which resulted in the deaths of six million people, and the many victims of the Second World War among the populations of all countries showed just how atrocious war can be. Following this tragedy and a few months after the creation of the

Council of Europe, the European Union was founded for peace, in the form of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community), created in 1951. This construction was drawn up by the Venerable Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi and Paul-Henri Spaak and defined by the Treaty of Rome on 25 March 1957. After the Second World War, it was clear that the defeated should not be humiliated. We must not forget the historic impetus provided by Robert Schuman's Declaration of 9 May 1950: "World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it. The contribution that an organised and living Europe can make to civilisation is essential to the maintenance of peaceful relations". This solidarity has given rise to an unprecedented political reality, combining the fact that each of Europe's peoples belongs to a national community and that each nation freely adheres to a pact of solidarity between them all. This pact includes obligations imposed on voluntary partners and is founded on a foundation of shared values aimed at building a unity that transcends the diversity of each of these nations. The aim of this pact is to integrate these diversities for the benefit of an entity rich in its many resources and capable of using them for the





common good of its members, who today number twenty-seven nations, forming a people of more than five hundred million inhabitants. All are heirs to an infinite wealth of histories, traditions, economic and cultural resources. So Europe cannot present itself without being aware of what it has to share for the greater good of all. At a time when war is raging in Eastern Europe and in many other parts of the world, when civil peace is threatened and undermined in our societies, the words of Robert Schuman are as relevant as ever. They had been somewhat forgotten. The criteria for a country's accession to the European Union had become essentially accounting and statistical. The war in Ukraine is now turning the membership criteria on their head. Firm adherence to democratic principles and values is once again a priority for entry into the European Union.

## The contribution of *European integration*

6 European integration has led to lasting peace in Europe, and in particular to Franco-German reconciliation. It has led to an acceleration in the democratic development of certain countries joining the European Union (Spain, Portugal, Greece emerging from authoritarian regimes). It has led to major technological projects (in the aerospace sector) and social cooperation (such as cross-border cooperation on hospital care), as well as joint international solidarity projects. The

construction of Europe has also accompanied an upward trend in life expectancy, thanks to the introduction of effective social security systems where they did not previously exist.

A few years ago, young Europeans were invited to take part in a session in which they were asked to visualise on a map of Europe the links they had with the different countries of Europe in terms of origin, family, work, leisure and personal history. The result was the emergence of a dense web of relationships covering the entire continent and testifying to a European history of mobility, shared cultures, references, religions and lifestyles. The project of the founding fathers of the European Union was certainly political and economic, but it was based on a humanist and spiritual spring (the founding fathers were for the most part believers), that of building peace in a Europe that had drifted away from the values that constituted its roots.

The grace of Europe and the reason why the European Union deserves our continued recognition as an opportunity for our future are not simply due to the fine political construction of 1957. They also stem from a whole past in which we can recognise our own foundations and destiny.

## II. Crisis of European consciousness

7 Today, we Europeans are questioning the solidarity pact we signed at the time of the Treaty of Rome. Do we still believe in it? We hear a lot of criticism and see a lot of scepticism about it.

## *Nationalist* **crises**

8 The supranational functioning of the European Union is being stigmatised, and is seen as jeopardising the independence and identity of the nations that make it up. The feeling among populations that they are not protected against political, economic and social intrusions from the rest of the world is being underlined, and the emergence of nationalist and populist reflexes is becoming widespread, with the risk that, as in other times, the other or foreigner will once again be treated as a threat. Diversity is hard to accept these days. Everyone is tempted to say: I am my reference. What is paralysing European coexistence today is the fear that nations will lose control of their own destiny. A fear that leads to withdrawal and tension with others. The European crisis has a lot to do with forgetting the dynamics of the differences and exchanges that have shaped Europe throughout history. As Pope Francis said in his homily on 23 September 2023 during his trip to Marseilles, the burden weighing on Europe is the difficulty it has in reaching out to others, in moving in its heart, in allowing itself to be touched from within, in allowing itself to be preserved against indifference: "A cold, flat heart drags through life mechanically, without passion, without impetus, without desire. And all this can make us sick in our European society".

