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LETTER TO THE EMBASSY OF POLAND TO THE HOLY SEE



The Vatican, 29 May, 2015

*To His Excellency
Mr. Piotr Nowina-Konopka
Ambassador
of the Republic of Poland
to the Holy See*

Your Excellency,

ON BEHALF of both the Holy Father Francis and myself, I thank you for the letters you have sent to apprise me of the events your embassy is organizing to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the historic Letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops: “We forgive and ask for forgiveness.”

The Polish prelates made their courageous gesture during the final session of the Vatican Council II, thus initiating the difficult but fruitful path and process leading to reconciliation between the two nations after the tragic events of World War II. Today, too, that gesture can serve as a model and an example for all nations and societies that may be experiencing difficult situations and conflicts.

Therefore, allow me to convey the Pontiff’s welcome and his grateful thoughts, and let me also express my conviction that the conference-cum-exhibition organized in the spaces of the Vatican City State to mark that historic Letter, is a most felicitous and commendable initiative.

I thank you for your courteous solicitude and for the information you have sent me. Indeed, I am hopeful that this very significant event will contribute to a better knowledge of the Church’s history in Poland and in Europe, and will urge men of good will to redouble their efforts in promoting gestures of peace and reconciliation between Nations.

Allow me here to renew my feelings of deep esteem for you.

PIETRO CARDINAL PAROLIN
Secretary of State



INAUGURATION OF THE EXHIBITION
"CARDINAL KOMINEK
UNKNOWN FATHER OF EUROPE"
23 X 2015



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁĄŻKA

PIOTR NOWINA-KONOPKA

A Polish economist, university professor, Catholic activist, spokesman for Lech Wałęsa 1982-1989. Member of the Diet of the Polish Republic 1991-2001. Minister in 1989 and 1990. Secretary of State for European Affairs and deputy to the Head Negotiator Poland - EU 1998-1999. Vice-Rector of the College of Europe, 1999-2004. President of the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation since 1991. Director of the European Parliament Relations with National Parliaments 2006-2009 and of the European Parliament Liaison Office with the US Congress, Brussels/Washington 2010-2012. Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Holy See since 2013.

IT IS OUR DUTY to remember the famous letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops, so that we may preserve the historic memory of a great event linked to the Vatican Council II, one that paved the way for a reconciliation between Poland and Germany which was not only moral but social and political as well. What happened since that gesture was made must be seen as a model for today's relations between Poland and Germany, between individuals, societies and countries. Thanks to it, we overcame the traumas of the postwar period together. We can say that one of the consequences of the ongoing process of reconciliation was to contribute to the reunification of Germany and further impel European integration.

However, there is another, no less important reason to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Letter – a document and an action forgotten, perhaps even unknown outside Germany and Poland. We are speaking here of a particular model, a model that can well be used for the many different types of conflicts which have led to our present-day “piecemeal war”, as Pope Francis has termed it. The Letter can inspire religious, social and political leaders to adopt initiatives which create places of encounter, dialogue, reconciliation and, in the final analysis, offer an opportunity for peace.

This formula – to “forgive and ask for forgiveness” – is the most important base we have to defeat hatred, conflict or aversion to the “stranger”: that same stranger with whom we necessarily share the responsibility for the shape our world takes. Whatever the objective or subjective reckoning up of blame may be, this formula allows us to find the common ground which we so urgently need both for today and for the future.

It is on these subjects that I have, as Ambassador of Poland to the Holy See, organized a series of commemorative events. The exhibition we are inaugurating

this evening at the Vatican Museums helps us visualize the 50th anniversary of the writing of the Letter. Monday morning at 8 o' clock, at Campo Teutonico, here in the Vatican, there will be a spiritual event, the celebration of the Eucharist of Reconciliation. Finally, intellectual nourishment will be provided Monday, 26th October at 9 am, at the Istituto Santissima Maria Bambina, where we shall all take part in a conference, "Towards Reconciliation". For these celebrations, we have taken advantage of the Bishops' Synod, now in its closing phase. And this in spite of the fact that by now only the eldest of the synodal fathers can say they were indeed direct witnesses of the Vatican Council II. For the majority of them the reconciliation between Poland and Germany is history vicariously experienced.

I wish to express my gratitude to many individuals for their support. First of all, I am extremely grateful to the Holy Father, Francis, and to his State Secretary, both of whom gave me the strongest moral support I could have hoped for through the supportive words conveyed to me in a letter personally signed by His Eminence, Cardinal Parolin. Let me also thank the Cardinal Governor Bertello, for having opened the doors of the Vatican Museums to us – and in this expression of my gratitude I include Professor Paolucci, Monsignor Nicolini and their staff. The exhibition is an initiative of the city of Wrocław, Breslau, the birthplace of Bolesław Kominek – bishop, archbishop and finally cardinal: a true early protagonist of the Letter we are remembering today. Let us say it: hurray for Kominek!

I thank the Mayor of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz, who is here with us now, for conceiving this exhibition, and for his perseverance and commitment in financing its setup. It's not enough to have someone who invents and pays for, you also need a "producer" – a competent person who has a sense of history, knows how to exhibit and is good at organizing. These qualities are summed up in Professor Krzysztof Pomian and his staff at the Europe Museum and Tempora Company. The exhibition's scientific committee is impressive, many specialists have contributed to the final effect.

Thus I heartily thank all and sundry and accordingly give the floor to Rafał Dutkiewicz, Mayor of Wrocław.



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁĄZKA

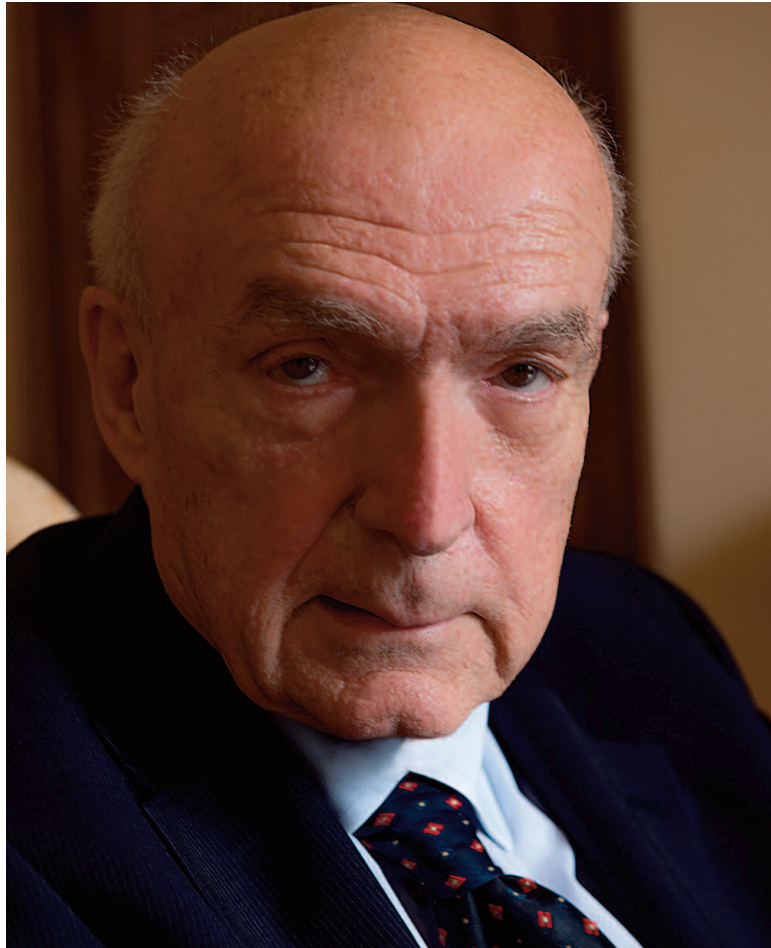


PHOTO ROSSANO MANISCALCHI

ANTONIO PAOLUCCI

Italian art historian, Director of the Vatican Museums since 2007. Has often worked as fine arts superintendent in a number of Italian art cities, including Venice, Verona, Mantua and Florence. Italian Minister for Cultural Heritage and Environments 1995-1996. After the earthquake in Umbria and the Marche in 1997, Paolucci was appointed Special Commissioner for the Italian government in charge of the restoration of the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. Has authored several monographic studies on history and art, and curated important exhibitions of the Italian Renaissance.

TWO SYMBOLS, two signs, define the exhibition which the Vatican Museums have devoted to the memory of Cardinal Kominek: one is Adold Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the other is the plaster bust of Iosif Vissarionvich Dzhugashvili, the man the world knows as Stalin. What those two symbols have meant for Poland's recent history, from the late 1930s to the late 1980s, is evident to anyone who has even the sketchiest knowledge of the history of our continent.

More than any other European people, the Poles have experienced war, foreign occupation, and the catastrophe and horrors of opposing absolutist regimes. Poland, a great country which history seemed to have destined to be, in turn, either a Russian Grand-duchy, or a German *Reichsprotektorat*, is today a free democracy in a free Europe. In spite of this, the sad and long time of war, occupation and despotic regimes, so eloquently symbolized by Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Stalin's bust, cannot, and must not, be forgotten.

This exhibition is dedicated to Cardinal Kominek, and its object is to bear testimony to our recent history. It seeks to show how even in those calamitous times there were men and women who knew how to safeguard their freedom of thought and action. Kominek belongs to this category of free spirits, which Europe today needs to acknowledge and be grateful to. The exhibition showcases an array of manifestos, photographs, documents and objects of social and political life, that help us understand the role Kominek so well fulfilled both as a man of God and a Prince of the Church, as he moved in that given situation with wisdom and clarvoyance, alternating flexibility and determination. He had a deep desire for the freedom and deliverance of his Church and Fatherland, and was at all times sustained by a steadfast faith. Kominek's testimony of *spes contra spem* has indeed been of the noblest. It is the life and works of the Cardinal which the Vatican Museums honours today.

I believe that in the summer of this year 2015, the present exhibition is destined to play a praiseworthy role in edifying the millions of visitors that incessantly pass through the Pope's art collections. The Museums' priority and its absolute must are, indeed, to educate and shed light on the fatal intersections of history. Between *Mein Kampf* and Stalin's bust, the life and actions of a Polish pastor, highly deserving of the Church and of his Fatherland, will – I am certain of this – leave a memory that we shall not easily forget.



PHOTO MACIEJ KULCZYŃSKI

RAFAŁ DUTKIEWICZ

Polish entrepreneur, mathematician, researcher at the Department of Christian Philosophy of the Catholic University of Lublin (1985), taught at Lublin and Wrocław Universities in the 1980s. Since the 1980s was an active supporter of Solidarność underground structures, and became one of its leaders. Mayor of Wrocław since 2002, promoter of this city’s selection as European Capital of Culture for 2016. Has emerged as a major figure in many debates on politics, history and ethics.

FOR SIX WEEKS, in the heart of Rome, visitors to the Vatican Museums will have a chance to see the Wrocław exhibition. Entrusted by Wrocław’s municipal authorities to a group of specialists based in Brussels and Paris, the exhibition will open before the 50th anniversary of the famous Letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops.

This exceptional multimedia show highlights the important role Poland managed to play in the process that led up to European unity.

The exhibition will then move on to Berlin, Wrocław, and Brussels. Rome is the first lap in the presentation of this story, since it is here that things began to unfold, during talks held with Pope Paul VI during the Vatican Council II.

After World War II, Europe went through a period of deep introspection, an intellectual quest to find a way to make sure that a tragedy as terrible as the war that ended in 1945 would never occur again.

The best outcome of that analysis is the European Union’s integration project.

We believe there would never have been a secure and enduring peace – let alone a European Community – without reconciliation between the European nations which had been opposed to each other. Reconciliation is both the best example and the model, and is also the best future for those who still harbour sentiments of hatred in their hearts.

The reconciliation between Poland and Germany is particularly significant, because it came against the backdrop of the killing of many millions of human beings. And in spite of this, the reconciliation process began with the extraordinary and beautiful words: “We forgive and ask for forgiveness,” which are the words we read in the famous “Letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops”.

Its author, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Wrocław, Cardinal Kominek, questioned as to the motives that impelled him to write this letter and have it delivered to its recipients, said: "Our viewpoint cannot be nationalistic. Rather, we must be Europeans in the deepest sense of the term. Europe is the future, nationalisms belong to the past. [...] We need to further discuss a federal solution for the European nations, and achieve this aim through, amongst other things, the gradual surrender of national sovereignty over issues regarding security, commerce and foreign policy."

The words cited here are good enough reason for us to include Cardinal Bolesław Kominek in a projected list of "Fathers of European Reconciliation" – a visionary precursor of a supranational, completely European outlook.

My ears still ring with the stories of a friend of mine who said he had heard Pope John Paul II saying more than once: "And on these words of Bolesław's I have founded my whole teaching..."

Crucially, we must also study the ethical and ontological assumptions the letter is based on. What surprises us is its powerful conviction that the dignity of human beings represents both the essence of the world and the rationale that underpins reconciliation in Europe.

Kominek's letter thus contains traces of something that in effect became very important for Wojtyła the philosopher: the personalism that emerges from existential tomism.

However, the most important thing is the incredible beauty of that phrase. It comes straight out of the Gospel.



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PHOTO KRZYSZTOF DUBIEL

KRZYSZTOF POMIAN

Polish philosopher, historian, author of critical essays, professor of humanities. Deported together with his family to Kazakhstan during World War II. Dismissed from his university post for having openly criticized Polish state politics in 1968, taught in France from 1972 to 1999. Professor at France's CNRS in 1984, promoter and head of the Brussels Europe Museum since 2001, member since 2010 of the Consulting Committee of the European Network of Memory and Solidarity (ENRS), which collects memories relating to 20th century European history, in particular to the periods of dictatorship, war and social resistance to enslavement. Has authored several publications on contemporary philosophy and studies on the relationship between philosophy and politics.

IT IS COMMONLY THOUGHT that we know everything we can possibly know about the European integration process that followed on the Second World War. But this is not strictly true. Or then it is only so if we assume that all the steps leading to integration happened in Western Europe, that the sovietized nations of Eastern Europe waited passively until 1989, for the implosion of the Soviet system that opened the door for them to join, if they so wished, a European Community already fully in place. This assumption is entirely unfounded. A better knowledge of the history of the countries of Central Europe after 1956 shows us, indeed, that the latent vitality of the European ideal did not exist only among the political emigrés. The latter did of course have their influence, however hushed and limited, on the opinion of those who stayed on in their homelands, especially amongst the intellectuals, and this in spite of tight security controls and repression through censorship. It is not by chance that the monthly review which in 1957 decided to publish a number of Polish writers banned by the Communist authorities, called itself "Europa". Philo-European tendencies came to the fore in Czechoslovakia during the "Prague Spring" in 1968. Later on, in 1980, in that same country, and also in Poland and Hungary, they developed into a lively interest for a shared Hapsburg past and for a renewed understanding of *Mitteleuropa*.

Yet these were only the dreams of intellectual circles, although they did have their part in shaping the opinion of dissident movements and, later, of democratic opposition. They however had no impact whatsoever either on public opinion in general, nor on current politics. The *Letter of the Polish bishops to the German brothers in Christ*, whose 50th anniversary we are celebrating today, proved to be an act of infinitely greater historic effectiveness, as time has shown. It made no explicit mention of European integration: nevertheless, we know

that its real author, Cardinal Boleslaw Kominek, saw Europe as the future, and nationalism as the past. Today we should remember this fact as both an indication and a warning. And even though the Bishops' Letter did not refer directly to European integration, it proved to be a real step in that direction all the same, helping create the conditions which almost 40 years later led to the enlargement of the European Union to all the countries of central Europe, many of which were in eastern Europe.

The Second world war created two gulfs which at that time seemed bottomless, and were in any case very, very deep: one in the West, between France and Germany, and the other in the East between Germany and Poland. Over the first gulf bridges started being built as early as 1950 with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. This process was completed in 1963 thanks to Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer. The second gulf continued to be unbridgeable even twenty years after the cessation of hostilities – indeed it seemed as if it would stay like that for good, confirming the old adage that “as long as the world is what it is, Germans and Poles can never be friends.” Had this state of things not undergone a change, not even the fall of the Soviet system would have eased Poland's accession to the European Union, and the the Oder-Neisse border question would have continued to be an obstacle in both its territorial and human dimension. Keeping the largest country of central Europe out of the European Union would likewise have cast uncertainty on whether the remaining countries in the once Soviet-dominated part of north-eastern and eastern Europe could be granted accession – including, most significantly, the Baltic republics. In other words, a persisting gulf between Poland and Germany would have made European integration impossible, or would certainly have slowed it down considerably. For there can be no integration without reconciliation. Nor can there be reconciliation without forgiveness.

The Bishops' Letter, with its celebrated words “We forgive and ask for forgiveness”, was the first bridge built across the deep gulf dividing Poles and Germans. At the same time, in spite of the intentions of the Communist authorities, the campaign they launched against the bishops and the clarification undertaken by the latter in answer to those attacks, made it possible for the *Letter*, or in any case for its main message, to reach the conscience of vast masses. This triggered a change in how the Poles spoke about Germany and the Germans, and also how they viewed them, which in turn helped renew and consolidate an independent public opinion in Poland.

The Letter eventually led to a German reaction as well. Only a short time before, the ground-breaking Memorandum of the Evangelical Church had created a stir in Germany, since it called for a change in relations between Germans and their eastern neighbours. All those Germans expelled from the territories assigned to Poland by the victors of World War II were hostile to the Evangelical Memorandum, as was a large share of German public opinion. From the Polish side, the Bishops' Letter for the first time dared take on with courage

and heartfelt compassion the acutely sensitive issue of the shifting of the border westwards and the ensuing resettlement of entire populations, a fact which showed up the similarities between Poles and Germans. This in turn accelerated the changing attitude of Germans towards Poland and Poles, as testified by a memorandum written three years later by a group of German Catholics, implicitly advocating the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line. The Bishops' Letter thus gave rise to a bilateral dynamic, which saw the active participation of intellectuals on both sides – Günter Grass and Stanisław Stomma are examples. By gradually gathering up wider and wider social circles in both countries, it forged the mentality and psychological basis for new relations between the two states, which were accordingly put on a firmer base in 1970. It appears that the Letter also contributed significantly to this. That the attitude of Poles towards Germans and vice versa were improving did not, quite obviously, wipe out the bloody memories, the deeply rooted negative attitudes and stereotypes, nor the reserves of ignorance that had sedimented over the centuries. But all this was at that time to a certain extent neutralized by a prevailing wish not to re-open old wounds, a wish to reach a mutual understanding in the name of peaceful coexistence in a united Europe.

The bishops' Letter seemed at first to be a purely Polish event. It then proved to be a historical turning point in Polish-German relations. As time goes on the Letter's European dimension, both spiritually and politically, becomes increasingly clear.



PHOTO MAŁGORZATA POŁOMSKA

EUCCHARIST OF RECONCILIATION
26 X 2015

GERHARD LUDWIG MÜLLER



GERHARD LUDWIG MÜLLER

German theologian, was ordained to the priesthood in 1978, appointed bishop of Regensburg, and elevated to archbishop in 2012. Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 2012, created cardinal in 2014. Has edited and curated the Complete Works of Pope Benedict XVI. Author of many publications on dogmatic theology, ecumenism, hermeneutics and the priesthood. Doctor honoris causa at the Catholic University of Lublin and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

*Introductory words to the Holy Mass
to commemorate the exchange of letters
between the Polish and German bishops,
1965-2015*

IT IS A GREAT EVENT OF GRACE, that bishops from Poland and Germany, and Catholic Christians from both countries, meet near St. Peter's tomb, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. We have gathered at the German Collegial Church of Campo Santo Teutonico, to commemorate and once again find ourselves at one with the historic words, "We forgive and ask for forgiveness", which 50 years ago the Polish and the German episcopates exchanged resonantly – when the Iron Curtain still divided them. What is impossible in the logic of power politics, is possible by the logic of the love of Christ: that two neighbouring peoples, who through Divine Providence have shared a common destiny – in good and in evil – for over 1,000 years, find themselves together in the lap of the Church, our Mother, forgive each other and together walk the common path to a better future.

Poland was the first victim of Hitler and Stalin's power politics: in their devil's pact they had decided the destruction and carving up of the country. How much suffering and death, misery, hate and irreconcilability was thus unleashed – both in action and reaction – and inflicted on the Polish, Russian and German peoples.

Only the Church, to whom Jesus Christ himself entrusted the word of reconciliation until his Coming at the end of history (cf. 2 Kor 5,19f), can with the power of love go beyond graves, chase resentment out of hearts and dissolve deeply rooted prejudice in thin air. Looking back on historical injustice – and especially that of the four Polish partitions – Christianity must send out a warning to the political leadership of Europe's countries that a commonality of peoples and many personal friendships amongst individuals of different nations is possible only on the basis of a natural moral law and with the inspiration of the spirit of God. The totalitarian, godless ideologies of the 20th century, which

bear the responsibility for racism and class hatred, must never again find a place in the spirits and hearts of people. The only thing that counts for us is that each human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and thus that the dignity of human beings must remain untouchable.

The Pentecost, out of which the Church of Christ arose historically after Easter, shows us that the diversity and multiplicity of Nations, languages and cultures are willed by God and bring good with it. Peoples are united in acknowledging their belief in the Triune God, and in Christ we accept each other as brothers and sisters, for we are the limbs of the same body of Christ, wonderfully joined together by the Holy Spirit.

In a world torn by violence and hatred, Germans and Poles should today offer testimony together that reconciliation is possible with the help of the spirit of God. Moreover, we rejoice to know that in brotherly fellowship that we are called children of God – of the common Father – for indeed we are that. In the prayer that the Lord has gifted for all times to his disciples, we pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.”

