



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL MIROSLAV VLK
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE EUROPEAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES**

*Cardinal Miroslav Vlk
Archbishop of Prague
President of the European Council of Episcopal Conferences*

You have informed me of the forthcoming *European ecumenical meeting* that will be held in Strasbourg from 19 to 22 April. This meeting inspires in me a sentiment of deep joy and great hope.

The gathering, jointly organized by the Council of European Episcopal Conferences and the Conference of European Churches, is the felicitous result of intense collaboration among the various ecclesial institutions of the European continent. It appropriately follows in the tracks of the great Jubilee of the Year 2000, in which the Churches and Ecclesial Communities celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, foundation of our faith and source of our salvation. Furthermore, this initiative takes place this year, in which all Christians celebrate the Resurrection of the One who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14,6) on the same day.

The Easter season shines with the words of the Master who urges his disciples to bring the Good News of salvation to the world: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt 28,20*).

The words that have accompanied Christ's Church through two millennia are also the theme of the *European ecumenical meeting* in Strasbourg. A source of consolation for all Christians, this promise cannot be separated from Jesus' prayer on the evening of the Last Supper: "even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17,21). The unity for which the Lord prayed in the Upper Room is a condition for the credibility of Christian witness. Today, more than ever, we must focus our reflection on this

deep relationship which plays a decisive role in the impact that the Christian message can have on the world. A clear proclamation of the Gospel is particularly urgent in Europe. Woven of different cultures, traditions and values connected with the countries of which it is composed, Europe can neither be understood nor built without taking into account the roots of its original identity; nor can it be pieced together by rejecting the Christian spirituality which permeates it.

To face this important challenge, it is necessary to intensify collaboration at all the levels of social and ecclesial life, and to deepen bilateral and multilateral dialogues. As experience shows, the results achieved through these dialogues strengthen the already existing communion and revive the desire to achieve perfect communion. From this confession of faith will be born full communion among disciples in Christ, the Head of the Body which is the Church.

My Venerable Brother, I extend my very best wishes to you, to all who are taking part in the *European ecumenical meeting* in Strasbourg, and in particular to the representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and the young people, that this gathering may awaken new and fruitful impulses in view of a common Christian witness in Europe and throughout the world, "so that the world may believe" (Jn 17,21).

From the Vatican, 13 April 2001.

JOHN PAUL II