## *Geopolitical* **crisis**

9 At the same time, the continent of Europe is affected in Ukraine by a murderous war that has gone on for too long, forcing the country to mourn its dead, care for its wounded, deal with destruction, welcome displaced populations, relieve the desperate and pay for all the economic consequences of the conflict.

Ukraine calls for our solidarity and support, which must be effective. What's more, the European project remains fragile, since it is based on communities with contrasting aspirations that have been deeply scarred by the vicissitudes of history.

## *Economic* **crisis**

10 These uncertainties give rise to populism, which is also a consequence of the economic crisis, and which criticises the European project. The impoverishment of certain regions and the unemployment that has affected populations have widened the gaps between us Europeans. Our economic and social differences have been highlighted, as have our political and cultural differences. Today, these differences sometimes set us against each other rather than enriching us. They lead to corruption, violence and every man for himself. The liberal, free-trade model that has prevailed among the decision-makers of the European Union has caused a great deal of social and territorial damage. This has been compounded by rising international tensions and domestic insecurity. Political correctness" and so-called "normality" are also creating problems, especially when the gap between the principles invoked and the policies actually implemented is too wide.

## *Migration* **crisis**

11 This has been compounded by the massive influx of migrants. The problem is real and we have no right to deny it. The Mediterranean has become a graveyard where more than twenty thousand people of all ages who dreamt of Europe have died. Many of our migrant brothers and sisters are knocking



on our door: the vast majority are fleeing the difficult and hopeless living conditions they face at home, and are prepared to brave death to escape their current situation and its impasses. They challenge us, but they also contribute to helping and energising Europe.



**Crisis of  
*European  
conscience***

**12** The European Union therefore runs the risk of disappearing if it does not rediscover its *raison d'être*: peace and solidarity in diversity. As bishops, we are clearly aware that the European Union is experiencing a serious crisis, a "crisis of the European conscience". At the same time, Europe has important assets to face this crisis without being destabilised, and must be a sure point of reference to face the challenges of the world. It seems to us that the European crisis has a lot to do with forgetting the dynamic of encounters, journeys, cultural and commercial exchanges that have characterised the history of our continent for centuries and have shaped it. Added to this is an ethical crisis linked to a lack of ideals or confidence in life, a loss of reference points, leading people to take refuge in drugs or even suicide. So we all need to realise that we are inextricably linked to each other. Today we are being questioned in the same way as after the 2nd World War. Forms of violence have arisen on our continent. But we also know that difficulty is a force for unity and new dynamisms for humanity.

**III. European values**

**13** At the heart of the diversity between nations, Europeans have common values that unite them and which they sometimes only become aware of when they are on other continents. Here are a few of them.

**The meaning  
*of person***

**14** To move Europe forward, we must first take into account the suffering of the weakest, because Europe must not be a club for the wealthy. It is a community that places human beings, with their frailties and needs, at the centre of common interests. If we look at these needs, we soon realise that they relate to the individual, to social and economic integration, to training and employment, and to solidarity between all. These issues need to become a key part of our European thinking. The Europe we are building must promote both economic development and fraternity between peoples. The challenge for Europe today is to arrive at a common approach to serve the good of all. This approach cannot be taken for granted.

## The diversity *of nations*

15 The particularities of each nation and its own genius constitute a common treasure that is precious for facing the future. Pope Francis is constantly calling on Europe to take a leap of faith. As far back as 1458, in his book *De Europa*, the world's first book on Europe, Pope Pius II criticised the Christian nations for their disunity. Europe, with its rich history, has a special vocation, a mission to fulfil, that of preserving, in the clash of cultures, in the conflict of ideologies and in the complexity of scientific revolutions, man open to others, anxious to dialogue and share, in the service of the common good.