But this prayer begins with the divine Teacher’s instruction that together we raise our heads and turn to the Father of the Son of God, as we say: “Our Father in Heaven, may thy Kingdom come! For in the holy Eucharist the Kingdom of God is entirely present in all its truth and in the fullness of life, which the Son of God has brought to us in his Incarnation, in his Cross and his Resurrection.”



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁĄZKA



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁAZKA

STANISŁAW GADECKI

Polish theologian and Bible scholar. Was ordained to the priesthood in 1973, named bishop in 1992, and metropolitan archbishop of Poznań in 2002. Vice-president of the Episcopal Conference of Poland in 2004, president of the Episcopal Conference of Poland since 2014. Author of numerous articles on biblical studies and on dialogue with Judaism. Has assiduously pursued university teaching in Poland and abroad (USA, Israel). Is one of the synodal fathers of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family in 2014, and the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod on the Family in 2015.

Homily
Vatican, Campo Teutonico, 26 October 2015

ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY of the *Message of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops*, we have gathered to give thanks for this groundbreaking event in the post-war history of the Polish-German relations.

1. The message of the Polish Bishops

This document, which is so important for the post-war history of the Church in Poland and Germany, contains words – often quoted and commented – expressing the essence of its message: “We extend to you who are sitting here on the benches of the Council, which is coming to an end, our hands and we grant you forgiveness and ask for it.” These words were spoken at the end of the Second Vatican Council and at the approach of the celebrations of the millennium of Poland’s baptism. In these circumstances, the Polish Bishops present at the Council addressed 56 letters to the Episcopal Conferences of different countries, announcing the upcoming celebrations and asking them to pray for this intention.

One of these letters, also dated 18 November 1965, was the *Message of the Polish Bishops to their German brothers in Christ’s pastoral office*. In the “year of our Lord 1966 – wrote the Bishops – the Church of Christ in Poland, together with the entire Polish nation, will celebrate the Millennium of its baptism.” Baptism is – both personally and socially – the sacrament of liberation, which introduces the baptized into a single community of faith and brotherhood. Therefore, true Christianity cannot tolerate a situation in which neighboring Christian nations remain at loggerheads with each other.

The great wisdom of the Polish bishops of that moment – led by Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński and Cardinal Bolesław Kominek, a great promoter of

reconciliation between the Polish and German peoples – was to try to look at the common history of our nations in the perspective of the Millennium. The *Message* was a great synthesis of Polish history, with special emphasis on the relations with our western neighbor. The mere fact of presenting that history from the perspective of 1000 years of Christianity had great importance in the so-called Polish People's Republic, whose world history began with the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution. In the millennial perspective, it became clear for the recipients of the *Message* that our peoples and States are united by a stable value that overrides all political divisions: our shared Christian faith. This vision was marked by Poland's inclusion in the great Christian family of Europe. It was a vision, in which – beyond the political borders – there was a great spiritual community.

The letter was an attempt at a moral account that would have been impossible without taking the past into consideration, without due attention to the plight of the Polish and German peoples, during and also after World War II. This was part of the effort that contributed to our nation's moral renewal. It was also an act of courage on the part of the Polish Episcopate, which, in those political circumstances, dared to take this initiative on the international forum without the will and the knowledge of the party.

The appraisal of history from the Christian viewpoint became an assessment that cannot be equated in the perspective of merely legalistic justice. This conviction also later inspired the reflection of Archbishop Karol Wojtyła, who had signed that *Message*: "The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions. It has been precisely historical experience that, among other things, has led to the formulation of the saying: *summum ius, summa iniuria*. This statement does not detract from the value of justice and does not minimize the significance of the order that is based upon it; it only indicates, under another aspect, the need to draw from the powers of the spirit which condition the very order of justice, powers which are still more profound."¹

2. The answer of the German bishops

Two days after the release of the *Message*, the German reply was published in the form of "*Greetings from the German Bishops to their Polish brothers in the episcopal mission and response to the letter dated 18 November 1965.*" This lengthy reply of the German bishops, who expressed their thanks and asked for forgiveness but refused to accept the loss of the German territory that, as a result of World War II, had become a part of Poland, did not bring the expected breakthrough and, instead, caused the Polish Bishops more disappointment: "Our warmly outstretched hand was not received without reserve" (Cardinal Primate S. Wyszyński later, in 1970, wrote to Cardinal Döpfner).

1. JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in misericordia*, 12.

3. Repression

This *Message* was an important step in the work to weaken the antagonism between the Polish and German peoples. It was, however, an extraordinarily courageous step for the Catholic Church in Poland. Given the mood of Polish society at that time, remembering the years of occupation, while constantly threatened with German revisionism by the Polish authorities, asking for forgiveness meant going very radically "against the tide." Many Poles did not understand the sense of the *Message*, and there was a tendency to consider the intervention of Polish bishops incompatible with the interests of the Polish Nation.

The state authorities skillfully used it, preparing the vast plan of a propaganda campaign, whose goal was: "First, to condemn the attitude of the Church defined in the *Message* as anti-national and anti-socialist, and favorable to German revisionism. Second, to denounce the Church's leadership as anti-national. Thirdly, to demonstrate that the Church falsified the history of the Polish nation. Fourth, to introduce a distinction between the hierarchy and the Roman Catholic clergy."²

On 10 December 1965, the Polish media began a massive attack against the Polish Episcopate. This was the largest anti-episcopal propaganda campaign in the entire history of communism. This propaganda stressed that the Polish Bishops illegally granted forgiveness to Germany on behalf of the Polish nation. In workplaces, mass demonstrations were organized, leading to demands for exemplary punishment of the authors of the *Message*. This action was intended to undermine the confidence in the episcopate within the Catholic part of Polish society and among the clergy. The first Secretary Władysław Gomułka exhorted the episcopate: "Let not the Church stand in opposition to the State. Let it not believe that it governs the souls in the nation. Those times have gone into the irretrievable past and will never come back."³

4. Good fruits of the message

Jerzy Turowicz, editor of "*Tygodnik Powszechny*", spoke out in defense of the *Message*, stating that the authors of this letter were "guided by the noblest desire for fraternity between nations" (Jan. 14th, 1966).

In the 1970s, this *Message* greatly facilitated the dialogue between Catholics from Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1968, three years after the letters of the Episcopates were exchanged, 160 German Catholic intellectuals (including Fr. Joseph Ratzinger) signed the *Bensberg Memorandum*, which called the German hierarchy to advocate the border along the Oder and the Neisse rivers. Only this *memorandum* was considered an adequate response to the *Message* of the Polish Episcopate. Gradually, after the ratification of the 1972

2. Administrative Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, December 1965.

3. WŁADYSŁAW GOMUŁKA, *Speeches July 1964 – December 1966* [Przemówienia. Lipiec 1964 – grudzień 1966], Warszawa 1967, pp. 397–407.

Warsaw Treaty, the German Catholic Church also fundamentally changed its relations with respect to Poland.

A clear example of this, of particular importance to the Polish Church and the Poles, was the material assistance given by German confreres in the 1970s and 1980s. It is impossible to forget the support of German cardinals who contributed to the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope. These were very specific, historical fruits of the *Message*.

With gratitude and joy, I would like to mention, at this point, some of the other direct and indirect results of the reconciliation initiated by the *Message*: the visit of the Polish Pope in Germany and of the German Pope in Poland (both very kindly undertaken); frequent and friendly meetings between bishops, priests and faithful of both countries; friendly meeting between Kohl and Mazowiecki a Kruźlowa; many Polish-German marriages; the celebration of the Eucharist and of the other sacraments in Poland in German and in Germany in Polish; frequent contacts between young people, schools and parishes (we can expect this also next year when many young people from Germany will come to Krakow to take part in the World Youth Days, just as many Poles participated in the 2005 WYD in Cologne).

5. Perspectives for the future

Today, with gratefulness for these fruits, I would like to finally draw attention to some of the premises concerning the present and the future of our two nations.

Firstly, the *Message* indicates the need for an ethos, in the life of the national and the international community. If we want to find the path of reconciliation and forgiveness in the name of charity, we must call truth by its name. It is necessary to look for our shared values, which unite and do not divide us. In this regard, we have special intercessors, whom the Church in our times has raised to the glory of the altars and who earnestly cultivated fraternal relations between the Polish and German peoples. It suffices to mention St. Maximilian Kolbe and St. John Paul II, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bl. Bernard Lichtenberg and Bl. Anicet Koplinski.

Secondly, the *Message* indicates the need for the connection of identity and memory, which seems particularly important today in the German, Polish and European perspectives. The apprehensions of modern Europe's faithful in the face of the inflowing foreign culture and religion are justified. Moreover, they seem to be intensified by the fact that Europe is affected by silent apostasy from Christ. In place of Christian values, some politicians are introducing detrimental ideologies that do away with the Christian vision of man and the family. It therefore seems necessary to develop and deepen cooperation of the Polish and German societies, especially among the faithful of both countries in order to promote the Christian values that have shaped Europe, and which are threatened today by internal as well as external factors. The defense of human life, from conception to natural death, care for the spiritual development of

youth based on Christian education, and the defense and promotion of the Christian family appear especially important.

Thirdly, the *Message* teaches us to look with a perspective, which is necessary in life, and especially in social, political and religious coexistence. Although we would sometimes like to see the immediate fruits of our efforts, we must frequently arm ourselves with patience and perseverance in the pursuit of the good. Indeed, social life is not characterized by simple automatisms. Life's tissue is, on the contrary, made of people, who are often characterized by mistakes, emotions and limitations of knowledge; and, hence, the path to building consensus and the community is a difficult one.

Fourth, in the name of the spirit of charity itself and of responsibility for the future, we call out to our sisters and brothers to continue together the work of reconciliation, always forgiving one another and expressing our unconditional trust in the Truth. Since the *Message* was written things have changed in the world and in the Church, including in the relations between the Churches in Poland and Germany. Poles are enjoying freedom they have acquired, and Germany the unity that was only a dream 50 years ago. What seemed impossible then, at least in the short term, has become a reality. In the context of Europe's unification, the borders between our countries have opened, and this has facilitated and deepened the relations between their citizens at various levels.

With gratitude and joy, I would like to mention, at this point, some of the other direct and indirect results of the reconciliation initiated by the *Message*: the visit of the Polish Pope in Germany and of the German Pope in Poland (both very kindly undertaken); frequent and friendly meetings between bishops, priests and faithful of both countries; many Polish-German marriages; the celebration of the Eucharist and of the other sacraments in Poland in German and in Germany in Polish; frequent contacts between young people, schools and parishes (we can expect this also next year when many young people from Germany will come to Krakow to take part in the World Youth Days, just as many Poles participated in the 2005 WYD in Cologne).

Conclusion

The ancient Romans used to say: *Historia est magistra vitae*. We are aware of how much we still have to learn with our gaze fixed on Christ, precisely when it comes to reading and interpreting the history of our nations and with regard to the spiritual and material well-being of the generations of today and of the future. With this in mind, today, let us sing our *Te Deum* to the Lord. Let us give thanks for the authors and signatories of that *Message*, among others: Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński, Cardinal Boleslaw Kominek, and Archbishop Karol Wojtyła. Let us ask for the light of the Holy Spirit, so that we may continue developing this great heritage, initiated – to such a great extent – by the *Message of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers*.



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁAZKA

CONFERENCE
“TOWARDS RECONCILIATION”
26 X 2015

PIOTR NOWINA-KONOPKA



WHILE I THANK the Reverend Eminences and Excellencies for having celebrated the Holy Mass this morning, let me open this conference using the same words I used during the inauguration of the exhibition last Friday at the Vatican Museums:

It is our duty to remember the famous letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops, so as to preserve the historic memory of a great event linked to the Vatican Council II, one that paved the way for a reconciliation between Poland and Germany which was not only moral but social and political as well. What happened since that gesture was made must be seen as a model for today's relations between Poland and Germany, between individuals, societies and countries. Thanks to it, we overcame the traumas of the postwar period together. We can say that one of the consequences of the ongoing process of reconciliation was to contribute to the reunification of Germany and further impel European integration.

However, there is another, no less important reason to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Letter – a document and an action forgotten, perhaps even unknown outside Germany and Poland. We are speaking here of a particular model, a model that can well be used for the many different types of conflicts which have led to our present-day “piecemeal war”, as Pope Francis has termed it. The Letter can inspire religious, social and political leaders to adopt initiatives which create places of encounter, dialogue, reconciliation and, in the final analysis, offer an opportunity for peace.

This formula – to “forgive and ask for forgiveness” – is the most important base we have to defeat hatred, conflict or aversion to the “stranger”: that same stranger with whom we necessarily share the responsibility for the shape our

world takes. Whatever the objective or subjective reckoning up of blame may be, this formula allows us to find the common ground which we so urgently need both for today and for the future.

This is the background which led us to organize today's conference. Let me first of all thank His most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Ravasi for having offered us his sponsorship at the Pontifical Council for Culture. It is most appropriate to cry out "Culture"! Because here we stand on the ground of culture: encounter, dialogue, reconciliation. I also thank the Cardinal for being present with us here today.

We wish to take back our past, both from the strictly historical point of view and from the theological one. I am grateful to professors Anna Wolf-Powęska and Klaus Ziemer for the first section, and to His most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Lehmann and His most Reverend Eminence Monsignor Henryk Muszyński, Primate Emeritus of Poland, for the second section, as they share with us their memories and their thoughts. For reasons of ill health, Cardinal Lehmann cannot be with us today, so Monsignor Kleindienst will read his address to us. As moderator for this session we shall have a Dominican, Father Tomasz Dostatni.

After the Letter, we experienced the process of true reconciliation over several years. Professors Markus Meckel of Germany, and Robert Traba of Poland, will both tell us about this process, each from his own perspective. This session will have Dieter Bingen as chair.

From the past we move forward to the present and future. Is it possible to employ the Letter as inspiration in the present world? The Primate Emeritus of the Czech Republic, His most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Miroslav Vlk, has his Czech and German experience. The Reverend Professor Serhiy Cyril Hovorun is Ukrainian, a member of the Orthodox Church, and he has observed from close up the current problems between Ukrainians and Russians, between Catholic and Orthodox. Finally, the Imam Emeritus, Reverend Mustafa Cerić witnessed with his own eyes the drama of Bosnia-Herzegovina – the disaster of Cain and Abel in our times, the fratricidal fight between different ethnic groups, religions and confessions. This session will be moderated by Professor Krzysztof Czyżewski, who is himself very active internationally in supporting reconciliation.

I hope we also have the chance to listen to a representative of the Holy See – but this will be a surprise...

Our conference will end with Her Excellency Annette Schavan, Ambassador of Germany to the Holy See, and His most Reverend Eminence Stanisław Gądecki, President of the Episcopal Conference of Poland.

It is my pleasure now to give the floor to His most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, who will open this conference as our patron and in his quality of President of the Pontifical Council of Culture.



PHOTO MAŁGORZATA POŁOMSKA

**GIANFRANCO RAVASI**

Italian biblical scholar, theologian and hebraist, ordained to the priesthood in 1966. Prefect of Milan's Ambrosiana Library 1989-2007. Nominated bishop in 2007. Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Culture in 2007, consecrated cardinal in 2010. Since 2011 has been working with the Court of the Gentiles, a Vatican body that promotes dialogue between believers and non-believers. Was the Holy See's General Commissioner to the Milan Expo 2015. Has authored several books on biblical exegesis for the general public, and contributes to Italian and foreign daily newspapers. Author of TV and radio programs.

THE INVITATION to join this meeting is especially dear to me because of the tie that links me both to the Ambassador, Piotr Nowina-Konopka, with whom I often work in tandem, and to Poland, which I have travelled to many times on official visits, and where I am ideally present through the Polish translation of many books of mine. My relations with Germany partake of this same intensity, not only through institutional relations, especially with the political and cultural world, but also because ever since I was a young man I have cultivated German literature with great interest. Thus Poland and Germany represent two realities which today cross and mingle in me.

I greet the Ambassadors here, and all participants to this event, and ask you to join in some brief thoughts I have built around a biblical text which is at the base of my past academic research, but also constitutes, for believers and non-believers alike, the great manuscript of Western culture.

The protagonist of the first text I wish to evoke is Lamek, a descendant of Cain: a disconcerting biblical figure, a provocateur, even scandalously so (*Genesis*, Chapter 4). His profile is well defined by his own song of sword and vengeance, spoken in the presence of his two wives, Ada and Zilla: "Ada and Zilla, wives of Lamek, hear my voice. I have slain a man for scratching me, and a boy for bruising me. Seven times shall Cain have revenge, yet Lamek shall have it seventy-seven." (*Gen.*, 4, 23-24). The logic of vengeance and war pure and absolute emerges quite clearly here. However, in the Old Testament it is the law of retaliation that rules, a "one-to-one" criterion of blanket justice, based on "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth". Lamek's law instead works on a ratio of "one to seventy-seven." Indeed, the object of waging war is not to break even on a debt, but to destroy the enemy. This is what Europe witnessed during the two world wars, especially during World War II, when rivers of

blood ran across our continent and two individuals like Hitler and Stalin imposed their rule of terror on the entire European horizon.

Let us contrast this citation with another, in the manner of an antithetical diptych: in this second one Peter (*The Book of Matthew*, Chapter 18), asks Christ: “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother if he sins against me? Up to seven times?” (*Bk. of M.*, 18, 21). Probably referring to Lamek, Jesus answers: “I tell you, not up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (*Bk. of M.* 18, 22). This is the news Christ brought with him – the law of forgiveness which breaks through all limits, reaches out for the fullness of love and thus takes a stand against the explosion of violence. These two pages from the holy scriptures help us to photograph two moments that define both European history and your two countries: one in which the flag was Lamek’s, the other in which Poland and Germany raise Christ’s banner of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In this connection, let us read Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s significant comment on what Christ spoke regarding forgiveness. The great theologian and martyr of Nazism, hanged on 9 April, 1945 in the concentration camp of Flossenbürg, when the Nazi monster was close to its demise, wrote: “Jesus tells Peter to forgive not ‘up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven’. (Matthew, 18, 22) This means we must not count, but rather forgive, at all times. Nor do we need to worry ourselves with questions like: ‘How many times?’ but just do it continuously, endlessly. This is forgiveness, and it is grace as well. Only this makes us free. We are used to counting, one, two, three, four. Things become more and more complicated, the relationship with our brother more and more tormented. [...] Let us free ourselves of numbers. To forgive and excuse are not actions we count, or that have a limit. [...] Forgiveness has no beginning and no end. It happens daily and continually because it comes from the Lord. It is the liberation from all hostility in one’s relations with our fellow human beings, for in this way we are liberated from ourselves.”¹

Let me place this authoritative voice – given the presence here of the Grand Mufti of Sarajevo – next to that of Nobel prize winner Ivo Andrić, a writer of ex-Yugoslavia, and quote you a few lines from his 1945 novel, *The Bridge on the Drina*: “My dead father once heard from Šeh-Dedija – and then narrated to me as a child – what bridges come from, and how the first bridge in the world was built. When Allah the powerful had created this world, the earth was flat and smooth like a lovely enamel pan. This displeased the demon, who envied man this God-given gift. And while it still was as it had been on arising out of the divine hands, wet and soft like an unbaked soup-plate, he approached it stealthily and with his nails scratched the countenance of God’s earth as deeply as he could. Thus, as the story goes, deep rivers and chasms arose to separate one region from another. [...] Allah was displeased when he saw what the cursed One had done; but since he could not go back on his handiwork, it having been de-

filed by the Devil’s hands, he sent his angels to help and comfort men. When the angels realized that men unhappily could not cross the ravines and chasms to go about their daily activities, they spread out their wings above those points, and people used these to go across. Thus, after the fountain, the greatest good deed is to build a bridge”. (Chapter XVI). From this perspective we sense the need to construct bridges, a theme on which Pope Francis insists, calling us to knock down walls and build bridges.

At this point, ideally, I leave the floor to these thoughts of Saint John Paul II’s. They are quoted from the homily he delivered at Częstochowa on 5 June, 1979, during his first visit as Pontiff to his homeland: “I wish from Jasna Góra to offer a special vow at Saint Hedwig’s Sanctuary in Trzebnica, near Wrocław. And I do this for a specific reason. Divine Providence, in its inscrutable design, has chosen today, 16 October 1978, to be the turning point of my life. On this day of 16 October, the Church of Poland celebrates Saint Hedwig and thus I feel it my bounden duty to offer to the Church of Poland this vow to the Saint: she is not only the patron saint of reconciliation between neighbouring states, but also the patron of the day on which the first Pole in history was elected to the Chair of Peter. [...] The Church wishes to serve men in reaching unity, it wishes to serve nations in reaching reconciliation. This belongs to its mission of salvation. We ever open our thoughts and our hearts to that peace, of which the Lord Jesus so often spoke to the Apostles, both before his Passion, and after his Resurrection: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.’ (Jn 14:27) May this Pope, who today speaks from the top of Jasna Góra, be effective in serving the cause of unity and reconciliation in today’s world. Don’t cease supporting him to this end with your prayers throughout the Polish land.”