## A taste *of peace*

16 Today, peace remains a challenge for everyone, and in particular for Christians in Europe. A new confrontation involving superpowers is underway on European soil, which has been destined for peace since the Treaty of Rome. Let's look for new words and prophetic gestures that Christians can make to build and strengthen peace in the world, to make Europe a credible actor for peace. Peace must be combined with all the forms of security that citizens need to lead a dignified life. The European Community was born of a project for peace that succeeded in reconciling former enemies who have now become brothers. The strengthening of nationalism threatens this progress. Of course, the issues of refugees and Islam on European soil weigh heavily on the debate. But we believe that it is possible to live together, that it is even

vital to avoid and repel extremism. To achieve this, we must resist the temptation to turn in on ourselves.

## Justice *and solidarity*

17 The concern for peace, which is widely shared, cannot be understood and activated without attention to justice, including international justice, and a relentless defence of human rights wherever they are violated. We are the custodians of Europe's great achievements: freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, respect for human rights, universal brotherhood. Europe must continue to uphold these profound values. But we have to want to. The values of peace, justice, solidarity and respect for rights, the privileged paths to the good of all, have not allowed themselves to be swept away by wars and by individualistic and inegalitarian currents, even when these values were in great danger. This is why we must believe very strongly in the future of Europe. It has been a battleground for the triumph of good, and it will triumph if we feel concerned about the institutions we want to give it and the commitments we are prepared to make. What is at stake is a Europe rich in values, the most urgent of which is solidarity between communities and citizens in the service of the common good.

### IV. A dream for Europe

18 The questions we are asked when we vote are clear: do we choose to live together? For what purpose? What are our ambitions? What do we want to do together? To what end? What dream do we have for Europe? How can we breathe new life into our continent?



## The humanisation *of society*

19 Europe must therefore allow itself to be won over by enthusiasm and by the desire to create a future for itself. As the Church, we must contribute to the rebirth of Europe, which we are convinced has great potential for opening up new paths to humanisation. Our Europe must be a Europe of children, of the poor, where being a refugee is not a crime, a Europe that offers young people the beauty of culture, the richness of exchanges (such as the Erasmus programme) and not just consumerism. Let's ask ourselves what our responsibility is at a time when Europe, because of its increasing size, is increasingly characterised by a plurality of cultures and religions. In the minds of Europe's citizens, the European Union today is often reduced to institutions, whereas Europe is first and foremost made up of people. It cannot be reduced to figures, quotas or poverty thresholds that turn the concrete person into an abstract principle. To continue our European journey, we must remember that the other person is a person and that what counts most is what unites me with them, what makes us a "community".



## The common good

20 It is our responsibility, together with politicians, to attest and highlight the reasons why Europe is an undeniable step forward in the history of humanity. Europe is a "common good". If some people feel that they are not benefiting from it, it is not Europe's fault, it is ours, because we have failed to preserve the founding values of dialogue, negotiation and sharing. But for the Catholic Church, turning in on ourselves is not the solution to the problem.

## Fraternity

21 Speaking to members of the European Parliament, Pope Francis compared Europe to a "tired grandmother" in need of a breath of fresh air. For our part, we believe in the European project. If we don't want to let it lose all the growth and hope it holds for the future, the time has come to step up our commitment to it. In the appeal that Pope Francis launched during his visit to Marseilles, he invited the European Churches to rediscover their passion and enthusiasm, to rediscover a taste for commitment to fraternity, and to dare to take the risk of loving the weakest. He invites Europeans to abandon their "sad passions": cynicism, disenchantment or resignation, in order to commit themselves to helping the





poorest (Homily, 23 September 2023). The question is that of the word "together". It is important that we give a precise content to this notion.

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## Peace

**22** Encounter and understanding, instead of rivalry and war, are a precious gift. But it will be all the more precious if it is fruitful for the world. So it is up to the European Union to take a strong initiative to ensure peace in the Middle East, to promote the organisation of a peace conference aimed at the creation of two states in Israel and Palestine, with status for and respect for minorities, and to promote the mutual security of the Israeli and Palestinian people, one with the other and not against, excluding all mistrust. It is the mission of the European Union to help heal the metastases of hatred and war that are spreading throughout the world.

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## Global solidarity

**23** It is incumbent on today's Europe to be self-critical of the way its own institutions operate and to realise that it has a vocation to invest itself in a mission of wider, even global, solidarity. Today's Europe has no superiority to impose. What's more, it is facing up to powers such as the United States, Russia and China. Faced with these policies, Europe will only succeed by being "something else". It will distinguish itself by developing a new project for peace, by creating, in dialogue with its resources and cultural traditions, new enterprises where the sense of human community will prevail

over the capture of wealth, where it will be able to help, driven by a profound sense of justice and fraternity, people from other continents to make their own wealth bear fruit, rather than being forced to migrate on frail boats in the Mediterranean.

The European path must be a path of mutual aid, shared wealth, solidarity and fraternity. Its strength and promise lies in the fact that it is a project based on a shared desire for peace, founded on respect for human rights.

## V. Meeting our commitments

**24** To realise our dreams of breathing new life into Europe, we must rely on various means. Let us mention just a few.

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## Intermediate bodies

**25** The European Union is a highly developed and fairly well coordinated economic body, with a common currency in twenty countries, the euro, used by all, a fight against corruption and regulation of international trade. But it struggles to unite peoples and take account of social and cultural factors, which is why it is perceived by many Europeans as a prescriptive straitjacket, run by soulless technocrats charged with implementing principles that will enable us to live together, but who are not concerned with the real problems of citizens. For this living together to be soul-creating, it must be oiled by "intermediary bodies", which emanate from the grassroots, and it must be driven by a will and a project, that of serving the common good of all European citizens.



## Social life

26 It is not enough to establish rules of free trade and free competition. Consumers benefit from this, but not citizens, workers, men and women, because our affluent societies leave millions of people behind. So we must not be content with a Europe of uniform rules, but we must build a Europe of shared life and shared action. We have to realise that Europe is not about others, it's about us, and it's up to us to make this project a reality, to turn Europe into an area of prosperity, peace, social justice and progress in human rights, a social model that includes all people and tackles head-on the problems that threaten their future. In this way, the huge issue of ecology cannot be tackled in a fragmented and selfish way.

## Christian heritage

27 This road raises a fundamental question. Europe has an immense heritage, steeped in Christianity : what do we want to do with it ? In an interview with the newspaper La Croix in 2016, Pope Francis said : "Yes, Europe has Christian roots. Christianity has a duty to water them, but in a spirit of service, as in the washing of the feet (Jn 13:1-17). The future of Christianity for Europe is service. So the answer to the question lies not in a culture of pure conservation, but in the service of new relations between peoples and the construction of a common

project, nourished by the traditional values that have irrigated the European continent throughout history. Jesus himself links peace to the breath of the Holy Spirit. After his resurrection, he said to his disciples : "Peace be with you ! As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:21-22). The Spirit of Christ breathes on us today so that we may be his messengers of peace, following in the footsteps of Schuman, who wrote : "Our objective must be to establish a spiritual community between men and between nations. Those who are fortunate enough to be able to contribute to this, by their spirit of fraternity founded on a Christian conception of freedom and human dignity, will be among the best architects of a renewed and united Europe" ("The Mission of Europe", in Pax Romana, 1951, reprinted in La politique pour vocation, Salvator, 2022, p. 119).