In this speech I have made different witnesses speak. I will now finish by referring to the message which the Polish bishops dared to send to their Christian brothers in Germany during the Council, on 18 November, 1965. My wish is that those words may serve as the ideal backdrop to this meeting: for they are the fruit of the mind and heart of the great Polish cardinal Kominek, who died in 1974. The suggestive image of hands which those words evoke are a complex and precious reality, and may thus become rich soil for the hopes of your people: “Dear German brothers, don’t take offence for this catalogue of what happened in the last moment of our millennium. We do this not to accuse you, but to seek justification for ourselves. We are well aware of how many German citizens groaned under the inhuman pressure of National Socialism. We are aware of the terrible inner suffering to which the upright and self-responsible bishops were then exposed – let us remember, for example, Cardinal Faulhaber, von Galen and Preysing. We know about the martyrs of the “White Rose”, the activists of the 20th of July Resistance Movement, we know how many laymen and priests offered up their lives (Lichtenberg, Metzger, Klausener and many others). Thousands of Germans, both Christians and Communists, shared the fate of our Polish brothers in the concentration camps.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the situation being made so very much worse by the past: in this very moment, dearest brothers, we turn to you: let us try to forget. Without polemics, without cold war, let us instead undertake the dialogue which today both the Council and Pope Paul VI seek to promote. [...] In this more Christian – but also very human – spirit, we reach out with our hands towards your hands, as you sit here on the same benches and the Council draws to a close, and we forgive you and ask you for forgiveness. If you, German bishops and Fathers of the Council, will shake our hands, which we offer you fraternally, only then can we celebrate our Millennium with a clear conscience and in the most Christian way possible." (*Message of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers in Christ*, 18th November, 1965.)



**TOMASZ DOSTATNI**

Polish publicist, entered the Dominican order in 1984, after being ordained to the priesthood in 1980. Between 1990 and 1995 he was active in Prague as a priest and promoter of the resurgence of the Dominican order in the Czech Republic, in the same period was correspondent for the Vatican Radio and the Catholic Agency of Information, and founder of the Centre of Christian Culture. Managing editor from 1995 to 2000 of the review “W drodze” (On the Way). Engaged in the ecumenical movement, supporter of social and inter-religious dialogue, active in Poland, the Czech Republic, and particularly in Lublin with the “Brama Grodzka” Movement. Has authored numerous publications on these themes.

I BELONG TO THE GENERATION which in Poland – and maybe not only in Poland – is known as the “Generation of the children of the Vatican Council II”. I was born exactly fifty years ago. I don’t know the preconciliar Church – my Church is the Church after the Council. I grew up in it and it has made me the man I am today: a Christian, a Dominican monk and a priest. The Letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops, with the message it contained – “We forgive and ask for forgiveness” – constitutes an important step towards the reconciliation between nations and men with very different experiences of World War II. I would like you now to listen to two Polish-German considerations, two historical and theological considerations. The context in which that letter came into being is important for us to grasp what at that time, at the end of the Council, was in the hearts and minds of the men of the Church.

In his introductory speech, Cardinal Ravasi speaks of a “forgiveness without end”, citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran martyred in World War II. Ravasi speaks of him as a “martyr for the faith”. I would like to underline the fact that it is a very good thing that we are able to see the “martyrs for the faith” in an ecumenical perspective, that we acknowledge that other Christian churches have also fathered witnesses to the same Gospel, and that they paid with their own blood for their allegiance.

It seems to me that in today’s world, riven by new conflicts and by the drama of terror attacks, the evangelical message of reconciliation constitutes the alternative which we Christians are able to offer. Professor Tomáš Halík, a Czech theologian and winner of the Templeton Award, speaks of “reconciled diversity”. We can be different in terms of confession, religion, we may hail from different national cultures, but today there is no other path than that of dialogue and reconciliation. And this we can learn from the previous generation, the one that started and nurtured the Vatican Council.

**ANNA WOLFF-POWĘSKA**

Polish historian of ideas, professor of humanities, expert in relations between Poland and Germany. Director of Poznań's Institute of the West, 1994-2004. Full professor, teaches at the Political Sciences and Journalism Department at Poznań's Adam Mickiewicz University. Chairman of the Science Council of Berlin's Centre for Historical Studies. Author of numerous publications on relations between Poland and Germany. Has won prestigious awards, including the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize in 2008.

THE *MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION* did not mark an immediate turning point in Polish-German relations. From the point of view of civil society, it got no answer. Neither the Poles nor the Germans were ready for a dialogue, never mind reconciliation. Nor could it have been otherwise. Twenty years after World War II was too short a period to overcome the entire legacy of blame, injustices and mutual hostility. To reckon up the traumatic experiences of the past requires distance, generational change, acquisition of knowledge, a new language in education and new awareness.

Three bottom-line factors influenced the two neighbours' historical culture, and how each viewed the other: the war of attrition and the Nazi occupation of Poland, which was completely different from the occupation of Western Europe; the territorial changes; and the ideological division of Europe. In the first two decades after 1945, Poles and Germans lived inside two completely different and isolated worlds. Everything divided them. Both past and present were the object of differing interpretations. For West German citizens, the Russians were the victors and the Jews were the victims, while the Poles were not neighbours, but only occupants of east German lands, a satellite of Stalin's empire. The common border was the "Oder-Neisse line": the area which the Potsdam decisions had finally awarded to Poland, was for Germans "a territory under Polish rule", "the lost lands" – while for the Poles it was the "reconquered lands".

The crimes of the Third Reich created a hiatus in Polish-German relations which came to be mirrored in all aspects of life. The post-occupation reality, at least, did not promote any rational self-questioning, all the more so because Auschwitz was not an event measurable by human reason. Shifting the border sparked the conflict. For the Germans the issue was territorial, for the Poles it was existential. The spectre of a revision of the Polish-German borders, kept

alive by the loud rhetoric of the expellees' unions in the German Federal Republic, was a source of constant fear. For the Poles, the Western and Northern Territories became a great rifle range on which to vent their frustrations. The Polish understanding of historical justice implied the condemnation of all that was German.

For both the German expellees, and for those Poles who had been deported from the eastern border, the question of the loss of those "small homelands" came to constitute a basic identity problem. As Piotr Lachmann has pointed out acutely, the strongest roots are those of the uprooted. Diametrically opposed to this was the political, material and psychological situation of the two groups of expellees. The Poles who had been driven out of the lost eastern territories had no hope of returning, and in addition feared a new exile. While the problem of these Poles remained a taboo for the entire duration of the People's Republic of Poland, the Germans who were driven out of the western territories found themselves, from this point of view, in a completely different situation. Protected by the Federal government, aided by infrastructure created especially for them, with a ministry of their own, financed by all the governments that succeeded each other in power, supported by the organizations of the displaced, the cultural institutions, the media, the publishing houses, the expellees became a political force which the authorities of Western Germany, starting with the CDU and the CSU, had to reckon with at all times.

Both Poles and Germans filled the void of knowledge of each other with the stereotypes that dated back to when the country had been under Prussian occupation – a fact later consolidated by Nazi occupation. Poland was identified with the *Polnische Wirtschaft*, and with a nation's incapacity of constructing a proper state. From the spirit of Cold War pedagogy came the directives on how to view the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Poland, as an object of learning, was only part of the overall *knowledge of eastern Europe*. The *Ostkunde* forcefully suggested the image of the German East as a paradise lost, inspiring people with a sense of the injustice which the Poles had inflicted and continued to inflict upon Germans.

Poland, in its turn, saw Germans as dominated by the all-present narrative of the war. The collective Polish memory put the aggression and occupation of two totalitarian powers, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, above all else. At the same time – Soviet crimes, Katyń, the shifting of the Polish-Russian border and the submission of the satellite states to Soviet Russia in the aftermath of 1945 – were all strictly censored themes. Thus, in the postwar period, Poles moved their entire attention, as well as their need to vent their anger for the wartime trauma, onto the Germans.

Public opinion generally came to identify Germany with Hitler's offences and with *Fascism*. The Commission of Inquiry on Nazi War Crimes was at first called Commission of Inquiry on German War Crimes. Although wartime experiences had obliterated every positive feature from the German image, there

were some voices, however rare, who called for an end to hatred. Not without reason, the Polish dramatist Leon Kruczkowski wrote that "one of Nazism's greatest crimes, in no way inferior to the extermination of millions of people, is to have for a certain period of time imposed on many European nations, Poland first and foremost, the conviction that such crimes were German, of all Germans, of the German nation en bloc."

Studies on Polish-German history occupy an area which, in both West German and Polish historiography, is tightly interconnected with politics. As Peter Bender has pointed out, the Poles have thought historically, the Germans ideologically. On both sides historical research has yielded topics for current politics.

Research conducted in West Germany in the area of *Ostforschung* had an ideological bias. Polish research was used to justify the centuries-old "Polishness" of the western and northern lands. In both cases, stereotyping the enemy significantly influenced political views and forced political sciences into a subsidiary position vis-à-vis the logic of national states.

Relations between socialist Poland and the German Democratic Republic were defined by a special schizophrasia. The treaty signed in 1950 at Zgorzelec under Soviet pressure, was amply exploited by the propaganda. While party representatives of both countries claimed that "we are marching together towards the bright Socialist future," the "fellow peoples" were hermetically divided by the "friendship border".

The fact that in these circumstances a *Message of Reconciliation* appeared is a clear demonstration of the farsightedness, wisdom and courage of its authors. The same courage which the politicians lacked.

**KLAUS ZIEMER**

German politologist, professor of political sciences, teaches at the German universities of Heidelberg, Essen, Munich, Mannheim, Trier, and at Warsaw's Stefan Wyszyński University. Has been head of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. His historical research studies concentrate principally on Polish contemporary history, the history of relations between Poland and Germany in the post-war period, and political system changes in eastern Europe.

IF WE WISH TO UNDERSTAND the Polish Bishops' Letter and the reactions to it in a historical context, we need to disengage ourselves from our perception of today's good relations between Germany and Poland. In the mid 1960s, there were no real relations even between the episcopal conferences of both countries – indeed there was conflict over the re-organization of ecclesiastical law which Cardinal Hlond had undertaken in August 1945 in the former German regions, now under Polish rule. Both sides competed at the Vatican, the one side to have these changes recognized, the other to prevent them.

Precisely because the prospect of a common understanding – let alone reconciliation – between Germany and Poland could be more or less ruled out at that time, Breslau's Archbishop Bolesław Kominek took on the situation and for quite some time made it a special concern of his. As a Pole from Upper Silesia, he was particularly sensitive to this issue. In late September 1965, the first talks came on the margin of the Vatican Council II in Rome between several Polish and German bishops, all of whom had received Pope Paul VI's encouragement as well.

In the consciousness of the German public, Poland was at this time hardly an issue. A discussion on World War II hardly took place, since Germans overwhelmingly perceived themselves as having been the war's principal victims.

The question of German blame for and during World War II, as also the ensuing consequences, was brought to a broader public for the first time by the so-called Eastern Memorandum of the Protestant Church of Germany, published on 1st October, 1965. Indeed, the Memorandum did not call for an express recognition of the Oder-Neisse border, but the question lay close to its line of reasoning. In Germany, the Memorandum triggered a highly emotional

and polarising discussion that went on for months, and which in the long term proved to have a cathartic effect.

After the publication of the GPC's Memorandum, Archbishop Kominek wrote a letter to the German Catholic bishops. Its contents were initially agreed amongst a handful of Polish bishops, Cardinal Wyszyński being the most prominent of these. From mid-October on, Kominek discussed the text with a handful of German bishops as well. On 18 November 1965, the letter was delivered to the German bishops.

It contained a lengthy presentation of Polish history and the history of relations between Germany and Poland, with a strong emphasis on the religious aspects. This history was outlined positively up to the 18th century. Only later, the letter argued, did a negative development come into the picture, reaching a terrible climax in World War II. Reference was also made to the horrendous loss of Polish lives, as was the loss, after the end of the war, of what had been Poland's eastern territories. The German opposition to Hitler and the suffering of the expellees were also discussed, yet the letter deemed it absolutely essential for the postwar Polish state to include the previously German regions. The letter culminated with the words, "We forgive and ask for forgiveness", and with an invitation to the German bishops to take part in the forthcoming celebration of the 1,000-year anniversary of the Polish church.

The Polish bishops were aware that with this letter they were taking a great political risk. After the German bishops had commented critically on the letter's historical passages, Kominek invoked this as a chance to effect a breakthrough that must be seized. The Polish bishops had strong hopes that their German counterparts would answer with equal boldness, and above all support a recognition of the current German-Polish border.

But this was exactly what the German bishops could and did not wish to acknowledge. They generally shied away from open statements on genuinely political issues, such as recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. Their restraint in this specific case was however also motivated by the interdependence between Church, ruling Union Parties and Expellees' associations: since this had been in place since the earliest days of the German Federal Republic, Church authorities were expected not to challenge it with any sudden political moves.

The Polish bishops were disappointed by the Germans' insufficient admission of guilt in their reply, particularly in view of the explicit forgiveness the Poles had extended in their own letter. A reason for this weak response may have been that most Germans at this time still believed that in the aftermath of World War II they had suffered much more from the Polish side than the Poles had suffered from German occupation during the war years.

In general, the German response to the Polish bishops' initiative indicates that relations with Poland were not a central issue for them at that particular

time. Precedence was given to maintaining the balance of power within the church and, as in the Protestant church, forestalling tensions.

Władysław Bartoszewski has brought the asymmetrical approach of both sides down to a common denominator: with their letter the Polish bishops moved "far ahead of the consciousness and moral maturity of Polish Catholics at that time". The reply of their German counterparts had on the other hand mirrored "in some fashion the moral maturity of the German Catholics".

The reaction in Poland to their letter went beyond the bishops' worst fears. The Party leadership launched a persecution of the Church not seen since Stalin's times. They were furious that the clerics had in this way breached the Party's monopoly on foreign policy, were pursuing a completely different policy towards Germany, and implicitly also questioning the Party's right to be the Polish nation's sole representative. The bishops' historical representation of German-Polish relations was radically at variance with the Polish Communist interpretation of history – leaving aside the questionability of any one single thesis. They spoke of a thousand year-long German threat, and exploited hatred and fear of Germany time and again just to bolster their own weak political legitimization at home.

The Party's attacks on the episcopate at first resonated with Polish Catholics as well, since the latter were entirely unprepared for the bishops' move. In November 1965, Archbishop Kominek tried to publish an article in the Catholic weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny* on the need for reconciliation with the Germans, but the censorship forbade it. 20 years after the end of the war, Polish society was still quite plainly unable to grasp that they must not only forgive, but also seek forgiveness.

In early 1966 more and more people began to understand that the current disputes had less to do with a defence of Polish interests against Germany than with an exacerbation of the old battle between Party and Church. More and more believers turned once again to church leadership, a fact which culminated with the demonstrative call "We forgive, we forgive", voiced by the crowd during a collective gathering with Cardinal Wyszyński in Tschenstochau / Częstochowa on 3 May 1966.

In Germany a critical minority of Catholic intellectuals felt uneasy about the German bishops' answer to the Letter of their Polish colleagues. Under the leadership of the publicist Walter Dirks, the "Bensberg Circle", so called after the venue where they usually convened, drew up a "Memorandum for Poland", published in March 1968. Compensation for Poles who had been victims of National Socialism was urged. Stress was placed on the responsibility the entire German nation bore vis-à-vis the Poles. Recognition of the Oder-Neisse border through Germany was also demanded, and so was the reorganization of the dioceses in the former German regions. Prominent signatories, such as the theologian Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, lent the Memorandum a wide but as of yet discreet resonance amongst the public at large.

In Poland the Memorandum was understood as the true German Catholic answer to their bishops' letter. Cardinal Wyszyński thanked the Bensberg Circle on behalf of the entire Polish episcopate for their Christian courage and their international farsightedness, saying that the evangelical spirit could be felt in every aspect of the Memorandum.

In the German media the Polish bishops' letter met with sympathetic interest, but did not create nearly as much sensation as the Protestant Church's Eastern Memorandum. The West German government and its supporting parties expressed themselves evasively. Nevertheless, the letter, and above all the GPC's Eastern Memorandum, contributed to the German public's growing acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border. After the formation of the Social-Liberal Coalition in 1969, Willy Brandt signed an agreement in December 1970, in which the Federal Republic recognized the current German-Polish border, pending a future peace treaty. In the long term, the symbolic power of his genuflection in front of the Warsaw ghetto monument proved even more important.

As early as autumn 1968, Willy Brandt had arranged for a fund to be established through the Foreign Ministry to train future Polish Catholic elites in the West, thus acceding to a request by Cardinal Wojtyła. The initiative was called "Activity for European Partnership", and though supported by a non-partisan consensus, it remained unknown to the general public. By 1990 it had raised up to 2 million German Marks for Polish grant holders.

In the GDR the bishops' exchange of letters led to significant tensions between the State and the Church. The East German leadership saw the epistles exclusively from a political point of view, and criticised the fact that they made no mention of the existence of the GDR and its recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. The Polish pastoral letter was deemed a consciously planned action to the detriment of the GDR. The East German bishops were charged implicitly with disloyalty to the state – and the Berlin Archbishop Bengsch explicitly so, in the course of an interview.

A working group at the State Secretariat for Church-related issues acknowledged the intentions of the Letter as going far beyond bilateral German-Polish relations. The Polish bishops thus aimed at eroding Communist ideology, and uniting Western and Eastern Europe through evolutionary ways

Thus the reactions in Germany to the letters were extremely varied. For so many, however, it was only after the Oder-Neisse border recognition and the reorganization of ecclesiastical law in the former German regions, that the real crux of the Polish bishops' letter became clear: i.e., the visionary message of a future German-Polish reconciliation, founded on an avowal by each party of its guilt, and the readiness to forgive the other. This message motivated individuals in both nations to seek a common dialogue and overcome enmity. This increasingly became a benchmark for ecclesiastical and political activity.

50 years on, the Letter's vision of a different relationship between Germans and Poles has to a large extent become a reality.



FOTO BISTUM MAINZ

KARL LEHMANN

German theologian, was ordained to the priesthood in 1963, elevated to bishop of Mainz in 1983, and to cardinal in 2001. President of the German Episcopal Conference 1987-2008, secretary at the first Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops in 1991, first president and representative of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences in 1993, member of the Pontifical Council of Social Communications in 2009. Promotes dialogue between Poles and Germans, is a central figure and point of reference for all those who since the 1960s have been engaged in the process of reconciliation between nations.

THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS between the Polish and German bishops, exactly 50 years ago – from 28 November to 5 December, 1965 – and thus at the close of the Vatican Council II, appears to us today as a true miracle. After Poland had suffered unimaginable cruelty at the hands of the National Socialist terror regime, and after Nazi Germany had gone so far as to conceive the annihilation of Poland, a spark was found in the hearts of Poles ahead of the 1,000 year Jubilee of their fatherland, which all adversities could not extinguish: the readiness to forgive.

This goes beyond the celebrations in Poland and Germany. Indeed, now that the Ordinary Bishops' Synod draws to a close, with the many bishops, priests, laymen and the religious gathered in Rome from all over the world, it is a powerful sign that the Polish embassy to the Holy See has also organized commemorative events and thus remembers, right here in Rome, at the heart of the world Church, the place where the first letter was delivered to its recipients. Here, as everywhere else, the word of forgiveness stands at the centre.

If we ask ourselves where such a highly improbable yet strong readiness for the word of forgiveness comes from, we can only point to the unconquerable conviction of the power of hope and belief, even in the midst of great inner conflict. It is precisely in the Polish people that this steadfastness and consciousness of belief survived, in spite of the horrific wounds they experienced.

When asked to offer some thoughts from the biblical and theological point of view, I almost immediately recalled a text by Saint Paul – the Apostle who quite specifically encouraged us to speak this word of reconciliation. It is his call in the place of Christ – indeed, exactly as Christ's authorized representative

– which in those times spoke to the quarreling parties: “Indeed, it was God who in Christ reconciled himself with the world, in that he did not charge human beings with their transgressions, and entrusted to us the word of reconciliation. *We are as envoys in place of Christ, and it is God who, through us, makes His appeal. We beg on Christ’s behalf: be you reconciled with God.*” (2 Cor 5, 19f.)

God himself took the initiative and by himself bridged the gulf that had opened between himself and human beings, but also among human beings themselves. This is only thanks to Christ’s personal engagement. Even though Christ was not to blame for the grievous and fatal enmity between God and men – as well as amongst men themselves – he was deeply struck by the irreconcilable overall situation and the negative results this was wreaking on the whole of humanity. For us he made himself to be sin (not the sinner, cf. 5, 21).

We can never silence this message of reconciliation. It belongs to the enduring centre and core of our belief. In Apostle Paul’s announcement, as also in the Apostle’s successors 50 years ago, and today as well, God’s word and Jesus Christ’s voice ring clear. And so we should note the form in which this sermon of reconciliation is couched. Nobody can impose forgiveness and dictate reconciliation. It remains a gift and an answer from belief. Thus the Apostle Paul also gives his sermon the form of the most urgent of pleas: “We beseech you on behalf of Christ: be you reconciled with God!” (5, 21) And so our weak word becomes, through Jesus Christ’s urgent plea, an exhortation we cannot avoid. It is equally an admonition, that we should at last take seriously what had already long ago been established in faith and in baptism. How else could Christianity, which preaches reconciliation to the world, be and remain credible, when this issue is being quarrelled over hopelessly in the Church’s innermost space?

Beyond the Polish-German reconciliation – which we commemorate with vast and deep gratitude – there are many other fields that are stirring us at present. Depending on their origin and country, they can be quite different. A central theme I would nevertheless pose to you:

We must even more than before commit ourselves in a body to a common European house in a spirit inspired by Christian belief. Indeed, we must fight for this. Together with the other churches we shall – above all at the centre of Europe – convey to our sceptical contemporaries the ever-young Gospel of Jesus Christ, that can also heal today’s wounds, and do it in a credible manner. At present, as Europe is overrun by a wave of refugees not seen since the days of World War II, we need more than ever to reflect on the Christian values which are the bounden duty of us all. We must remain at all times on the watch for xenophobic sentiment, as well as racism, and reflect on the successful reconciliation of peoples after World War II, so as to generate strength for the challenges we face today. In spite of many obstacles let us time and again spread the call for reconciliation, and dauntlessly implement it in the raw reality of the everyday.