## Creativity

28 What is at stake is the pursuit of a Europe rich in values, the most urgent of which is solidarity in action between communities and citizens in the service of the common good. Among the assets that characterise the European soul are creativity, inventive genius, the ability to find oneself and to go beyond one's own limits. After an immense conflict, Europe has shown humanity that a new beginning is possible. The edifice that was built at the beginning was built by States that were not united by force, but that freely chose the common good, the desire to give every citizen, victor or

vanquished, access to it. As the historian Arnold Toynbee (1890-1975) wrote in *A Study of History* : "Civilisations are born in response to a challenge, and they collapse when their creative forces are no longer capable of devising appropriate responses to the new challenges that beset them".

## Political dialogue

**29** In many places, the common good is no longer the primary objective. It is replaced by demands, and this is fertile ground for identity-based divisions, which destroy bridges and build walls. The challenge facing our democracies is to recreate a political dialogue, because politics is the greatest service we can render to the common good. Hence the importance of choosing Members of Parliament. Only recently, war and violence, the noise of weapons and terrorist choices have upset the balance of our continent. What we need now is to establish a community of men and women who share the same path, who take on the mission of global solidarity with suffering peoples.



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## The diversity of peoples

**30** What can be said in any case is that the European Union is a young organisation on an old continent. It is not just a geographical map, but a political project of cooperation and sharing of sovereignty

to ensure the common good, a good life for all, while respecting the diversity of nations. Some deplore the fact that the number of member countries is expanding too fast. In our view, the issue is neither the number of countries nor the size of Europe. Europe is not an end in itself that defines the size of its welfare area and its desire for unity. We advocate a different philosophy : a Europe that is an open community serving a grand project of unity and peace. As Robert Schuman foresaw, "Europe prefigures the universal solidarity of the future". This in no way dilutes or dissolves the individual nations. The European Union is inseparable from the States that make it up. They must

find within it the full measure of their development. Otherwise it would be like "a skeleton without flesh". The strength of this Europe lies in its project of solidarity, which can only be achieved through the involvement of its peoples. This project is the perpetuation of its founding values : reconciliation, peace and stability through solidarity between all.

## Integral ecology

**31** A number of major challenges lie ahead of us: the future of man in his relations with his fellow human beings and with the world, and the preservation of his identity in the face of the major technological revolution we have entered. Europe, a community of goods and values, will make us stronger to face these challenges. The path of "integral ecology" mapped out by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'* and in his apostolic

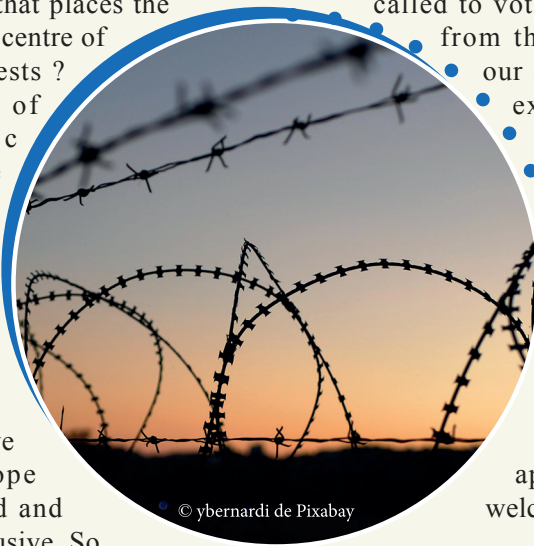


exhortation *Laudate Deum* is a valuable tool for this: with this notion of "integral ecology", the Pope shows that the various aspects of ecology (the environment, climate, bio-diversity) are linked to the various dimensions of human life, in particular to the fate of the poorest and to the spiritual life of each person.

## An inclusive city

32 Europeans, we must give back to the whole world something that is equal to what we have received. Something that develops, just as we have been developed. Europe is in fact a continent that, through the richness of its sources, has developed a great deal and generated decisive progress for humanity. We have a choice : entrust these riches to a project that transcends us, the one expressed in the Gospel, or confine our goals to our finiteness. What are today's Europeans prepared to do ? To promote a Europe that places the human being at the centre of our common interests ?