Let us not waver. This depends on all of us. Saint Paul is aware of this danger, but knows also the opportunity offered by the present moment. Thus he calls to us clearsightedly and encouragingly: “In the time of grace I hear you, on the day of salvation I help you. *Now* the time of grace is here; *now* the day of salvation is here.” (Cor. 6, 2).

I regret that I cannot be with you personally, but I am strongly by your side in spirit and in prayer, and in faith, and beg for God’s rich blessings for all of us.

**HENRYK MUSZYŃSKI**

Polish Primate Emeritus of Poland, professor of theological sciences, known for his activism in promoting inter-religious dialogue between Poles and Jews, supports reconciliation between Poland and Germany. Ordained to the priesthood in 1957, was nominated bishop in 1985, metropolitan archbishop of Gniezno 1992-2010, Primate of Poland 2009-2010, vice-president of the Polish Episcopal Conference 1994-1999, delegate for the contacts with the Commission of Episcopal Conferences of the European Community 1999-2005. Has chaired the sessions of the Discussion Group with the Russian Orthodox Church.

ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY of the *Message of the Polish bishops to their German brothers in the pastoral office of Christ*, which falls on 18th November this year, Cardinal Karl Lehmann contributed a profound theological analysis of St. Paul's message, which states that God "has reconciled us to Him through Christ, and has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation." (Latin: "ministerium reconciliationis" - 2 Cor 5,18-19) Although the text of the Polish bishops does not refer directly to St. Paul's text, on the theological plane it undoubtedly represents the foundation for the work of reconciliation.

1. The religious and psychological context of the Vatican Council II

Although the *Message* also briefly refers to the thousand-year history of Christianity in Poland and in Germany, it's the phrase "We forgive and ask for forgiveness" that remains engraved in our peoples' memory. These words are the core and foundational nucleus of that document. The theological motives for the gesture of forgiveness are undoubtedly a groundwork, but in the case of the *Message*, ecclesiastical and pastoral reasons proved the decisive influence. And these boil down to two fundamental points.

The first was the close of the Vatican Council II, which the Polish bishops experienced in an atmosphere of collegial spirit and unity with the whole Church. The second was given by the particular time in the history of salvation, as well as immediate necessity, linked to the upcoming millennial anniversary of the Baptism of Poland, occurring in 1966.

Having experienced ecclesial communion and the spirit of true religious brotherhood with the bishops and conciliar fathers coming from all over the

world, the Polish bishops thought of inviting the other Council participants, in particular their nearest European neighbours, to the celebrations of the 1,000-year anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. This is clear from these words in the *Message*: "Right here, during the Council, we have realized that the imperative at this moment is for us to initiate a dialogue on a pastoral episcopal platform, without delay, so that we can get to know each other better."¹

These words clearly confirm that the bishops' urge to write the *Message* had arisen as a result of their pastoral preoccupation and religious consciousness that it is baptism that underpins the unity and communion of the entire Church, even at a collective and national level. The ecclesiastical and pastoral character of their initiative was further underlined by Karol Wojtyła, then archbishop of Krakow, and later cardinal. Soon after he came back from the Council, ever before Christmas 1965, he told his faithful: "There [at the Council] we experienced many Churches in the single Church of Christ (...) We are on the threshold of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland. (...) Living (...) with this unflagging unity of bishops, in communion with them at the Council, we decided to tell them about our 1,000-year anniversary of Christianity, our great Baptism Jubilee; and to do this in the simplest way, in a Christian manner, with that community spirit which unites us to them and to all men."²

A particular problem arose in relation to the German episcopal brothers. "We have looked also to our nearest geographical neighbour," said Archbishop Wojtyła, "whom we have been divided from historically as a result of many things (and united, too, since what divides in some ways also unites), and we have thought with great pain – and it has indeed been painful both to mind and heart – how we should speak about our Millennium to this nearest Western neighbour of ours, to those German Catholic shepherds, the German bishops."³ Indeed, it was hard to celebrate such an important historical event as if nothing had ever happened between us – without a reconciliation that would imply a mutual forgiveness.

The awareness of the crimes, wrongs and injustices dating back to the war made the issue of forgiveness look particularly sensitive in relation to Germany. The widespread sentiment was that the Germans had to ask us for forgiveness, not the other way round. Many Poles at that time simply could not bring themselves to formulate a request for forgiveness. "There are people," said Archbishop Wojtyła, "who would probably want us to declare our hatred. Dear friends, after one thousand years of Christianity in Poland, (...) could we utter such a thing? Maybe there are people who would wish us to tell them: you were and are our enemies. I ask myself: as we move toward the Millennium of

1. *Orędzie biskupów polskich do ich niemieckich braci w Chrystusowym urzędzie pasterskim*, in: BASIL KERSKI, TOMASZ KYCIA, ROBERT ŻUREK *Przebaczymy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, Olsztyn 2006, p. 217.

2. KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Kazanie w katedrze na Wawelu*, 25 grudnia 1965r., in: *Odnowa Kościoła i świata. Refleksje soborowe*, (ed.) P. Andrzej Dobrzyński, Kraków-Rzym, 2011, p. 294.

3. *Ibidem*, pp. 294-295.

our baptism, of our welcome to Christ, could we, we Polish bishops, have said something like that?"

"What did we say? This: Dear brothers in Christ, German bishops, down the centuries, and especially in recent times, your nation has committed many injustices against us. [...] We have remembered them, we have described these injustices, including Auschwitz, including the last war's six million victims, without hiding anything and without playing anything down. We remembered them so that they would be able to remember them."⁴

On 5 December, before the end of the Council, the German bishops responded to the Polish bishops' gesture of forgiveness. "With brotherly respect we reach out for your outstretched hands, and we too ask you to forget, indeed, to forgive us. May the God of peace, through the intercession of *Regina Pacis*, make sure that the spectre of hate never again parts our hands."⁵

Even in the eyes of the German representatives, which included the well-known Dr. Winfried Lipscher, the answer of the German bishops to the Polish bishops' letter appeared to be "evasive and anything but satisfactory".⁶

Alas, it was not only the German bishops, who were denied the right to travel to Poland, but Pope Paul VI himself who could not, for political reasons, show any readiness in welcoming the Polish bishops' invitation. In spite of the invitation, they never took part in the Millennium celebrations at Jasna Góra. Empty as well, and covered in flowers, remained the symbolic throne of the Pope whom today we know as Paul VI the Blessed.

It remains unclear what influence Pope Paul VI the Blessed himself had on the invitation to the German bishops to attend the Millennium celebration. According to Cezary Gawryś, he was indeed the one who, on being invited to attend, said: "first make a gesture to the Germans."⁷ The phrase in the *Message*, "No polemics, no more cold war, but rather the beginning of a dialogue, which both the Council and Pope Paul VI today desire for all places,"⁸ would seem to confirm the credibility of this thesis.

2. The Millennium of the Baptism of Poland, celebrated with the eloquent testimony of universality, unity and ecclesial communion

From the earliest Christian times, baptism has been – and so it will be forever – the principal source of unity and communion in a religious and theological perspective. The Polish bishops, granting their forgiveness and stretching out their hands to the German bishops, were fully aware that forgiveness is a sign of the Christian proof of faith. In the *Message* they wrote: "Only if you, German Bishops

4. *Ibidem*, pp. 294-295.

5. BASIL KERSKI, TOMASZ KYCIA, ROBERT ŻUREK, *Przebaczymy i prosimy o przebaczenie*, p. 223.

6. ADAM KRZEMIŃSKI, WINFRIED LIPSCHER, RENATE MARSCH-POTOCKA, CEZARY GAWRYŚ, ZBIGNIEW NOSOWSKI, *Nie ma kropki w pojednaniu [dyskusja]*, in: "Więź" nr 3(2015), p. 58.

7. *Ibidem*, p. 62.

8. KERSKI, KYCIA, ŻUREK, *op. cit.*, p. 217

and Council Fathers, fraternally receive these outstretched hands, can we celebrate our Millennium with a clear conscience and in a wholly Christian manner." They also expressed their gratitude to their German Protestant brothers, who at that time were equally trying to find a solution to this problem.⁹

Reconciliation and forgiveness are strictly religious and theological concepts, unknown in Communist terminology. This is why the gesture of the Polish bishops provoked the Communist authorities to initiate an unimaginable campaign against the bishops, and in particular against Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and the entire Catholic Church. As a result of the propaganda in the Communist-controlled media, most Poles only got to know about the contents of the *Message* through bits and pieces of declarations appearing in the daily press. Thus it became difficult, if not downright impossible, for the public at large to accept the Polish bishops' gesture of reconciliation. Many priests even nursed grave misgivings regarding the reasoning behind the Polish bishops' gesture, asking themselves why they must ask the Germans for forgiveness, when it should have been the other way round.

Cardinal Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, seized the occasion of the Millennium celebrations at Jasna Góra on 3 May, 1966. In the first place, he explained to the teeming crowds at Jasna Góra the meaning of this important gesture of Christian forgiveness. He also reminded them of the fact that forgiveness does not mean, quite naturally, also to forget, but that on the other hand you can't build the future on hatred, violence and a desire for vengeance. That forgiveness is a fundamental condition for reconciliation. We Christians are, as such, ready to forgive, because God was the first to forgive us our sins, and so He expects us to take the first step towards our fellow men (the exact translation of the German expression *wir gewähren und bitten um Vergebung* can be rendered as "we grant forgiveness and ask for forgiveness" – this formula was often used by Archbishop Wojtyła.)

Taking advantage of the solemn and religious atmosphere, the Primate dared ask the teeming crowds this question: "Do you forgive?" The faithful, on behalf of the entire nation, answered firmly: "We do forgive".¹⁰ By asking this question, the cardinal summoned up an extraordinary, twofold courage: first, he took sides against the official opinion, which then was widespread among the people, thus eliciting all the more the enmity of the Communist authorities, given that for them his gesture was tantamount to betrayal. In the second place, he ran the risk of getting no answer from the crowd of faithful standing at the feet of Jasna Góra. In that moment, Cardinal Wyszyński truly proved himself the spiritual guide and father of the nation, he who holds real authority over the souls of men.

3. The testimony of mutual rapprochement and reconciliation between Poles and Germans after the exchange of letters

The vision of the Polish bishops was farsighted and prophetic. A reconciliation that implies forgiveness is not, however, a question of public statements and documents, but an inner act and a process that endures in time. In a religious sense, it has a threefold dimension – it includes reconciliation with God, with ourselves and with our fellow men. As such, time is required, and patience first of all. It is a process that reaches fulfillment slowly. In addition, it cannot be limited exclusively to bishops and clergy. It includes the whole Church, and gathers in the great masses of the faithful.

Catholic laymen also played an important role in working on and achieving rapprochement and reconciliation. In this context, let us recall two important initiatives which went far in fostering a rapprochement and a coming to fullness of the reconciliation process: e.g., the so-called *Eastern Memorandum* of the German Evangelical Church of 1965, and the *Memorandum of the Catholic Laymen of Bensberg* of March 1968. The second of these was endorsed by 160 signatories, all of them important representatives of German Catholicism, including the professor Father Joseph Ratzinger, Prof. Karl Rahner, and the abovementioned lay theologian Dr. Winfried Lipscher.

Thanking the *Memorandum's* signatories with sincere and cordial words, Cardinal Wyszyński stressed the fact that in that *Memorandum* he saw the realization of the conciliar constitution "Gaudium et Spes", and the true spirit of the Gospels.¹¹

Cardinal Bolesław Kominek expressed this with even greater force. Thanking the *Memorandum's* signatories – as witnessed by Dr. Lipscher – he declared: "You are the fullest and most authentic answer to our Letter. This was the answer we wanted to receive from the German bishops, and we did not receive it." As a sign of gratitude, he grasped the cross of Cardinal Bertram, who had been a parish priest in Breslau during the war, and said: "Today I have the courage to carry this cross, for the first time in my life [...]. It is for you, because you have responded so wonderfully to our initiative."¹²

The first declarations made by bishops and faithful were followed by concrete gestures of outreach and collaboration, first on the part of the bishops, then by the politicians. In 1973, Stefan Wyszyński, cardinal of Gniezno, made a visit to Cardinal Julius Döpfner, then President of the German Episcopal Conference. In September 20-25, 1978, there followed an official visit by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and Karol Wojtyła, and by Archbishop Antoni Baraniak, to the German bishops.

The gestures coming from the politicians were equally eloquent. In particular, Chancellor Willy Brandt, who knelt in front of the monument of the

9. *Ibidem*, p. 218.

10. Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński. *Biografia w fotografiach*, Orchard Lake-Michigan 1969, p. 247.

11. *Pojednanie i polityka. Polsko-niemieckie inicjatywy pojednania w latach sześćdziesiątych XX wieku a polityka odprężenia*, (red.) FRIEDHELM BOLL, WIESŁAW J. WYSOCKI, KLAUS ZIEMER, Warszawa 2010, p. 109.

12. KRZEMIŃSKI, LIPSCHER, MARSCH-POTOCKA, GAWRYS, NOSOWSKI, *op. cit.*, in: "Więź" nr 3(2015), pp. 58-59.

Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, on 7 December, 1970, or Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Helmut Kohl who exchanged a sign of peace during the mass at Krzyżowa/Kreisau on 12 November 1989. Utterly unforgettable, too, is the meeting between John Paul II and Chancellor Kohl at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on 23 June 1996, after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

To complete the picture, let me evoke at least a few other eloquent acts of outreach and rapprochement by Polish and German bishops.

In 1978 the so-called Polish and German Bishops' Contact Group was set up, headed by Archbishop Jerzy Stroba and Bishop Franz Hengsbach. For eleven years, from 1994 to 2005, I acted as co-president of this group on behalf of the Polish Episcopate. The German side was led by Bishop Josef Homeyer, followed by Walter Kasper (now cardinal), Bishop Franz Kamphaus and Reinhard Max (now cardinal). Since 2005, the Polish side has been headed by the archbishop of Katowice Wiktor Skworec, and the Germans by the Archbishop of Bamberg Ludwig Schick.

An important step towards rapprochement is the 1995 Joint Letter of the German and Polish episcopates, drawn up by the abovementioned Contact Group to mark the 30th anniversary of the exchange of letters of 1965, as well as the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. In this document that for the first time an attempt was made to fully comprehend what the Germans were apologizing for, and what the Poles: "The criminal aggression of the German National Socialists, and the innumerable wrongs the Germans then inflicted on the Poles, is clear to us all. In this prayer we also include the wrongs to which the Poles subjected many Germans, as a result of exile and the loss of native lands imposed by the victors."¹³

Eloquent proof of the continuing process of outreach and reconciliation is the two episcopates' next letter, written in 2005, to mark the 40th anniversary of the exchange of letters, in which the bishops acknowledge the fact that the moving and prophetic words "We forgive and ask for forgiveness" have exerted a deep influence on history.¹⁴

All the most important historical moments, such as the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, and then the 50th anniversary of the exchange of letters, which is due this year, 2015, have been marked by new joint documents coming from the two episcopates. The 2009 document was signed on the Polish side by Archbishop Jozef Michalik, and by Archbishop Robert Zollitsch on the German side.

The 50th anniversary of the exchange of letters will be marked by a joint document, as well as a solemn joint ceremony conducted by the representatives of both episcopates at Jasna Góra, on the feast of Christ the King, on 22 November 2015.

13. *Wspólne słowo polskich i niemieckich biskupów z okazji 30. rocznicy wymiany listów (1965-1995)* nr 9, in: "Więź" nr 5(1996), p. 92.

14. Cfr. *Wspólne oświadczenie Konferencji Episkopatów Polski i Niemiec z okazji 40. rocznicy wymiany listów między oboma Episkopatami w roku 1965*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 5.8-9.

During the last fifty years there has been significant progress in the field of outreach and collaboration between the episcopates and the Churches of Poland and Germany. Today, half a century later, we are living in a new, for the most part pacified reality, and inside the common architecture of the European Union. Together we endeavour also to remain abreast of the new challenges our Churches need to confront: a growing secularization and the defence of fundamental Christian values, such as the inalienable dignity of human life from conception to natural death, the stability of marriage and family, and a host of others.

The foundational value of the Church will forever be life according to the Gospel and the testimony of faith. In spite of the fact that, as Pope Francis declared in the bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, the word 'forgiveness' "in some cases [...] seems to have disappeared. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. [...] The time has come again for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy. [...] Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope."¹⁵

15. FRANCIS, *Misericordiae vultus* n. 10, in: "L'Osservatore Romano" 5 (2015), p. 8.



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁAZKA

DIETER BINGEN

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WITH THE EXCHANGE of letters between the Polish and German bishops at the end of Vatican II – which contained the celebrated phrase in the Polish letter: “We grant forgiveness and ask for forgiveness” – the Polish bishops took a big risk and showed all their courage. The individuals and movements (Solidarność) that chose to go down the path towards an understanding between Germans and Poles in those years and decades, needed just these qualities. German Chancellor Willy Brandt’s unusual and bold gesture, with its generally religious connotations, was the symbol of the historical and moral dimension of a correct understanding of Germany’s relations with Poland. His genuflection before the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto insurgents became a further icon of the idea of reconciliation. Nevertheless, the issue of “reconciliation” proved difficult over time. Who should or could be reconciled with whom? German Democrats with Polish Communists? The initiatives taken by the Christian churches in the GDR over entire decades to reach an understanding with the Poles (Günter Särchen, Anna Morawska Seminar in Magdeburg, and others) had the hardest time of all.

The solidarity between many Germans and Poles, triggered by the great Parcel Campaign of the early 1980s, promoted a change in how Polish society viewed (West) Germans. The opposition in Poland initiated a fundamental discussion on Polish-German relations and the place both neighbours would have in a Europe forged with the shared values of freedom and democracy. In this way they pioneered a new Polish policy vis-à-vis Germany. Long before the birth of any organized political opposition, it was the Catholic intelligentsia with their clubs (KIK), and Catholic print media such as “Tygodnik Powszechny”, “Znak” and “Więź”, that set the pace in spreading an unbiased image of Germany.

Among the rare felicitous cases of history, we include the fact that after a century of totalitarian regimes, Germans and Poles managed to become the principal cre-

ators and beneficiaries of this extraordinary event. At a high level of abstraction, the two nations shared not only a coincident sentiment, but also a communion of ideals and visions.

The extraordinary nature of what came to pass is symbolized by the “places of memory” shared by Europeans today, such as the *Solidarność* independence movement between 1980 and 1989, and the demolition of the Berlin Wall on 9 November, 1989. The fall of the Communist regimes in Europe, the universal acceptance of independent democratic systems for all, and the related factor of the collapse of the ideological blocs then opposing each other in Europe, have repositioned Germany and a reborn Poland within a new system of neighbourly relations. Surrounded by friends: this is how the new formula, expressing this new relationship, sounded. And it is a condition which, throughout the modern history of the two countries, first appeared at that time. The German Federal Republic and Poland now act as the connecting link along the Oder-Neisse line – i.e., the old political frontier between Eastern and Western Europe. Only by harmonizing mutual interests on fundamental issues concerning integration, and by opening the borders, was it possible to expand the European community space eastwards. Without an agreement between Germany and Poland the expansion of the European Union would have remained a pipe dream.

The general path, insofar as it was meant to lead in the direction of reconciliation and understanding, was based on remembrance and comprehension, on a change in perspective and open discussion. To this end both nations needed individuals who would epitomize this. Let me here present two figures from this circle:

Markus Meckel (b. 1952) completed theological studies in Naumburg and Berlin between 1971 and 1978. From 1980 to 1988 he took over the Vicariate and Evangelical rectory in Wipperow / Müritzt, Mecklenburg. In the 1970s he initiated political activities in opposition to the regime, and participated in numberless initiatives and attempts to interconnect the political groups. He was co-founder of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the GDR, and this party's representative at the Central Round Table. From April to June 1990 he was acting chairman of SPD-Ost, member of the GDR's only democratically elected People's Chamber (March-October 1990), and was the GDR's only democratically legitimized – as well as its last – Minister of Foreign Affairs. From 1990 to 2009 Meckel was a Bundestag parliamentarian, and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee; deputy member of the EU Committee; chairman of the German-Polish parliamentary Group of the German Bundestag (1994-2009). Between 2004 and 2008 he was chairman of the Political Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Since 12 October, 2013, Markus Meckel has been President of the German War Graves Commission. This association was established in 1919, and on behalf of the Federal Government presently cares for the German war dead abroad, maintaining 832 war grave sites totalling 2.7 million dead in 45 states. With his regular and extra-curricular educational training work with young people, he pursues aims of peace education and helps shape a culture of remembrance and commemoration in Germany and throughout Europe.

Markus Meckel holds many other functions and memberships, all of which testify to his engagement in forging German-Polish understanding. Thus he is co-chairman of the board of the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation (SdpZ), chairman of the “Poland Discussion Circle” of the German Society for Foreign Policy (DGAP) and of the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation (DGAP), chairman of the Association for the Promotion of the Museum of Jewish History in Poland (JgiP), on the Board of Trustees of the European “Memory and Solidarity” Network, and on the Board of Trustees of the German-Polish Society.

Robert Traba, was born in 1958 in the Masurian town of Węgorzewo / Angerburg, and studied at Copernicus University in Toruń / Thorn. He is founder and chairman of the Borussian Cultural Community in Olsztyn / Allenstein, and also editor of the quarterly review “Borussia”. He began his scientific activities in the research centre of the Polish Historical Society in Olsztyn / Allenstein. 1995-2003 Traba was a scientific collaborator at the German Historical Institute of Warsaw, and at the University of Warsaw (2001-2005). Traba is Professor at the Polish Science Academy's Institute for Political Studies; and, since 2006, Director of the Polish Science Academy's Centre for Historical Research, and honorary professor at the Free University of Berlin. He is co-chairman of the German-Polish Schoolbook Commission, and member of many Polish and international scientific committees, chairing amongst others the Foundation for German-Polish Co-operation. He is deputy chairperson of the International Advisory Board of the Topography of Terror Foundation. Absolutely paradigmatic of Traba's scientific and public interest are his scientific and publishing activities in the bilingual multi-volume publication project “German-Polish Places of Remembrance”.

Markus Meckel and Robert Traba both make significant contributions to a mutual understanding between Germans and Poles. Their biographies outline the different general conditions for, possibilities of, and obstacles to, German-Polish rapprochement. What is common to both is an openness to the Other, with curiosity, boldness, frontier-breaching, conscience and responsibility as guiding principles.

These are the principles which have traced the path for Germans and Poles.

If we discuss these issues today, we need to think of a young generation, for whom that exchange of letters, and even the history of 20 or 30 years ago, are a grey prehistory beyond their horizon of personal experience. Without a savvy and open-minded pedagogy of history that meets the young on the home turf of their present reality, the significance of those letters for the destiny of Germans and Poles after World War II could hardly be conveyed, nor would it give a sense of the path that led to their historic understanding. Those born later, i.e., the second and third generations, carry no guilt. Yet, it is precisely the younger generation that has to take on a collective inheritance – whether accepted or denied – and shoulders a collective responsibility carried by the testimony of the bold, those who confirm that it is worth safeguarding decency (Władysław Bartoszewski), and being curious and open towards the Other. And that one should, when called for, display courage so as to thwart despondency, cowardice and opportunism. Europe needs this today.

**MARKUS MECKEL**

A German politician and evangelical pastor. From the early 1970s onward was engaged in the GDR in political opposition activities against the Communist regime. One of the founders in 1989 of the German Social Democratic Party (SDP). Minister of Foreign Affairs of the GDR in 1990. Chairman of the German Commission of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly 1998-2006, vice-president of NATO's Parliamentary Commission. Founder and president of the Federal Council of the Foundation of Research on the SED Dictatorship, member of the Board of Directors of the European Network of Memory and Solidarity (ENRS). His interests lie in foreign policy in support of democracy.

FIRST OF ALL I would like to thank you for this invitation. It is already remarkable that you have invited me, as a German and a Protestant, to this conference in Rome. I am most grateful for this!

The letter of the Polish bishops to their German counterparts 50 years ago came as a big bang at that time, as a historic event whose significance remains unbroken to this day. Historically, it is a companion to the Eastern Memorandum of the Evangelical Churches of Germany, which became public a few weeks before the Letter. Indeed, we are dealing here with a double big bang, which at that time shook people in both countries. Cardinal Kominek of Breslau, the actual initiator and author of the Letter, later acknowledged the fact that the Memorandum, which he had studied thoroughly, was a strong encouragement to his own initiative. It contributed significantly to the fervent hope that the German Catholic bishops would react with equal courage and clarity – yet we know that those hopes were disappointed. The Catholic church in Germany was then too strongly bound to the Adenauer government, which showed no readiness to make concessions regarding the border issue. So later, too, Richard von Weizsäcker, himself involved in the drafting of the Eastern Memorandum, recognized that he and his fellow campaigners had found the letter of the Catholic bishops a “forceful answer to our statement”. However, for the Catholic bishops they were in some ways “the false ones”. There had rather been hopes for a clear word from the German Catholics.

Both the Eastern Memorandum and the Letter had much in common: indeed, both contradicted the general attitude in their countries at that time – in Communist Poland as well as in the Federal Republic of Germany. In Western Germany, the Memorandum touched a taboo, a self-deception. At that time the

basic attitude amongst the German people was still strongly influenced by the view that in 1945 Germany had been above all a victim, and that the loss of its eastern territories was an injustice. The self-deception lay in feeding the belief that the Oder-Neisse border was temporary. In his report to the Synod in November 1965, the bishop of Hanover Hanns Lilje described it in the following terms: “Nearly three quarters of the letters I receive every day are a protest against this Memorandum. (...) This belongs to the secret things of German mentality today. There are three things you cannot mention to the normal German man: you can’t talk to him about the Jews, you can’t talk to him about 20 July 1944, and you can’t talk to him about the Capitulation of 1945. This is a weakness which in the long run is not worthy of a people like ours.” These were Bishop Lilje’s words in 1965.

Both the Memorandum and the Letter were both de facto criticism of the authorities at that time. This naturally turned out to be most serious in Poland. Gomulka felt attacked in his monopoly over foreign policy; indeed, he interpreted the letter as a foreign policy signal – and in this sense was not entirely off the mark. Later he also glimpsed the chance of setting the unprepared Polish people, for whom the letter was also difficult to accept, against their church. Yet in this he was ultimately unsuccessful.

In Germany, criticism of the Memorandum was equally hefty. However, since the Federal Republic was a democratic land, such discussions were possible there. But here, too, it was always a question of “betraying the national interest”. The church was frequently denied the legitimacy to father such political messages. The Federation of Expellees was up in arms against the Memorandum and the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. For it must be clear that it took 20 more years until President Richard von Weizsäcker was able to convey to the German people that the end of the war in 1945 had in fact been a liberation!

The authors of the Memorandum, along with many leading church figures, strongly committed themselves to defending this document against all attacks. Ludwig Raiser, a senior author, and earlier one of the authors of the “Tübingen Memorandum”, spoke of “realism as a duty in Germany politics” which the churches urged people to accept.

There had already in earlier years been various initiatives in German society to re-start the stalled relationship with Poland. In 1964 there was an initial Pax Christi pilgrimage to Poland. In that same year, a small group of young Protestants from the GDR, organized by “Aktion Sühnezeichen” started in 1958 by Lothar Kreyszig, tried to travel to Auschwitz. But the journey was held up by the Polish authorities, and only allowed to go ahead the following year. Stanisław Stomma and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, both members of the Snak-Group in the Sejm, got in touch with the German initiators, thus starting up small communication networks. But it was the Bensberg Circle that became crucial to the Polish Catholic Church. The 1968 declaration by this group of Catholic intellec-

tuals was then seen in Poland as the real answer to the letter of the Catholic bishops – even though it had not been authored by the official representatives of the German Catholics...

It was only with the Social-Liberal coalition victory at the polls in Bonn that these initiatives for social reconciliation began to have a political effect. Willy Brandt, with whom I spoke about this in 1991, told me that in West German society the Memorandum had created a highly significant majority support for his new Ostpolitik and for the 1970 Treaty of Warsaw.

Willy Brandt’s policies were welcomed by many people in the GDR as well. Let us remember how GDR citizens cheered him in Erfurt. Thanks to his policies, the frontier became more permeable, and solidarity between East and West Germans was strengthened through all sorts of encounters – thus kickstarting their reconciliation process with the Eastern neighbours, in particular with Poland. Willy Brandt’s genuflection brought a deep awareness, especially in the churches of the GDR: he’s kneeling for us, too!

Indeed, his new Ostpolitik could only be pushed through with a strong political conflict at home. All the more do we need to acknowledge that for this reconciliation process, this Chancellor was ready to put his political existence on the line!

In the wake of the Warsaw Treaty of 1970, there were different social activities and attempts to breathe life into it. In the Federal Republic “German-Polish Societies” were founded, and these often became the social vehicles for the newly agreed twinning of cities. Let us mention the twinning of Bremen and Gdansk as one of the first and most important. In 1972, a schoolbook commission began work to harmonize the two countries’ highly conflicting historical interpretations. Poles were deeply impressed by West Germans’ widespread solidarity towards them as a people and towards the independent labour union Solidarność after the imposition of martial law in 1981. In Poland it was also to a large extent the opposition gathering around “Solidarność” that looked to reconciliation with Germany. Let us remember Jan Jozef Lipski’s *Two Fatherlands – Two Patriotisms. Observations on National Megalomania and Xenophobia amongst Poles*, a book published in 1981, and still worth reading today.

With the victory of freedom and democracy in Central Europe it became possible in 1989-90 to harvest the fruits of this long process. Everybody remembers the photo in which Helmut Kohl and Tadeusz Mazowiecki exchange a gesture of reconciliation in Kreisau, right after the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, this embrace was part of the Catholic mass – more hope than political fact. Helmut Kohl was in no way ready then to recognize the border quickly and without delay. In the year before the parliamentary elections, he had the expellees in mind, and had no wish to lose their vote. Thus he attempted to shift the border decision as far into the background as possible, just as the Polish government under Mazowiecki was pushing instead for a speedy recognition of it.

With the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989-1990 and the question of German unity, Kohl's approach convinced me, too, that the border issue needed to be settled permanently. As late as December 1989, we – i.e., the newly founded Social Democratic Party of the GDR – stressed the necessity of reaching a prompt, unconditional and permanent recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. This stance was then specifically affirmed by the freely elected People's Chamber of the GDR in its declaration of 12 April, 1990. In it, we East Germans shouldered the poignant responsibility we had inherited from our past, a fact which the German Socialist Unity Party had denied for decades.

As the GDR's Foreign Minister, I supported Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki's suggestion that Poland and the two German states engage in three-way talks to draw up and sign a treaty on the border question, and have this ratified by the new all-German Parliament immediately after unification. On my initiative we got these talks going at the State Secretary level, but they were finally scotched by Chancellor Kohl. As the border treaty was at last coming into being following German unification, he thus once again postponed its ratification in the Parliament to after the elections, speaking of his country's recognition of the border as a "price for German unification". In my view his perspective was completely inappropriate, given that this border was after all a consequence of World War II and German crimes. In my view, it was also important at that time that we underline this fact clearly, for only thus would a unified German state earn the necessary outside trust. By delaying a timely recognition of the border issue, Germany denied Poland – and in particular denied its Prime Minister, who had done so much for reconciliation between the two countries – the necessary solidarity in difficult years. At that time I experienced this with great pain and anger.

Fortunately, our misgivings were not fulfilled later on. What came true was the experience that only borders truly recognized can become permeable as well. On this path we have moved far ahead. After 1991, Helmut Kohl obtained great credit vis-à-vis the Poles by becoming the committed advocate for a future European Union membership for Poland and the other new democracies.

Today Germany and Poland are not only both democratic states and partners in Europe and Nato. The reliable relations between them are firmly anchored in each of these two societies. Mutual trust has grown ever deeper. We know on both sides of the border that building a free Europe is our shared challenge. On the way there, the Eastern Memorandum of the German Evangelical Churches and the Letter of the Polish bishops in 1965 have proved an increasingly solid foundation for the reconciliation process.

Nowadays the example of the reconciliation between Germany and Poland is often pointed out internationally; indeed, it is seen as a model process. Given our present partnership in Europe, the spirit of this past calls on us today to tackle our upcoming problems. This is especially true today for the migrant

question. "Solidarność" is a Polish word known all over the world: a word that has multiple theological and also political dimensions. It would be a radical experience if the churches of both countries were able today to give their governments a guiding word on this theme, basing it on the perspective of solidarity!

Thank you!

**ROBERT TRABA**

Polish historian, professor at the Institute of Political Science of Poland's Academy of Sciences. Co-founder of the cultural movement "Borussia", and one of the chief editors of the "Borussia" review, both of which are engaged in promoting dialogue between people of different backgrounds, culture and religion. Co-director of the Joint Polish-German Commission for the Revision of History and Geography Schoolbooks, Director of the Centre of Historical Research at Poland's Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 2006. Member of the Board of the Foundation for Collaboration between Poland and Germany, member of the Board and a co-chairman of the International Committee of the Foundation "Topography of Terror".

MY THOUGHTS TODAY on the Polish bishops' message of 1965 will deal not so much with the history, as with the memory – more precisely with the history of how Poles and Germans remember the phrase, "we forgive and ask for forgiveness" contained in that Letter. Do we remember? And how do we remember? How do we translate the sense of our memory into the practice of Polish-German and European collaboration? When I gaze across this conference room, where we are all discussing together, and listen to the other speakers' voices, I find even here – in a "neutral" territory from the point of view of nationality, such as the Vatican – the thesis confirmed that we remember only asymmetrically – every national community usually remembers its "own" places of memory, the battles won, the illustrious figures, the extraordinary events. This happens even when it is the representatives of the universal Church in its totality that are speaking. If some of you went today to leaf through the schoolbooks of German high schools, you wouldn't find a single word on the bishops' Letter. In those books the German equivalent of reconciliation is... German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling five years later, in 1970, in front of the Monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Conversely, the episode linked to the Letter is studied in Polish schools, though it has yet to enter the "living" memory of the Polish people. Half a century after that celebrated phrase, "we forgive and ask for forgiveness", can we today consider it a mere relic of a tradition learned and stored in the deeper layers of Polish memory and of a (limited) circle of German friends of theirs? Today, only a few days from the anniversary of the writing of that letter, this question makes extremely good sense.

I will then try to address this issue, recalling some factual events which are important in aiding us to understand the mechanisms that regulate collective memory and its loss.

First of all, the bishops' Letter was written in a bad moment, when it could not be transformed into a significant event that would take root in both German and Polish memory. Why? In the late 1960s, Poland was going through a phase of ideologization and re-nationalization of its history, a fact complicated by the country's slide into an economic crisis. At the opposite end stood West Germany, with its *Wirtschaftswunder*, its economic miracle. The so-called Auschwitz trials came as a shock, but they did for the first time attract widespread attention to this question, and most importantly to the crimes committed during the Holocaust. In effect, it was only Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* – the recognition that the border coincided with the Oder-Neisse line – and the liberalization of the Polish Communist system, that ushered in a new space for dialogue between Poland and Germany. And slowly the society also came to feel the need for a dialogue on history. Its horizon was, indeed, defined by Reconciliation. But if Germany looked to the Franco-German model, in Poland it was above all the Letter that was taken as an example by the growing democratic opposition – a fact for which you, too, Mr Ambassador, have your undisputed merits. A strong intellectual impulse also came from Polish emigré circles in Paris. The final act in this process was undoubtedly the *Solidarność* peaceful movement, the first on this scale in Europe, which pioneered, amongst other things, the idea of revolution based on reconciliation.

In this context, we cannot forget the manifesto of the new understanding in Poland and its relations with its Western neighbour, Jan Józef Lipski's *Two Fatherlands, Two Patriotisms*. Lipski was a socialist in line with the pre-war ethos, and he wrote about Polish-German reconciliation drawing inspiration directly from the Polish bishops' message. The essence of this new viewpoint was years later synthesized in the best of ways by Stanisław Somma, another important Catholic intellectual and precursor of the Polish-German dialogue: "Man stands before the nation with his conscience – as an individual. Only later does he create a society, not vice-versa. And so I believe that the persons who have conscience must let themselves be guided by it. This is how Tadeusz Mazowiecki viewed it: he believed that a Christian ethic must also shape international relations."

The recently expired Władysław Bartoszewski, the symbol of anti-communist opposition and of a dialogue between Poles, Germans and Jews, was convinced that it was precisely *Solidarność* and martial law that finally got Germany seriously interested in Poland – thus facilitating a return to the bishops' letter as well.

A symbolic *fnis coronat opus* to the Letter's appeal for a shared Polish and German memory, was the reconciliation mass held in Krzyżowa on 9 November, 1989, attended by both Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Helmut Kohl. However, this unscripted symbol of reconciliation was again unlucky, because on that same

day an unprecedented event took place: the Berlin Wall began to crumble. The historic fallout of that event triggered a blizzard in the media which still today darkens the extraordinariness of the Reconciliation between an independent Poland and a unified Germany.

And so is there still the possibility – to go back to my initial question – that the message "we forgive and ask for forgiveness" can become a less divided/asymmetrical locus for a living memory in Poland and Germany?

Yes. And three circumstances concur to this fact. In the first place, the universal mechanism which regulates the process of remembrance and oblivion; just now, when the generation that experienced the war is disappearing, we are seeing impressive work done on the memory of single individuals, and conveying this to the generation of our grandchildren – the last link, at the sociological level, of the handing down of tradition.

Secondly, education in Poland: at first overshadowed by ideology, then by the over-ingenuous myth of reconciliation as fostered by the second generation (my own) – the generation of those who became vicarious witnesses of the trauma undergone by their parents. This has unleashed a need to explain and re-assess the past of the war years. In the 1990s, I suggested to a German journalist – then at the outset of her career, now a prominent figure – she find other concepts other than Reconciliation to possibly define how Poles and Germans relate to the past. It was quite naïve to suppose that the tragic past could be overcome just like that. No, even psychologists confirm that the past is sifted through single individuals down three successive generations – the so-called century of memory (compare with World wars I and II).

We cannot however forget – and here I come to my third point – that memory lives publicly only when we indeed allow it to live in a public space. Only then – somewhat paradoxically, given its nature – can memory have a future! It seems to me that today's conference is a dynamic wheel that propels "living" memory processes of "the message of the Polish bishops to their German brothers..." And this in a context that is no longer only Polish and German, but goes beyond that, because reconciliation is universal. As the famous Polish author Zofia Nałkowska wrote regarding German crimes: "Those were men who inflicted this fate on other men".



PHOTO EWA ŁOWZYŁ

PAWEŁ MORAS

A Pole from Lower Silesia, where he has had various posts in the local administration. Since 2008 is Polish chairman of the organization *Polsko-Niemiecka Współpraca Młodzieży* (Polish-German Youth Collaboration), member of the Permanent Council of the Polish-German Forum since 2008, member of the Foundation “*Krzyżowa*” for European Entente 2005-2008, member of the Foreign Policy Commission of the Union of Polish Provinces 2003-2004.

I AM ONE OF THOSE indirect fruits of the Letter which Archbishop Gądecki remembered in today’s homily. In fact, I head the *Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk*, the German-Polish Youth Foundation. This institution meets on a yearly basis and brings together 120,000 young Poles and Germans. Over the past 25 years of activity, the numbers of young meeting together in this way have reached the 3 million mark. I’m not here to tell you anything about my work, but because what I have just described is the result of a certain kind of experience, and this is what I wish to share with you. We Poles oftentimes complain. And even today we heard comments to the effect that the answer of the German episcopate to the 1965 Letter was low-key. And maybe we think this is very human, because the Holy Spirit knows when the right moment comes. There are many elements which show that in another time frame, even the clergy – I mean the German bishops – contributed significantly to a dialogue, not to a monologue.

I’d like to tell you a little story that very few people know, and which is an example, and testifies to what I am saying here. I come from Breslau, and was born there in 1974, in the year in which Cardinal Kominek passed away, and so indeed you would expect me to be acquainted with the bishops’ Letter only through books. But, luckily, the Breslau Catholic Intellectuals’ Club, thanks to the effects of that letter, worked in tandem with the people of Bensberg, specifically with the members of a Catholic group in Bensberg, and this collaborative effort then led to an informal partnership between Dortmund and Breslau. Each parish of Breslau is twinned with a parish in Dortmund. This relationship has been going since the 1970s; in the 1980s it took the concrete shape of relief supplies, massive supplies which reached Breslau’s inhabitants from Dortmund,

in an effort co-ordinated by the Catholic and Protestant parish churches. In later years this activity culminated in the creation of the Saint Hedwig Foundation, the patron saint we spoke of today. In 1995, in the Dortmund parish church that is twinned with my Jesuit church in Breslau, the people of Bensberg, who were behind the twinning process, urged their priest to write a letter to their Polish partners in Breslau on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second world war. The priest was sceptical for the reasons mentioned by Professor Wolff-Powęska: i.e., had it been a question of apologizing to the Jews, that would have been good and fine; but in this case the issue was far too political, since there were many in our parish who had been driven out of the border areas. The discussion in the sacristy was attended by a young priest. Without too much hemming and hawing, he went to the priests who were debating the issue with the parishioners, read the letter and boldly put his signature to it. This convinced the priest and hundreds of parishioners to follow suit. It was a turning point. That young priest was Reinhard Marx. Today he is the president of the Episcopate of Germany. And this shows us how the Letter produced beneficial effects even in periods much later than the time when it was written.

And so I just wanted to share these thoughts with you.





PHOTO GRZEGORZ GALAZKA

KRZYSZTOF CZYŻEWSKI

Polish poet, actor, author of critical essays, promoter of culture. Co-founder in the 1980s of the clandestine review "Czas Kultury" (Time of Culture), one of the initiators in 1990 alongside Czesław Miłosz of the foundation "Pogranicze" (Borderland), and now its chairman. Co-founder in 2011 of the International Centre for Dialogue, president of the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress, ambassador in 2008 of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Has taught in several universities, including the universities of Warsaw, Vilnius, Boston University and Harvard. With his activities he promotes border ethics and inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

I AM GREATLY HONOURED to chair, here in the Vatican the round table of the Conference "Towards Reconciliation". I am joined by Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, the Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić, and Father Serhiy Cyril Hovorun. We wish to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Letter of the Polish Conciliar Fathers not only by learning more about the history of the letter and its signatories, but also to reconsider its significance for our world today. Can that letter, with its celebrated and by now symbolic formula, "We forgive and ask for forgiveness", inspire us to seek the solutions for the conflicts that trouble our multicultural and globalized world?

Having myself been involved for many years in reconciliation processes on different borders between East and West, I am aware of the great role religion plays in them. And so I'm grateful to Ambassador Piotr Nowina-Konopka for having given this shape to the conference program, i.e., allowing for a perspective on the future and seeing the bishops' Letter as an important reference point for us to ponder over the great challenges that confront us today. The voices of the speakers at this round table will conclude the debate "Toward Reconciliation" in a special manner, concentrating not so much on "what has been achieved", but rather on "what will need to be achieved" in due course.