As the President of Italian Catholic Action, Giuseppe Notarstefano, says : "Europe must truly become the City of Man, if we want it to live". It is by putting our finger on reality that we can take effective action for a Europe that is regenerated and becomes more inclusive. So what kind of dream can we pursue



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? It can only be a collective dream, of men and women, young and old, who share the same path. We want a Europe capable of fostering fraternity between peoples as much as economic development.

## VI. The European elections and the issues at stake

33 The Europe for which we are called to vote must be an area of future, partnership and international responsibility. With this message, we would like to contribute to enabling as many people as possible to rediscover a taste for the European adventure, despite the current conditions.

## The problems to be faced

34 It is to open up this future that we are called to vote. Let us not shy away from this call, having before our eyes some fundamental expectations, such as a shared need for security, prospects for training and work for young people, better control of environmental problems such as global warming, air quality, biodiversity and fossil fuels, as well as a fair and united approach to the issue of welcoming foreigners.

## Openness *to foreigners*

35 At a time when we are voting for a Europe of the common good that puts aside personal egoism, we must be aware of the new challenges to be met and the ethical stakes of the choice we have to make. World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it. And if Europe is to rise to the ethical challenges of today - challenges of justice, solidarity, respect for rights and freedom - we must all be equally motivated by a concern for the common good of our European homelands. A new humanism must emerge, based on a capacity to integrate rather than exclude, based on a synthesis of the traits of diverse cultures. We can then look forward to overcoming the barriers that keep us apart. European humanism is a humanism of dialogue. It is an asceticism that recognises everyone as a valid interlocutor. It is about looking at the other, the foreigner, the migrant, the person who belongs to another culture, as someone to be listened to. On this basis, new cultural, philosophical and religious (and not just economic) coalitions can be built, with the aim of creating an integrated and reconciled society.

## Concern for young people *and the elderly*

36 This is what the vote on 9 June 2024 must lead to. In particular, we must think of young people, whose dreams and ways of life, of exchange, of dialogue, of sharing,

are forging the European spirit. Through these elections, let's make them protagonists of the future. But how can they be if they are deprived of decent work, if they are the first victims of rising unemployment and underemployment ? They will look elsewhere for ideals and meaning because we no longer offer them any. They risk being destroyed by drugs and addiction. Fortunately, we are sensing an ethical and spiritual upsurge among young people, for which we are grateful.

As for the elderly, they often show their dynamism in voluntary work, even though they are pensioners or retired. They deserve to be appreciated and loved until their last breath. But they also run the risk of being marginalised. The same applies to people with disabilities or frailties. Life must be protected, from conception to natural death.

## Economic *issues*

37 One of the issues at stake in these European elections is the establishment of a new economy, not based on profit, but a social economy that guarantees access to work and land, in other words, the rediscovery of that humanism of which Europe was the cradle and source. It has often been said that a united Europe is a major economic power on earth. Are we aware of the extent of the scope it offers for our action ? The countries of the European Union together possess not only considerable resources, but also a wealth of technological, scientific, cultural and human resources. Agricultural policy also raises many economic and ecological questions, which have come to the fore in recent times.



## Solidarity

**38** The question that Europe must ask itself, like any other human community, is that of the values we claim, the goals we pursue and the means we use to achieve them. The question of the choice of values, objectives and means is one that calls out to us as Christians, and it lies at the heart of the vote we are about to make. For what is at stake are men and women, human groups and communities who are not all at the same level of opportunity, whose interests may sometimes conflict and whose solidarity needs to be strengthened. The choices we make are therefore far-reaching. What can give meaning to our vote is the rediscovery of our common wealth, our historical and cultural proximity, from the Atlantic to the Urals, which makes such a project not an abstraction, but a well embodied vision, a dream that has foundations.