When the Polish bishops sent their Letter to the German bishops, they initiated the reconciliation process between the two countries. The fruits did not come straightaway. The German bishops' answer at that time was a disappointment. It was only in November 1989, at Krzyżowa, when German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Prime Minister of Poland Tadeusz Mazowiecki exchanged the "reconciliation gesture", that the first head of government of an independent

Poland could finally affirm that there was no exaggerating the importance which the Letter was having for the reconciliation then taking shape.

After 1989, the words of the Letter were cited during reconciliation processes that saw Poland working with its other neighbours. In May 2001, in Warsaw's Church of All Saints, Bishop Stanisław Gądecki appealed to those words during a penitential function for the Jews murdered in and around Jedwabne. In May 2006, at Pawłokoma, President Lech Kaczyński again referred to those words during a mass for the Ukrainians and Poles murdered in 1945. Both Polish Catholics and Greek-Catholic Ukrainians were present at the mass. The year before, as the Orange Revolution was unfolding, Polish and Ukrainian bishops wrote a joint message drawing inspiration from the Letter. The words "We forgive and ask for forgiveness" were also spoken by Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, on December 2014, when he expressed his apologies for the Volynian tragedy in front of the Polish Parliament.

Thanks to the presence at this table of such illustrious guests, we can in the course of our discussion refer to social and cultural contexts in which they are personally involved, and which at the same time reflect some of our present world's most significant challenges. I am thinking of the coexistence between Christians and Muslims, Greek Orthodox and Catholic Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics, and I am thinking of the Czech-German frontier, the ex-Yugoslavia and Russian Ukrainians.

Cardinal Miloslav Vlk is archbishop emeritus of Prague. His life and service to the Church make him the symbol of a priest and promoter of the reconciliation which is fatally linked to Central Europe's struggle to free itself from the power of totalitarian regimes. Just as the Prague Spring was getting underway in 1968, Vlk was ordained to the priesthood. He was then 36 years old. Ten years later the Czech authorities prevented him from performing his religious duties. During the next decade he went underground, and during that period supported himself by washing windows and performing other manual labour. Only at the outset of the Velvet revolution did Cardinal Vlk's life circumstances undergo a change, as a result of which he was able to return to his priestly duties. In 1990 Pope John Paul II had already nominated him bishop of České Budějovice. The following year he became archbishop of Prague, and one year later president of the Czech Episcopal Conference. Between 1993 and 2001 he was also president of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe.

Mustafa Cerić is a Bosnian imam, and has for many years been the Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina. When I asked Tadeusz Mazowiecki if he could suggest someone in Sarajevo who was ready for dialogue, a person I could involve as a speaker at the international symposium "New Agora", he answered unhesitatingly: Mustafa Cerić. Here I wish once again to specifically remember the Polish prime minister, since he was also, as we know, a special UN speaker on the human rights situation in Ex-Yugoslavia. The fact that he covered this role in such a responsible and competent manner up to his resi-

gnation in 1995, after the Srebrenica massacre, is associated in my mind with the best school of dialogue and reconciliation. For him this school was the Letter and the tradition in the Polish Church that is linked to it. Mustafa Cerić is a man firmly convinced that democracy and Islam can coexist, this is surely why he so quickly found a common language with the United Nations Special Envoy. Even though Cerić officially became Grand Mufti in 1999, he was de facto leader of the Muslim community of Bosnia and Herzegovina as early as 1993. At present, he is President of the World Bosniak Congress, of which he is one of the founders.

Father Serhiy Cyril Hovorun is a priest of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Over the years he has chaired the Patriarchate's Department of External Relations. He participates actively in the ecumenical dialogue, both between the churches in Ukraine, as well as with other religions. He has authored scientific studies on Church history theology, and has recently written a critical work with the title "Maidan: The Church in the Public Space". His active participation in the events of the Maidan was a very important experience for him, and it has won him the recognition and respect of many Ukrainians, irrespective of religious observance. He supports close cooperation between the Church and civil society, and sees in this the potential to overcome the conflicts afflicting both Ukraine as a country, and to improve relations between Russian and Ukrainians.

**MILOSLAV VLK**

Czech, ordained to the priesthood in 1968. During the communist regime was persecuted and forced to perform his priestly duties underground. Worked as a common labourer and then as a window cleaner. Consecrated bishop in 1990, Archbishop of Prague 1991-2010 and Primate of Bohemia. Chairman of the Episcopal Conference of the Czech Republic 1992-2000, president of the Episcopal Conferences of Europe 1993-2001, elevated to cardinal in 1994. Member of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and member of the Special Council for Europe of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

Dearest friends,

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME to take part in this conference. We Czechs are extremely grateful to the Polish bishops for the Letter they handed to their German colleagues after the Vatican Council II, because we Czechoslovak bishops also derived inspiration from it to reflect on our relationship with our German neighbours.

In 1990, at the beginning of a new period in our history, Václav Havel, a famous humanist and the first Czechoslovak president of the post-Communist period, wrote a letter to the Germans immediately after his election. It was a letter of reconciliation and apology which, though not containing the words “we forgive and ask for forgiveness”, did however express the same feelings and thoughts as the Polish letter.

Shortly thereafter, the cardinal of Prague, František Tomášek, speaking as a representative of our Catholic Church, apologized for the *Vertreibung*, i.e., the expulsion, after World War II of the German citizens living in the so-called Sudetenland, bordering on Germany. The Germans had inhabited those territories for many centuries. It was the Bohemian kings in the 11th and 12th centuries who had invited them to settle there. Before World War II, these Germans were Nazi sympathizers, and had a markedly hostile attitude towards our Republic. In the wake of the famous Munich Conference of 1938 between the European powers, Adolf Hitler annexed the Sudeten region to Germany. After World War II, negotiating with the powers that had defeated Nazism, Czechoslovak politicians were allowed to expel the Germans from those regions, which had meanwhile reverted to Czechoslovak rule. This process was not always conducted in a just and non-violent manner. The guilty and the innocent were punished alike, and not a few put to death. In this way,

Cardinal Tomášek wanted to apologize for those injustices and acts of violence. At that time, i.e., the collapse of the Communist regime, a conference of bishops in our country was still waiting to restart. And so, with the new bishops still missing, Cardinal Tomášek turned out to be the only signatory of the letter.

On the threshold of this new period of our history, President Havel invited the Slav pope, John Paul II, to visit us in Czechoslovakia, to “reinforce” the new system. New bishops needed to be nominated quickly so as to speedily regroup the Czechoslovak Episcopal Conference, which had ceased to exist during the Communist period, so that the Church might be suitably represented.

The Germans – the German Bishops’ Conference – replied to Cardinal Tomášek’s letter, apologizing for what the Nazis had done to our country. The bishops also touched on the invasion of our Republic by the German Democratic Republic army in 1968. Once the new bishops had been appointed, the Episcopal Conference was in a position to reply to the German epistle.

The intense exchange of messages between the Czech and German clerics was appreciated by the politologists as well, who saw it as an effective way of rebuilding bridges and resolving such complex issues. In the wake of these letters, there were new developments in Czech-German relations. For a number of years the two sides met at the Marienbad conferences, where they dealt in a body with a variety of themes relating to our shared past. In the Sudetenland the German churches and cemeteries were restored. Thus the younger Germans, and their parents, re-established contact with those regions. A certain degree of collaboration ensued, different institutions came up, and so we were able together to discuss our common recent history. It is through dialogue that problems need to be discussed. This means not only to seek to make one’s own view of the problems prevail, but also to understand the other side and what they are saying, and admit that their angle of vision also contains elements of truth. In brief, a dialogue.

After World War II very serious actions were at times perpetrated, and the Czechs apologized for these to the Germans. One was the expulsion of the German population of Brno, another the Ústí/ Aussig Massacre.

Let me, then, thank the Polish bishops for having inspired us to act as we did. And to conclude, I would like to say that this 50th anniversary of reconciliation is not only a commemoration of a past event, but also a chance to ponder on something that is very important for us today: as we turn to face the problems presently confronting us on all sides, that letter serves as an up-to-date model of how such problems may be resolved: engaging in dialogue, opening up and – as Professor Wolff-Powęska stated in the closing section of her speech – learning from history. All this is, I think, very important, given that in the history of the past century we find two regimes – the Nazi and the Communist – both based on hatred, and both fallen. Those systems proved themselves incapable of guiding nations over time. Human life, indeed, cannot be based on hatred. Hatred creates no future.

Reconciliation between Poles and Germans teaches us that our problems today, which however are related to the past, can only be resolved through forgiveness and dialogue.

This is my personal experience. Christianity is capable of showing the paths and supplying the tools to solve problems. This is the experience I gained from forty years of Communist persecution of the Church – even when for ten years I found myself cleaning shop windows in the streets of Prague. A number of books on these experiences have been published in Germany and in France. One of them has even been translated into Arabic. My bishop friends in the Middle East published it for the Syrian Christians, victims of persecution, so that they could read a book on the persecution of the Church in Czechoslovakia under Communism, and how we survived. I’m happy I can share my personal experience with others – this historic lesson of our Church under Communist rule. Thank you.

**MUSTAFA CERİĆ**

A Bosnian-Muslim theologian and prominent member of Bosnian religious life, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1999-2013), supports the establishment of a nation state for the Bosnian people. Over time has increasingly committed himself to the dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the Balkans and throughout Europe. Since 1993, has led the Islamic community of Bosnia-Herzegovina. President of the cultural organization World Bosniak Congress (WBC) since 2012, member of the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Council of 100 Leaders of the World Economic Forum, the Executive Board of the European Council of Religious Leaders, the World Conference of Religions for Peace, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought of Jordan.

THANK YOU, Professor Czyżewski, for this introduction, and ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, friends, Good morning, Salaam Alaikhum, and Shalom. You take what you like.

I'm really honoured by the invitation of the Polish Ambassador to the Holy See, His Excellency Piotr Nowina-Konopka, who invited me for this occasion. And I ask the moderator in advance forgiveness for my sin, if I become longer, and if for these 7 minutes of Jesus, add to 70 forgiveness. This is what I learnt today, something new. Because I want to reflect and to say that I belong to a Slavic people. We are Slavs. There is some dispute as to whether we are really Slavs, or Illyrians, but I am proud to be of Slavic origin – if that is so – if only because of the Polish people. Because the Polish man explained to us how the cosmos works. And the sun. We, the Slavic people, gave to the world the most influential Pope in the history of the Papacy, I believe. The Polish people on our Slavic behalf had this letter written to the Germans. So the Germans have to appreciate what we Slavic people do, in Europe and in the Balkans. As we appreciate what the German people do for my people, receiving them as refugees – all these people who come from the Middle East and just want to go to Germany. I just came from Frankfurt, having lived for two days with my people in Kassel.

And of course I want to share with you my great honour, because I knew Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who became – I can say – my friend. At that time he resigned from his post as Boutros Boutros Ghali's Special Representative in

Bosnia, because he could no longer contemplate the genocide in Bosnia. So I saw to it that the victims of genocide in Bosnia give him a special award, called "Srebrenica 1995". So you people of Poland should be proud of your Tadeusz, as I am proud of him also because of his Slavic origin. Thank you.

Now I would like to tell you something, how excited I am, your Excellency, to be with you. When I read this letter, I could not but write my own letter to you bishops in Europe. And this is my original letter, the one I wrote before the conference, not a common word, but the inspiration I had for this one. So grant me your patience. It is not a long letter. I want this letter to be heard here in Rome, because I am speaking on behalf of my religion, my faith, my Bosnian culture: I am speaking from Bosnia, with its long history, the one thousand years of coexistence we have had in Bosnia-Herzegovina. You know probably better than I do how we Bosniaks behaved throughout history, since the time of the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Tito's empire, until we came to what we are here and now. So I just want you to listen to this voice that represents all this. And I'm very small, of course: a small Grand Mufti from a small country. But I carry the big burden of this small country in the heart of Europe. I would like to paraphrase the phrase "We forgive and beg for forgiveness" with "We accept and we beg for acceptance". Europe is your homeland and ours. In your and our peace. In your and our security, in your and our friendship.

Dear friends, I am honoured by the invitation of His Excellency, the Ambassador Piotr Nowina-Konopka has extended to me to actively participate in the remembrance of the historic pastoral letter which the Polish bishops addressed to the German bishops 50 years ago, and the ensuing German response. The bishops' pastoral letter awakens in each and every man the will for peace and friendship. Indeed, this letter awakens a sincere desire for reconciliation among brothers. Rome is the right place for this historical memory. But this is not only the right place. This is also the right time to urge all people of good heart in the world to learn a lesson and accept the message of this pastoral letter. The lesson is that the heart of love is better than the heart of hate. And the message is that the hand of the good healer is better than the hand of the evil killer.

Dear Eminences, inspired by the example of your fraternal and pastoral love in Europe, I felt the need and the freedom to write to you, European bishops, this letter on behalf of my faith, Islam, my Bosnian culture and the historical experience of my Bosnian homeland. This letter is an expression of friendship.

As you know, the first murder was fratricidal – Cain killed his brother Abel. Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him, was accepted and followed by his friends, his disciples, the Apostles, Al-Hawaryun. They were not his blood brothers, they were his friends in love. Thus the love of friends can be even stronger than the love between blood brothers.

The first Muslims in Mecca were persecuted by their brothers. In order to save themselves from them, they found refuge in a Christian friend, the King of Abyssinia, the Negus. Thus King Negus has become a historic symbol of friendship between Muslims and Christians. Perhaps, here lies the primordial wisdom of the Quranic guidance to the Muslims: "You will surely find the nearest in affection towards you those believers who say, We are Christians. That is because among them are priests and monks, and because they are not arrogant."

Dear friends, this Qur'anic description of your pastoral modesty requires my acceptance of and my respect for you as my friends. I am aware that there have been and there will be some who read the Qur'an with the intention of encouraging enmity. I write to you on behalf of the majority of Muslims who read the Qur'an, and they find there the reasons for friendship. You will understand therefore that for me there is no stronger motivation than the Qur'an to offer you my friendship and to receive yours. If it was possible in the past to build walls and hedge in exclusive spaces, such as Christendom and Islam, today this is no longer possible. Not only in Europe, but anywhere around the world, no one religion, no one culture, no one nation can be in isolation. All religions, cultures and nations of the world rely a-priori on each other, and therefore it is necessary that we know each other. This truth has been highlighted in the holy Qur'an in this way: "All men, behold, We have created you all out of male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware."

Your Excellency, certainly your letters from 1965 have greatly contributed to Europe being what it is today: a continent of peace, coexistence, social justice and prosperity for all people of goodwill. Therefore it is inexplicable why at the end of the 20th century in the territory of this Europe, a genocide was allowed to happen against my people in Bosnia, the land with a thousand years of great human values which are the essence of today's Europe: i.e., the values of human good and dignity, human rights and freedom, human peace and coexistence and the value of unity in diversity. If Pope Francis said that the city of Sarajevo is the Jerusalem of Europe, then Europe has the right to be proud of its Sarajevo. In the same way as the city of Sarajevo is proud to belong to an open and free Europe: the cry "Never Again" to holocaust, and genocide, must become embedded in the minds of us all.

Dear European bishops: obviously we are all in fear, you in Europe in fear of a spreading fear of Islam; and we Muslims in Europe are in fear of those who spread the fear of us, here and now. If anyone has it, it is Europe that has an experience of the false fear of those who are different. This is precisely what your letters are all about! The call to freedom from false fears of yourself, and from the others that are different from you. It is for this reason that your letters

are historically important, not only for you as bishops, but also for all Europeans who believe that truth, justice, peace and reconciliation are values of the first order. So, I hope you will understand this letter of mine – signed by prominent muftis, imams and Muslim intellectuals in Europe – as the voice of reason and the acknowledgement that Adam and Eve are our common father and mother. It is not possible that we know everything about each other: but it is possible that we accept one another as we are, without prejudice or fear. We accept you and we beg you for your acceptance of us without prejudice or fear. It is not enough that we have an awareness of each other; it is necessary that we have a willingness to accept one another in a spirit of common good for all of us here and now in Europe. Europe has no reason to be afraid of anyone, or anything. Least of all of Islam and Muslims, who in their names carry the meaning of the peaceful man. Here, my dear friends, I would like to bring you a few quotes from the holy Qur'an, which tells us of our spiritual common ground, and thus releases us from the fear of one another. "Say, oh Muslims, we believe in God, and in that which is revealed unto us, and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinctions between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered."

Finally, I would like you to join me in this prayer that I have repeatedly recited at the collective funeral in Potočari, in Srebrenica, for the souls of the victims of genocide. "Dear God, if we forget Thee, do not forget us. If we make a mistake, give us the strength of the repentance of Adam. If we are darkened by false belief, enlighten us with the true faith of Abraham. If disaster befall us, teach us how to build a Noah's Ark of salvation. If we are caught in the fear of tyrants, empower us with the justice of Moses. If we are filled with hatred, save us with the love of Jesus. If we were expelled from our homes, strengthen us with Mohammad's desire to return to our homes. Dear God, may peace be upon all the Prophets of God, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad."

Your Eminency, in the hope that we will always meet in peace and understanding, please accept my sincere expression of love and respect. Thank you. If any one wants to take a copy – I didn't read the whole letter, because it's longer – it is available by the grace of my friend, Marc Manser, so take it if you like. It will be published in Sarajevo, in Bosnia, in Bosnian, English, Arabic, and will be translated into German. And it will be published in a special booklet. This is my letter, signed by the Mufti of Serbia, of Sanjak, of Slovenia, and by some intellectuals from the University of Sarajevo and the University of Tuzla. And by the President of Bosnia's Academy of Science and Arts.

So this is my contribution, my gratitude to my brothers, my Slavic brothers in Poland, for their great historical initiative. And my gratitude to the Polish

Ambassador, who noticed and invited me to represent the Muslims here in Rome, on the 50th anniversary of this great historic letter. So may God bless you all. Thank you.



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SERHIY CYRIL HOVORUN

Ukrainian orthodox priest, archimandrite, doctor in theology, was ordained to the priesthood in 2006, entered the Kiev Hierarchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in 2007. Teaches at the Theological Academy of Kiev, and is a researcher at Yale University's Department of Patristics and Theology. Took active part in the Maidan demonstrations in Ukraine, and is a supporter of Ukrainian independence.

I WANT TO EXPRESS my thanks and gratitude to the Embassy of Poland to the Holy See for this invitation. This great event has made a lot of people aware of this letter, which was up to now was confined to the Polish media mostly, and partially to the German media. Now it can become famous beyond those milieus.

As I read the letter, what came to my mind was the historical narrative by the Yale historian Tim Snyder. He is a famous Polonist. He has described the events and the places which are also referred to in the letter. Tim Snyder calls those places "bloodlands", because those lands are full of blood, of people who died there. A number of massacres occurred in the bloodlands. Primarily it's of course the Holocaust, which caused millions of Jews to perish in those territories. But there were also mass killings of Polish citizens in the inter-war period. As well as the tragedies of the Ukrainian people, with the famine in the 1930s, and then the cleansings by the Nazis, and the Communists.

These tragedies to which the letter refers, are common tragedies to all those peoples. We share in those tragedies. This is probably why we understand each other so well. In the wake of the recent events, I think we in Ukraine don't feel any other nation closer to us than the Polish nation. And we really appreciate the position of the Polish government, of the Polish people, and we feel their support. We understand – I personally understand – why this is like that: because we actually have the same experiences. We share in the same tragedy.

In some sense, the "bloodlands" are like the Balkans, with the same divided people, the same stories, truths and stereotypes shared by local communities. We had and still have the same kind of divisions, and we need to have the same

recognition of our own faults and even crimes. My personal experience of the Balkans is that every nation there has its own truth, and every nation has its heroes and enemies. And each nation actually has to be blamed for something, each has a responsibility for some tragedies.

We should recognize that in Eastern Europe we all are victims, and are to be blamed for something. For instance, my nation, the Ukrainian nation – let me say it here: we should recognize our negative role, our guilt, our culpa for the Rzeż wołyńska of 1943 (Massacres of Poles in Volhynia), for the crimes that we committed. I think it is inspirational now, reading the letter, to recognize and really acknowledge our faults.

When it comes to the present situation, I think it is a tragedy that in the centre of Europe, according to the estimates of the UN, more than 7,000 people have been killed in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. According to the records of the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Welfare, approx. 1.2 million families have been registered as refugees, as internally displaced people from eastern Ukraine. The unofficial estimate of those who had to leave their homes in the east and in Crimea, is approx 3 million people. If you go to Kiev, you find that every third car on the streets has number plates from Donetsk and Luhansk. And those are people who can afford to stay in Kiev. Most of them cannot afford this, and in the suburban areas they crowd into small flats, 5 or 6 families in each flat.

I should also mention the tragedy of the Crimean Tatars. We in Ukraine, as a result of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, have come to feel the same that the Tatars feel. Now we understand them, just as the Polish people understood the Ukrainians as a result of their own experiences of being divided and displaced. Now we understand the Crimean Tartars and we say, yes, they are our brothers, even though they are Muslims, and we share in the same tragedy, we share in the same war, and we stand shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, with each other.

Today during the liturgy, in the word we heard of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. I think it was a very important reference. Not everyone in Europe, I am afraid, understands the consequences of that evil pact. The Polish people do. And unfortunately, not everyone in Europe solidarizes with the Polish people, and the understanding that this Pact, which was signed in 1939, actually opened the door to the largest massacre in European history. The letter of the bishops did not mention the Pact, because at that time it was still a secret document, it was only revealed later on. But now we know: that pact really led the way to World War II.

I think some forms of that pact are still lurking in Europe, unfortunately. There are voices – I should say it openly, why not – like Mr Putin's, who recently said, "Well, the Pact of Molotov-Ribbentrop was not that bad." His intention is obviously to implement some of its ideas nowadays. To have, if not a new Yalta, at least a new Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Today it is with the intention of dividing Ukraine, and to bargain, trade Ukraine for other geopolitical agendas. I think

we should be very much aware of such a possibility, and we should not make the mistakes of Europe 70 years ago.

Speaking about reconciliation, certainly we need a reconciliation in Ukraine. Indeed, its people are deeply divided. They are mostly divided by propaganda. It's very much a personal experience. I have a lot of friends who are on the other side. It's like in zombie movies: once you had a friend, and then suddenly this friend turns into a zombie, ready to bite and kill you. This is exactly the experience we have with many friends, and even relatives in Ukraine. I see them as those who want to bite me, they want to make me one of them. And I understand that they see me in the same way. That's how propaganda works.

When I read the letter, I was really astonished, how wise were the fathers, the bishops of the Polish church, who actually set up a strategy of reconciliation. The largest part of the letter is about the history: how things went in Polish-German relations for centuries. It is a very long and detailed and not very pleasant catalogue of the wrongs each side inflicted on the other. But those things had to be said in order to then stretch out the hand with the offer of forgiveness. One cannot ask for forgiveness, one cannot forgive without telling the truth about what happened. This is actually the essence of the truth and reconciliation process. A process which happened in many countries, which became crucially important in reconciling such countries as Argentina, and particularly South Africa, where reconciliation between the two parts of the country was possible only on the basis of truth. First the truth has to be said, then reconciliation comes. One cannot achieve reconciliation by saying, well, let us just ignore what happened, let us just go ahead and forgive each other. This is a very cheap reconciliation, it will not work for a long time. You can build a solid reconciliation only by speaking the truth. Then, once the truth has been spoken, you have to make another step and proceed to reconciliation. Truth without reconciliation is a lie. When we are without truth, we just create preconditions for another conflict. It is important after the truth has been said to proceed to reconciliation. In Ukraine, we are still at the stage of seeking truth. We cannot proceed further without having covered this stage.

Now a few words about Orthodox-Catholic relations. I was a member for some time of the International Joint Commission of the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches. And I know how important the dialogue is. Dialogue is indeed an instrument of rapprochement between the two churches. However, I believe the dialogue has become instrumentalized in the wake of the Ukrainian conflict – I call it Russian-Ukrainian war, which is being waged in the east of Ukraine. One side of the dialogue unfortunately impedes, creates obstacles, and then tries to sell solutions to those obstacles – the solutions to the problems it had created. The other side embarks on this game and accepts the rules of the game, and says, ok, we will turn a blind eye to what is going on in Ukraine, but let us continue with the dialogue. I think in this way it will not work. It will work by speaking the truth and recognizing the truth. On the basis

of this we can proceed towards the agenda of the dialogue. That's why I think it is important not to sell truth for the sake of dialogue. Then dialogue turns into a self-sufficient value. It will not lead anywhere. Dialogue is important as far as it is built on truth. I have used some euphemisms here. But I think it is wrong to use euphemisms in connection with the Ukrainian situation. In dealing with the Ukrainian situation, things should be named with their proper names. The war should be called war, the perpetrators should be called perpetrators, and the victims should be called victims. And this is the way towards dialogue, reconciliation and building bridges. Thank you.



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GIOVANNI LAJOLO

Italian, diplomat at the Holy See and high official at the Roman Curia. Ordained to the priesthood in 1960, secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Germany between 1969 and 1974, titular archbishop of the Caesariana in 1988, Apostolic Nuncio in Germany 1995-2003, Secretary for Relations with States in the Secretariat of State 2003-2006. Nominated cardinal in 2007. President of the Governate of the Vatican City State, and the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State 2006-2011. Has been active on behalf of the Holy See in revising many concordats with European countries, including Italy.

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I AM HONoured to take part as a Delegate of the Holy See in this meeting between the representatives of the Polish Episcopate and the German Episcopate, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Letter of 18 November 1965, which the Polish bishops sent to the German bishops. In their reply, which came on 5 December of that same year, the German bishops answered: “with deep emotion and joy”. I would like now heartily to congratulate their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany for having conceived and organized today’s event.

1. In memorable pages, the Ecumenical Vatican Council II states that the Church is the sign and instrument of the unity of all humankind, an infallible seed of unity for each and all, a visible sacrament of unity in salvation (Lumen Gentium, nos. 1 and 9). Nor could it be otherwise, for that unity is summoned by the one and only Father, guided by the one and only Lord, principle of unity and peace, and quickened by the one and only Holy Spirit. These doctrinal affirmations can be verified by the living fabric of history.

A very clear example of this is the exchange of letters which today we are remembering. We see in them how the Church, in an era of open political contrasts across Europe, took the initiative – not the only one, for sure – to overcome opposition and promote concord, to heal deep and painful wounds which the tragic events of World War II had caused. Today, not least thanks to the Church’s unifying presence, these two great peoples – the Polish and the German – are at the centre of the demanding and involved process of unifying Europe; if it is

to achieve stability, this must be a moral process even more than a political one. Following ideally on the previous speeches, I would like now to offer some thoughts, albeit quite sporadic ones, on the culture of encounter and reconciliation, drawn from Pope Francis' *Magisterium*. Indeed, his *Magisterium* is entirely in harmony with those of his predecessors on Peter's chair, yet presented with the freshness of a new gaze and a personal language.

2. According to Pope Francis, the culture of encounter and reconciliation must necessarily root first of all in the safeguarding of memory. Safeguarding memory is for him "a power that unites and integrates [...], the vital nucleus of a family and a people."¹ He underlined its importance last year, when he addressed the Council of Europe: "To walk towards the future we need the past, we require deep roots, and courage too is needed so that we don't hide from today's challenges. Memory, courage, a healthy and human utopia are needed."² It was certainly courage and a very human utopia motivated by faith that inspired the Polish bishops, first and foremost Cardinal Kominek, to write the Letter. It is significant that its message has brought us together here not only to commemorate that event's historic significance, but also to enhance the culture of encounter and reconciliation in the present context, riven as it is by deep divisions and grave dangers at the global level.

Pope Francis has promoted this on various occasions. I would like to evoke three instances, which correspond with areas in the international scenario, in which peace and a dialogue between peoples still today constitute open challenges.

In the first official act of his recent Apostolic Journey, the Holy Father called himself a "pilgrim in prayer" to ask the Mother of God, a especially worshipped by the Cuban people, that the nation "go down paths of reconciliation". In this framework, he underlined the importance of the normalization process with the United States of America, noting how, after years of distance, this is "a sign that the culture of encounter is prevailing". He then encouraged the political leaders to continue on that path, so that it becomes "an example of reconciliation for the entire world". And he concluded with an appeal to all: "The world needs reconciliation in this 'piecemeal' Third World War atmosphere we are living through".³

From the Americas we go ideally to the Deep East, and set foot on Korean soil. Ending his visit there in August 2014, the Pope celebrated the Holy Mass of peace and reconciliation, as if to signal that most heartfelt invitation. Standing before a people suffering from persisting wounds, he said that "forgiveness is the door that leads to reconciliation." This, he recognized, "seems [...] impossible

1. JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO, *Nel cuore di ogni Padre. Alle radici della mia spiritualità*, [In Every Father's heart. At the Root of my Spirituality], Milan 2014, p. 203.

2. FRANCIS, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg 25 November 2014.

3. FRANCIS, Address to the Welcome Ceremony, International Airport "Jose Martí", La Habana, 19 September 2015.

from a human perspective, hardly workable, and at times even repellent." And yet it dwells at the centre of the Christian mystery, and "Jesus makes it possible and fruitful through the infinite power of his Cross. Christ's Cross reveals God's power to resolve all divisions, heal all wounds and re-establish the one-time links of brotherly love."⁴

Last June, the Holy Father journeyed to Sarajevo, a city that is a symbol of pain in our continent, and is named – as the Pope himself recalled – the "Jerusalem of Europe." In Sarajevo he met with the representatives of the Christian Churches and Communities and with those of the other religions, and said to them: "We are all aware there is still a long way for us to go. Let us not, however, be disheartened by the difficulties, and let us continue persevering on the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. While we do justice to our memory of the past, thereby learning the lessons of history as well, let us avoid regrets and recrimination, and allow ourselves to be purified by God, who offers us the present and future. [...] This city [...] today, with its wealth of peoples, cultures and religions, can again become a sign of unity, a place where diversity does not constitute a threat, but is an asset and the opportunity for shared growth. [...] it is possible to live side by side in diversity but also in a spirit of common humaneness, and so build together a future of peace and fraternity."⁵

Appeals and gestures tell us how much the culture of encounter and reconciliation is present in Pope Francis' mind and heart.⁶ I would like now to try and reflect on a few of the crucial points, borrowing an image he himself employed.⁷ We could imagine this as a solid tree provided with roots, a trunk and branches.

The roots lodge deep down in faith. The Holy Father has spoken, and quite recently too, of a "style of reconciliation with God", stating that Christ's very mission in the world consisted essentially in "reconciling and pacifying."⁸ There is thus, as he said in another homily, a specific "Christian style", which cannot be different from the one Christ used to foster reconciliation. This means for us to renounce proud and condemnatory attitudes, so that we can "tolerate each other, forgive and be merciful, even as the Lord is merciful with us."⁹ He has also underscored two features of the divine style, which "reconciling and pacifying the small and on the way", not in a loud and ostentatious manner, but

4. FRANCIS, Homily, Cathedral of Myeong-dong (Seoul), 18 August 2014.

5. FRANCIS, Address, International Franciscan Student Centre, Sarajevo, 6 June 2015.

6. It has also been noted how his discourse, which is familiar, colloquial, and strengthened by a deep and sincere sentiment and the ability to infuse trust and hope, is not mere form but substance as well, because not only does it assert a given subject, it also performs this vis-à-vis people and reality. Compare, for example, FRANCESCO BOTTURI, *Nuova evangelizzazione e cultura dell'incontro*, [New Evangelization and the Culture of Meeting], International Meeting "Il progetto pastorale di Evangelii Gaudium" [The Pastoral Project of Evangelii Gaudium]. This text was published in www.novaevangelizatio.va/content/nvev/it/eventi/Icontra-evangelii-gaudium/re_lazioniincontro-internazionale.html.

7. Compare with FRANCIS, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014.

8. FRANCIS, Homily, Domus Sanctae Marthae, 8 September 2015.

9. FRANCIS, Homily, Domus Sanctae Marthae, 10 September 2015.

rather by walking together with humankind and favouring humble truths in the company of patience and hope. The Christian man and woman, if they wish to reconcile and pacify, are also called upon to get involved with the world, together with both the good and the wicked, as they pursue the sole intent of putting in practice – again, these are his words – “the protocol of love towards your fellow man.” The way goes through concrete gestures and a loving gaze towards those who are poorer, weaker and more frail. Finally, God teaches men to realize “the great work of pacification and reconciliation in the small, on the way, not losing hope with the ability to dream the great dreams, the great horizons.”¹⁰

Alongside the “Christian style” there is a second root, which we might call “the risk of the Gospel”. This requires us to come out of ourselves, to shed a logic dominated by our selfish needs, and move concretely towards others, without fear or prejudice. This is how the Pope put it in the *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The Gospel always enjoins us to run the risk of encountering the other face-to-face, of encountering his physical presence which questions us, with his pain and his pleas, with his contagious joy, in a constant man-to-man. True faith in the Son of God incarnate is inseparable from offering oneself [...], from the reconciliation with the flesh and blood of others.”¹¹

This appears all the more urgent to us today, for it is required by the new evangelization, and by that “process of missionary reform” towards which the Pope, through the above quoted *Evangelii Gaudium*¹², has sought to “mobilize” the Church and all believers. Indeed, he has written that “the new evangelization spurs every christened individual to be an instrument of pacification and a credible testimony to a life reconciled.”¹³ This means that encounter and reconciliation should not be voiced rhetorically, but rather experienced in real life, first of all within the community of believers – lest the mission itself fail. He in fact noted how “those who are hurt by age-old divisions may find it hard to accept that we exhort them to forgive and seek reconciliation, because they think we ignore their pain or demand that they forsake their memory and ideals. But if they see the example of communities that are truly fraternal and reconciled, this is ever a light that beckons.”¹⁴ Finally, the Church is called today in particular to “make its mark” as an evangelizing community that “knows how to take the first step, knows how to take the initiative, reach out.”¹⁵

From the roots grows the trunk, and in the trunk we can see the principles grafted that sustain the culture of encounter. Two, in particular, are themes which once again he dwells upon in the *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Unity is superior to con-

10. FRANCIS, Homily, *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, 8 September 2015.

11. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, 88.

12. FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, 3.

13. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, 239.

14. *Ibidem*, 100.

15. *Ibidem*, 24.

16. *Ibidem*, 227.

flict; time is superior to space.” To understand the superiority of unity over conflict implies a wish to “accept the onus of conflict, resolve and transform it into a connecting link in a new process”¹⁶, without either fleeing from or remaining hostage to it. In this way, the Pope continues, “it becomes possible for us to develop a communion in the differences, which can be fostered only by those noble individuals who have the courage to go beyond the ostensible conflict and consider other men in their deepest dignity.” It is a question of learning, he goes on, “a style of building history”, a “living environment where conflicts, tensions and opposites can reach a manifold unity that engenders new life.”¹⁷ This does not mean, mind you, a renunciation of one’s own identity, a syncretism or absorption of the other, but the will, patience and creativity to seek new solutions at a higher level, where the precious potential of the opposing poles can be conserved. Diversity takes on its full value when the parties are willing to get involved in a process and in the dialogue, so as to engender a “reconciled diversity”.¹⁸

It is precisely on the theme of dialogue that the Holy Father dwells time and again. Speaking to the representatives of Paraguay’s civil society, he underscored that dialogue begins when all sides respect a fundamental precondition: one’s own identity. We need to start from this point to reach the objective: “the good that’s common to all”. The way is however effective if it is truly quickened by a “search for the culture of encounter”. It must, says the Pope, “be a meeting that can acknowledge that diversity is not only good, it is also necessary.” Because, he goes on to say, “uniformity annuls us, turns us into automata – the richness of life is in diversity.” Thus dialogue must be humanized, so that it becomes a “giving and receiving with an open heart.” In this way the difficulties and hard work of misunderstanding do not undermine dialogue, but enable it. The chief obstacle does not arise from conflict, but from narrow-mindedness, which is the worst risk for nations and even for cultures: “True cultures are never locked inside themselves – [...] if they close up, they die – but they are urged to meet with other cultures and create new realities.”¹⁹

The second principle is the superiority of time over space. This means knowing how to work for peace “in the long term, without obsessing over immediate results. It helps to bear patiently situations that are fraught and adverse, or

17. *Ibidem*, 228.

18. *Ibidem*, 230.

19. FRANCIS, *Speech for the Meeting with the Representative of the Civil Society*, Asunción, 11 July 2015. The call to give value / cherish unity as a fruitful synthesis of differences was also aimed at the European Union: “The motto of the European Union is Unity in diversity, but unity does not mean political or cultural uniformity, or that of thought. Indeed, any true unity lives on the wealth of the diversities it is made of: like a family that is all the more united the more each of its members can be him or herself right to the bottom, without fear. In this sense, I feel that Europe is a family of peoples, MANCA i quali potranno sentire vicine le istituzioni dell’Unione se esse sapranno sapientemente coniugare l’ideale dell’unità cui si anela alla diversità propria di ciascuno, valorizzando le singole tradizioni; prendendo coscienza della sua storia e delle sue radici; liberandosi dalle tante manipolazioni e dalle tante fobie», *Discorso al Parlamento europeo*, Strasburgo, 25 novembre 2014.

changes in plan imposed by the dynamics of reality.” One of the main problems at the socio-political level, the Pope states, “consists in the pursuit of the spaces of power, over the time-frame which those processes necessitate.” It is important instead that we work ahead, and be aware of the consequences of our acts, without seeking immediate success and self-assertion: “it is a question of giving precedence to the actions that generate new dynamic forms in the society, and involve other individuals and groups that will promote these, bringing them to fullness in important historical events.”²⁰ It is processes of this kind that peoples of the world are made of, and the price is that they rarely bring facile and immediate political returns.²¹ Fostering the development of a “culture of meeting in a manifold harmony,” requires “slow and arduous work.”²² His appeal is urgent and clear: “It’s time to know how to plan in the framework of a culture that favours dialogue as the form of encounter and seeks consensus and agreements, without however separating this from the wish for a just society, capable of memory and without exceptions.”²³

Let us come, finally, to the “branches” of this tree, i.e., to the consequences and beneficial fruit that the culture of encounter can bring. First of all, it “saves us from an isolated conscience and from self-centredness.”²⁴ This is true both for the single individual as it is for communities. It also makes knowledge more authentic, inasmuch as “true wisdom” is acquired through reflection, but also through dialogue and the generous encounter amongst individuals.²⁵

This in turn allows us to reject “the culture of conflict that furthers the other’s fears, and marginalizes those who think or live in a different way.” The Pope is convinced that this is indeed the best path to seek a true and lasting peace: to educate all to “recognize in the other not an enemy to be fought, but a brother to be welcomed.”²⁶

The culture of encounter also benefits a correct awareness of human rights. There is, according to the Holy Father, a sort of “compass inscribed in our hearts”, which “allows us to look at man not as an absolute, but as a reactional being.”²⁷ Following that compass, we avoid the risk, often lurking in today’s Western culture, of “asserting the rights of the single individual, without taking into account that every human being is linked to a social context, in which his or her rights and duties are connected to those of others, and to society’s common good.” Human rights should, therefore, be brought back into the framework of the culture of encounter, joining the personal dimension to the dimension of a common

20. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, 223.

21. *Ibidem*, 224.

22. *Ibidem*, 220.

23. *Ibidem*, 239.

24. *Ibidem*, 8.

25. FRANCIS, *Laudato si’*, 47.

26. FRANCIS, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014.

27. FRANCIS, *Discorso al Parlamento europeo*, Strasburgo, 25 novembre 2014.

good. “Indeed,” the Pope states, “if the right of each single individual is not ordered in harmony with an overarching good, it ends by considering it has no limitations, thus becoming a source of conflicts and violence.”

The expectation of encounter, which defines broad-minded political visions capable of analyzing the causes and acting upon these without rushing to intervene immediately on the effects, could also be a platform to take on the migration emergency which is presently affecting the European continent. “Europe”, the Pope said in Strasbourg, “will be able to tackle the problems related to immigration [...] if it adopts appropriate, courageous and concrete policies aimed at helping [...] the Countries of origin to develop socially and economically and overcome internal conflicts – the main cause of this phenomenon – instead of policies dictated by self-interest, which increase and feed these conflicts. There is a need to act on the causes and not only on the effects.”²⁸ Even more concretely, he urges civil leaders time and again to translate the culture of encounter into caring for the fragility of peoples and individuals.

There are however also “dry branches”, and these need to be removed because they transmit grave infections. Let me mention three important ones: the “culture of waste”, which is a result of both unbridled consumerism and the primacy of technology and profit, both of which put things ahead of people; the “globalization of indifference”, “which arises from selfishness, and is the result of a view that considers man incapable of embracing truth and living an authentic social dimension”²⁹; finally, the delusion that the armed conflict and all that feeds it – not least the traffic of arms – can bring solutions. On the contrary, “in wars and conflicts there are people [...] who weep, suffer and die. Human beings that become waste material whilst others only enumerate problems, strategies and discussions.”³⁰

The dry branches coexist with the good ones, but hope, with its combative nature, must never stop in the face of evil. It feeds on the testimony of those who have worked for the reconciliation and encounter between peoples. They are the heralds of peace and the prophets of future times. Today this Conference celebrates some of these and urges us to follow their example, infusing us with “an encouragement to return to the firm conviction of the Founding Fathers of the European Union, who were enlivened by profound Christian ideals and so wished for a future based on the ability to work jointly to overcome the divisions and foster peace and communion amongst all the peoples of this Continent.”³¹ So that Europe can – after sparking two world wars, and precisely with the awareness of its historical responsibilities – work globally as an active factor for the peace which it itself needs greatly and urgently.

28. FRANCIS, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014.

29. *Ibidem*.

30. FRANCIS, Address to the United Nations Assembly, 25 September 2015

31. FRANCIS, *Discorso al Parlamento europeo*, Strasburgo, 25 novembre 2014.



PHOTO GRZEGORZ GAŁAZKA

ANNETTE SCHAVAN

German politician, Federal Secretary of the Union of CDU Women in 1987-1988, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of Land Baden-Württemberg 1995-2005, Vice-Chairman of the CDU National Party 1998-2012. Member of the Baden-Württemberg Regional Assembly 2001-2005, Federal Minister of Education and Research 2005-2013, member of the German Parliament 2005-2014. Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Holy See since 2014.

Your Eminences, Excellencies, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

ALLOW ME, as the Ambassador of Germany to the Holy See, a few closing comments. First of all, thank you: Germany's thank-you for this letter and for courage in a difficult time. Letters that lead to reconciliation are not needed in easy times. They are meaningful in difficult days, in times when they are held to be nearly impossible.

Thank you for a great gesture, and for the inspiration. If history is to develop further, if the impossible can become possible, then inspiration is needed – not a repetition of the old and familiar.

And, finally, thanks for the initiative leading to this conference. Thanks to my colleague, the Polish Ambassador to the Holy See – to you, dear Piotr, and to your team.