## Choosing the Gospel

**39** Europeans are inhabited by the same fundamental desires as every human being: the desire to possess, to be master of oneself, to be respected. So we need to ask ourselves what our priority values are in Europe. The Gospel invites us to affirm solidarity with the poor rather than the prestige of the great. Think of the words of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The book of the prophet Isaiah was given

to him. He opened the book and found the passage where it says: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim a favourable year from the Lord'. Jesus closed the book, gave it back to the servant and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this passage of Scripture that you have just heard is fulfilled'" (Lk 4:17-21). Even today, this commitment to the poor is fulfilled by the breath of the Spirit and reveals the presence of God. Why can we say that the European construction project is particularly a project for Christians? Because Christians can refer to a fundamental charter that Christ left them in the Sermon on the Mount, namely the Beatitudes (Mt 5:6, 9): "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God". God's grace comes through Christ's self-giving to all humanity.

**40** Making a choice, discerning what is appropriate, presupposes that we get to know the other person with his or her history, traditions and depth. This is not just a matter of tourism, or even of study, but of encounter, openness and a willingness to face the truth together. We can also see that difficulties are a force for unity and new dynamisms for humanity. To achieve this, we need to return to de facto solidarity, to the concrete generosity of which Robert Schuman spoke in his declaration of 9 May 1950 : "Europe will not be built all at once, nor in a general construction : it will be built by concrete

achievements that first create de facto solidarity". So Europe will be built together, if together we take action, as the fathers of Europe did.

**Conclusion: new challenges,  
new inspiration**

41 When it comes to voting for a Europe of the common good and not of personal egoism, we need to be aware of the new challenges to be met and the ethical stakes of the choice we have to make. We need a fresh impetus to choose for union in diversity and for the individual in solidarity.



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barriers that threaten to drive us apart. It's a way of recognising everyone as a valid interlocutor and building an integrated or reconciled society.

**Choosing unity  
*in diversity***

If Europe is to rise to the ethical challenges of today - challenges of justice, solidarity, respect for rights and freedom - we must all be equally motivated by a concern for the common good of our European homelands and a concern for union in diversity. This is the prerequisite for living in peace in Europe and contributing to peace in the world. World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it. A new humanism must emerge based on the ability to integrate rather than exclude, based on a synthesis of the features of the various cultures. It is a humanism nourished by our shared cultural and spiritual history. It is a humanism open to otherness and to the diversity of cultures, open to foreigners and migrants. It is a humanism that calls for dialogue and is based on our contacts and encounters. It's a humanism that energises our economy by promoting everyone's capacity to work. We can then rejoice in overcoming the

**Choosing people  
in the spirit  
*of solidarity***

42 European humanism is a humanism based on respect for the individual and on solidarity. The person, with his or her specificity and projects, is at the centre of the European Union, whether it be the child, the young person, the adult, the elderly person, the healthy or the sick, the native or the foreigner, the man or the woman. Solidarity is essential to achieving respect for the individual. It enables us to support and revitalise those who are poor, sick, depressed or marginalised. Solidarity implies social security to support the family and ensure its well-being, to provide education, to pay the unemployed or those dependent on public assistance, to care for the sick and disabled. Justice, integral ecology and social legislation are the bedrock of European humanism.



Creativity, spirituality, fraternity and, for us Christians, the evangelical spirit give our Europe the new breath it needs. As we

cast our ballots, may we be aware that we are voting for a project of hope.

*Scy-Chazelles, the birthplace and burial place of Robert Schuman, 8 April 2024*

+ **Jean-Claude cardinal Hollerich,**  
*Archbishop of Luxembourg*

+ **Stephan Ackermann,**  
*Bishop of Trier*

+ **Philippe Ballot,**  
*Archbishop of Metz*

+ **Jean-Pierre Delville,**  
*Bishop of Liège*

+ **Jean-Paul Gusching,**  
*Bishop of Verdun*

+ **Pierre-Yves Michel,**  
*Bishop of Nancy and Toul*

+ **Marc Stenger,**  
*Bishop Emeritus of Troyes*

+ **Pierre Warin,**  
*Bishop of Namur*