This morning we have remembered an unusual step towards reconciliation. And it touches us today. The power for reconciliation is capable of moving mountains and bringing walls down. It has already managed to alter diverse political realities in Europe in the direction of more freedom. Today, Poland and Germany are friends. This is a great gift, especially for us in Germany, and Europe is once again unified. We know this reunification of Germany in Europe would not have been possible without inspirational impulses from many Christians. It would above all not have been possible – Europe would not be what it is today – without Saint Pope John Paul II. Without his encouragement to *Solidarność* – “Let no-one be afraid!” – this peaceful revolution would perhaps not have got underway so forcefully. Saint John Paul II, your fellow citizen, had a

vision for Europe: Europe must again breathe with both lungs. He fought for a path to freedom and democracy, and for the revolution to remain peaceful. This is not something to be taken for granted. This is why we speak of a miraculous turning point.

Many things were said this morning. We must now ponder over the time of remembrance that comes after the witnesses. This is why the German-Polish Youth Foundation is so important. This is why it is important for a young generation in Poland and in Germany to know – and always to experience anew – that it is our fortune in Europe to be united. We are European women and European men together. Herein lies the great opportunity for the future of the young generation in Poland, in Italy, in Germany, in all the member States of the European Union. A good development in our countries requires a good development in Europe. These are two sides of the same coin. Let no-one believe that keeping Europe at arm's length is good for their country.

What does courage mean today? In the exhibition, and in today's speeches, too, it was perceptible what courage meant then. Without courage this letter would never have been. Strenuous opposition to it had to be taken into consideration. Without courage the inspirational strength to achieve reconciliation would never have happened.

Courage, today – the courage of the Church in Europe, the Church in Poland, the Church in Germany, the courage of our civil societies – is once again challenged, now that thousands of human beings are coming to Europe. They come from war-torn regions, they have been persecuted for their religious beliefs, they have experienced unimaginable violence. These people now need the courage of Europe's Christians. Indeed, who is in such a situation more challenged than we are, the Christians of Europe, of Poland, Germany, Italy. Now again we have a similar situation, in which we shall see how strong our passion is for the values of the West, for the values of Christianity. Now again we shall see how determined we are to find the required courage and compassion. Christians must be ready to contradict all those who feel these refugees do not belong to Europe. We must stand against those who after 25 years seek to build walls again. We must stand against those for whom the talk about the worth of men maybe meaningful, but for whom everyday reality is quite different. These are difficult times, difficult times in Germany, in Austria, in Slovenia, in Macedonia, in many countries, here in Italy too. Our way of dealing with the refugees is a practical test. Now it will be clearly seen whether people in need can depend on us not only to speak about values, but to seriously put them into practice.

History does not repeat itself. Different periods are hardly comparable. Nevertheless, situations resemble each other in terms of man's will to compassion. Then it becomes clear what we believe in, what the seed of our faith may yield, and how strongly God has committed us towards other human beings. This was absolutely clear to the Polish bishops then. So they blazed a path, and many others followed them down that path.

Once again, thanks for this letter! Thank you for the inspiration and the hope that like yesterday we may today be inspired again to be brave and fully cognizant of our God-given commitment towards other human beings.

Many thanks!



NOVEMBER 2015 is for the Catholic Church in both Poland and Germany a time for special celebration. Fifty years ago, on 18 November, 1965, the Polish bishops sent a letter to their German colleagues. In it were the famous words, “We forgive and ask for forgiveness”.

Today, fifty years after that event, it is difficult to comprehend how difficult and stratified was the process that led to the writing of that message. It was a process that lasted about 20 years, starting at the end of World War II, when the European political map was forcibly altered by the Treaty of Yalta.

One stimulus for that letter was certainly the Council, but another was the commemoration of Poland’s 1,000 Years of Christian Baptism. On that occasion, the Episcopate of Poland sent out to fifty-six other local churches an invitation to attend the festivities. Archbishop Bolesław Kominek was the man appointed to send the same invitation to the Germans. A Silesian Pole, he had graduated from a Prussian high school and was well acquainted with the socio-cultural reality of the Western territories. It is not a secret that the Letter became a milestone for the process of reconciliation and renewed unity of Europe, which at that time was still divided by the Iron Curtain. The image of the Polish Church, the German Church and the universal Church of today would be completely different if the Polish Episcopate had not decided at that time to go against the prevailing political sentiment. The courage of the men of the Church then derived from the awareness that Christianity goes beyond the *hic et nunc*, that its duty is to build the Kingdom of God of peace and concord.

I am reminded of the biblical distinction between *Kronos* (χρόνος) and *Kairos* (καιρός), which in a practical way creates a difference between our way of living in history, and our lives in the everyday.

Kronos is a profane time, the chronological time of our watches and clocks, and is identified with the elapsing of minutes, hours, days and years. *Kronos* is at times subjected to the action of demonic spirits which do not manifest themselves every day, but when they do appear, they attack human history causing immense suffering, for they aim at destroying man and civilization. Often these demonic spirits unite, as for example Hitler and Stalin united. And they always find many people ready to work together with them. And these are not common people, but often intellectuals who wish to enter into that circle of evil. And this is the saddest thing we can imagine – that intelligence, education, culture, the very best spiritual energies man is able to muster, try to subjugate him as time goes on, not defend him.

It is enough for us to remember how both Communism and Nazism approached many brilliant people, who submitted to their ideologies of evil and voluntarily collaborated in the work of subjugating men and entire nations. The collaboration of the poor with state terrorism is not so culpable, but the collaboration of illustrious individuals is a horrible fact. Thus, in the history of *Kronos*, there are often these evil moments. But at the end a ray of light always breaks in to announce our freedom from hatred.

Thank God a time called *Kairos* arrives. *Kairos* is a time of salvation, which joins historical time to the time of the Kingdom of God. In this history of salvation, angelic spirits appear, immaculate beings capable of boldly eliminating the consequences of *Kronos*.

And spirits such as these we find precisely in the year 1965 – in particular Cardinal Kominek, who was supported by others to change chronological history. These men perhaps did not even think of the fact that they would suffer, but they did solely what they had to do by interpreting the spirit of the Gospel.

To conclude, I would like to thank all those who put their efforts into organizing the exhibition we saw at the Vatican Museums, today’s Holy Mass, and the conference we now are taking part in. So let me extend special thanks to the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, his Excellency Piotr Nowina-Konopka, to Ambassador Annette Schavan of the Germany Embassy to the Holy See, and to Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture at the Vatican, who sponsored this conference.

To honour our courageous predecessors today, felicitously remembered during this conference, is very important for us, for our cultures, for our religions and for Europe.



Il 50° anniversario del Messaggio dei vescovi polacchi ai vescovi tedeschi

Tra le 56 lettere inviate dai vescovi polacchi agli episcopati dei diversi paesi – il 18 novembre del 1965, nel corso di una sezione del Concilio Vaticano – in cui era contenuto l’invito alle celebrazioni del Millennio del Battesimo della Polonia era compresa anche la lettera ai vescovi tedeschi. *Vorremmo... invitarvi fraternamente, e nel modo più solenne, a partecipare alle celebrazioni del Millennio.*

Il messaggio più importante di questa lettera – successivamente chiamata *Messaggio dei vescovi polacchi ai loro fratelli tedeschi nell’ufficio pastorale in Cristo* – fu la dichiarata volontà di conciliazione fra polacchi e tedeschi. *Con questo spirito profondamente cristiano, ma anche umano, tendiamo a voi le nostre mani, a voi seduti ai banchi di questo Concilio che volge al termine, vi perdoniamo e chiediamo perdono.* Gli storici ritengono che il *Messaggio* abbia costituito una tappa tra le più importanti nel processo di riconciliazione e che esso abbia aperto la strada ai successivi accordi internazionali.

Autore della lettera fu l’arcivescovo di Breslavia Bolesław Kominek, ed essa fu firmata da 34 vescovi polacchi, fra cui il Primate di Polonia Stefan Wyszyński e l’arcivescovo Karol Wojtyła. Il contenuto della lettera è stato discusso da vescovi di Polonia e Germania e da alcuni intellettuali tedeschi. Molto negativo fu il giudizio che sul messaggio dei vescovi polacchi espressero le autorità politiche polacche di allora. La storia, tuttavia, ha dato ragione ai vescovi polacchi e al Primate del Millennio.

Sul francobollo del “50° anniversario del messaggio dei vescovi polacchi ai vescovi tedeschi” emesso dalla Poczta Polska è simbolicamente raffigurato un richiamo all’intenzione del messaggio: una pianta verde a forma di croce che con le proprie radici apre una crepa nel cemento.

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50th anniversary of the Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops

On 18 November 1965, during a session of the Second Vatican Council, the Polish bishops sent 56 letters of invitation to the celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland addressed at the episcopates of other countries; these letters also included an invitation for the German bishops. *We hereby invite you, in a brotherly way and with the utmost solemnity, to participate in the celebrations of the Polish Millennium.*

However, the foremost intention of the letter - which was later called the *Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers* - was to achieve reconciliation between the Poles and the German. *In the utmost Christian, yet very human, spirit, we extend to you, who are sitting here on the benches of the Council, which is coming to an end, our hands and we grant you forgiveness and ask for it.* Historians believe that the Letter represents one of the most significant stages on the way to the reconciliation which opened the door to further international agreements.

The letter was written by Bronisław Kominek, the Archbishop of Wrocław, and was signed by 34 bishops, including Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, and Archbishop Karol Wojtyła. The contents of the letter were agreed by the Polish and German bishops as well as the German intellectuals. It was highly criticised by the Polish authorities of the time. History, however, proved the Polish bishops and the Primate of the Millennium to be right.

The stamp by Poczta Polska of the issue entitled "50th anniversary of the Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops" makes a symbolic reference to the intention expressed in the letter - a symbolic cross-shaped green plant whose roots open a crack in the concrete.

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MESSAGGIO DEI VESCOVI POLACCHI AI FRATELLI TEDESCHI IN CRISTO



REVERENDISSIMI FRATELLI RADUNATI AL CONCILIO,
Lasciateci carissimi fratelli, prima che il Concilio finisca, annunciare a voi, ai nostri vicini dell'ovest una lieta notizia che l'anno prossimo, l'anno domini 1966, la Chiesa di Cristo in Polonia con tutto il popolo polacco, celebrerà l'anniversario millenario del suo battesimo e al tempo stesso i mille anni della sua esistenza come nazione e stato.

Perciò vi invitiamo fraternamente e in modo più solenne a partecipare a festività del *Millennio* polacco. Il punto culminante del *Te Deum laudamus* polacco è previsto all'inizio del maggio 1966 nel santuario di Jasna Góra dedicato alla Madonna Nera, la Regina della Polonia.

Le parole che seguiranno che servano da commento storico molto attuale al nostro *Millennio* e forse, con l'aiuto di Dio, avvicino di più le nostre nazioni in un dialogo reciproco.

È fatto storicamente affermato che nel 966 il re polacco Miecislao I sotto l'influsso di sua consorte principessa ceca Dubrawka di Boemia, ricevette il battesimo come il primo re polacco insieme alla sua corte. Da quel momento in poi si divulgava l'opera missionaria cristiana, già da generazioni nel nostro paese continuata dagli apostoli cristiani in tutta la Polonia. Il figlio e successore di Miecislao, Boleslao Chrobry, continuò l'opera di cristianizzazione iniziata dal padre e ricevette da allora papa Silvestro II il consenso di fondare la propria gerarchia polacca con la prima metropoli a Gniezno insieme a tre vescovi suffraganei a Cracovia, Breslavia e Kołobrzeg. Ininterrottamente fino al 1821 il vescovado di Breslavia era appartenuto a Gniezno, la metropoli.

Nell'anno 1000 l'allora sovrano dell'Impero Romano, l'imperatore Ottone III pellegrinò insieme a Boleslao Chrobry alla tomba di Sant'Adalberto che alcuni anni prima era morto come martire nei territori della Prussia di Baltico. Ambedue

i sovrani: l'imperatore romano e il futuro re polacco (incoronato poco prima della sua morte), fecero un lungo tratto a piedi scalzi fino alle reliquie a Gniezno che onorarono con grande devozione e commozione.

Ecco gli inizi della Polonia cristiana e al tempo stesso gli inizi dell'unità nazionale e statale. Su queste basi l'unità in senso cristiano, ecclesiastico, nazionale e statale veniva ampliata da successivi sovrani, re, vescovi per 1000 anni. La simbiosi della Chiesa e dello Stato esisteva in Polonia sin dall'inizio e non è stata mai distrutta. Col passare del tempo ciò ha indotto i polacchi a pensare quasi all'unanimità: che quello che è "polacco" sia anche "cattolico". Da ciò è nato anche uno stile religioso polacco in cui il fattore religioso è strettamente legato al fattore nazionale, con tutti i pregi e difetti che la questione comporta.

A quello stile di vita religioso apparteneva da sempre, come la sua espressione principale, il culto della Madonna. Le chiese più antiche dedicate alla Madonna (tra cui anche la cattedrale metropolitana di Gniezno); il canto polacco più antico, si può dire "la ninnananna della nazione polacca" è la canzone mariana cantata finora "Bogurodzica Dziewica, Bogiem sławiona Maryja" (*Deigenitrix illibata, Dei dicta Maria*). La sua genesi è legata a Sant'Adalberto come pure la legenda di aquile bianche polacche si lega al nido di Gniezno. Queste e altre tradizioni e leggende popolari cingono come convolvolo le vicende nazionali, unendo strettamente il fattore nazionale e cristiano, in modo che non si possa separarli senza provocare danni. Esse chiariscono, ma anche in gran parte segnalano le vicende della cultura polacca, dello sviluppo nazionale e culturale.

La recente storiografia tedesca dà un significato politico e culturale ai nostri inizi: "Mille anni fa mettendosi in contatto con l'Impero di Ottone il Grande la Polonia entrò a far parte della società latina cristiana e grazie all'abilità politica ammirabile di Miecislao I e successivamente a quella di Boleslao Chrobry, la Polonia diventò membro a pieni diritti dell'Impero di Ottone III, un impero basato sul concetto universale di incorporare tutto il mondo non bizantino, contribuendo così alla formazione dell'Europa orientale". Furono gettate basi e create condizioni per futuri rapporti tedesco-polacchi nonché per la divulgazione della cultura occidentale.

Purtroppo, nel corso dei secoli i rapporti tedesco-polacchi non sono sempre stati così proficui e negli ultimi secoli si sono trasformati in un'inimicizia del vicinato ereditaria, di cui parleremo più avanti.

Nel medioevo l'unione tra il nuovo regno polacco con l'Occidente sulla base del papato a cui disposizione i re polacchi erano sempre, provocò uno scambio ricco tra la Polonia e altri paesi occidentali, soprattutto con i paesi germanici del sud, ma anche con la Borgogna, la Fiandra, l'Italia e dopo con l'Austria, la Francia e stati marini del Rinascimento. Naturalmente all'inizio la Polonia, come la più recente formazione statale, la più giovane tra fratelli più grandi nell'Europa cristiana, più prendeva che offriva. Tra Kalisz e Cracovia, capitale reale nel medioevo, tra Bamberg, Spira, Magonza, Praga, Parigi, Lione, Clairvaux, Gand si scambiava non solo la merce. Dall'occidente venivano benedettini, cistercensi,

dopo ordini mendicanti, e in Polonia, un paese da poco cristiano, fin da subito essi diventarono importanti. Nel medioevo a ciò si aggiunsero i diritti di Magdeburgo che contribuirono molto alla fondazione di città polacche. In Polonia venivano mercanti tedeschi, architetti, artisti, coloni di cui molti si polonizzarono; furono lasciati i loro nomi di famiglia tedeschi. Nella basilica di Santa Maria dei mercanti di Cracovia anche oggi troviamo iscrizioni sepolcrali di molte famiglie germaniche del medioevo che col tempo si polonizzarono. Da ciò Hitler e altri infami trassero conclusioni che Cracovia e la Polonia fossero un terreno colonico, e per questa ragione come tale dovevano essere trattate. Un classico esempio della collaborazione tedesco-polacca nel campo di cultura e arte nel tardo medioevo è Veit Stoss, famoso scultore di Norimberga che quasi tutta la sua vita operò a Cracovia. Tutte le sue opere che vi possiamo trovare sono ispirati dal *genius loci* polacco. A Cracovia egli fondò una scuola artistica che per intere generazioni influì sulla terra polacca arricchendola.

I polacchi rispettavano profondamente i loro fratelli dell'ovest che venivano da loro come ambasciatori di una vera cultura. I polacchi non nascondevano le loro origini non polacche. Infatti dobbiamo molto alla cultura occidentale, inclusa quella tedesca.

Dall'ovest venivano da noi anche apostoli e santi. Loro fanno parte dei valori più preziosi che abbiamo ricevuto in dono dall'ovest. La loro benedetta attività sociale la sentiamo ancora in molti luoghi. Tra quelli più conosciuti possiamo elencare: Bruno di Querfurt, detto vescovo dei pagani, che in accordo con Boleslao Chrobry compì l'opera di evangelizzazione del nord-est slavo e lituano. Molto conosciuta è Sant'Edvige, principessa slava nata ad Andechs, coniuge del duca di Slesia Enrico I il Barbutto della dinastia dei Piasti, fondatrice del monastero cistercense di Trzebnica dove si trova la sua tomba. Lei divenne la maggiore benefattrice del popolo polacco nel XII secolo nelle terre occidentali che allora appartenevano alla Polonia dei Piasti in Slesia. È cosa quasi storicamente affermata che lei imparò il polacco per servire meglio il semplice popolo polacco. Dopo la sua morte e la canonizzazione immediata, al luogo della sua sepoltura a Trzebnica, ribattezzata dopo Trebinitz, affluiva in massa il popolo polacco e tedesco. Il flusso di pellegrini continua finora e nessuno rinfaccia alla nostra grande santa di essere di origine tedesca. Al contrario, in genere, tralasciando il caso dei nazionalisti estremi, la si considera il migliore esempio del ponte cristiano costruito tra la Polonia e la Germania. Siamo lieti di sentire la stessa opinione dalla parte tedesca. I ponti tra le nazioni vengono costruiti da santi, o dalle persone con buone intenzioni e mani pulite. Loro non esigono di portare via niente al popolo fratello né lingua, né usanze, né terra, né beni materiali. Anzi, gli portano i beni culturali più preziosi e gli donano sempre quello che è il più prezioso di ciò che possiedono: loro stessi e così spargono il seme della loro personalità sul terreno fertile della terra del paese vicino missionario; il seme gli porta, secondo le parole del Salvatore, frutti centupli per intere generazioni. Così percepiamo in Polonia Sant'Edvige così percepiamo tutti i missionari martiri

che venuti dai paesi dell'ovest operarono in Polonia, come successe con l'apostolo e martire Adalberto di Praga. In ciò consiste la grande differenza tra il portare della cultura in modo pienamente cristiano e il cosiddetto colonialismo, oggi giustamente condannato.

A partire dal 1200, quando la terra polacca con le persone e istituzioni cominciava a diventare sempre più cristiana, questa terra diede vita ai santi polacchi. Già nel XII secolo il vescovo di Cracovia Stanisław Szczepanowski, credente e martire, fu ucciso all'altare dal re Boleslao II l'Ardito (morto in esilio come penitente devoto in un monastero nell'Alta Austria). Sulla tomba di Santo Stanislaw, nella cattedrale reale di Cracovia fu scritto un canto maestoso in suo onore, finora cantato in latino in Polonia. *Gaude Mater Polonia, prole faecunda nobili.*

Successivamente nel firmamento comparve la tripla stella dei santi della famiglia di Odrowąż (una famiglia molto antica che per secoli aveva risieduto nei suoi possedimenti sull'Oder nell'Alta Slesia). Il maggiore di loro San Giacinto, in polacco Jacek, apostolo domenicano che a passi da gigante percorse l'intera Europa dalla Moravia fino al Mar Baltico e dalla Lituania a Kiev. Un suo parente, beato Ceslao, anch'egli domenicano, che difese la Breslavia di allora dai mongoli, e nella Breslavia di oggi giace in una tomba nella nuova chiesa dedicata a Santo Adalberto viene onorato da cittadini pii come protettore della città ricostruita dai maceri dopo il 1945.

A Cracovia riposa beata Bronislava, secondo la tradizione sorella del beato Ceslao, canonichessa premostratense.

Nel firmamento dei santi risplende un maggior numero di stelle. A Sącz beata Cunegonda, a Gniezno beato Bogumił e beata Jolanda, in Mazovia Vladislao, nel castello reale di Cracovia la pia Edivge, una nuova Edivge, prossima alla canonizzazione. A ciò si aggiunsero nuovi santi e martiri, Santo Stanislao Kostka, novizio dei gesuiti a Roma, San Giovanni Kanty, professore dell'Università Jagellonica di Cracovia, Sant'Andrea Bobola, martire della Polonia dell'est, canonizzato nel 1938, nonché altri santi, fino al padre francescano Massimiliano Kolbe, martire del campo di concentramento di Auschwitz che volontariamente diede la sua vita per il suo prossimo. Attualmente a Roma ci sono in corso 30 canonizzazioni o beatificazioni di circa 30 candidati polacchi. Il nostro popolo onora i suoi santi, li considera migliore frutto che un paese cristiano possa offrire.

L'università polacca di Cracovia appena menzionata fu, accanto a quella di Praga, la prima università in tutto il territorio europeo dell'est. Fondata nel 1363 (sic!) dal re Casimiro il Grande, per molti secoli illuminava non solo la cultura polacca ma anche quella europea nel miglior senso della parola. Nel XVI e XVII secolo, quando le terre slesiane dei Piasti cessarono di appartenere al Regno Polacco, migliaia di studenti e professori di Breslavia, Racibórz, Gliwice, Głogów, Nysa, Opole e da tante altre città della Slesia studiavano e insegnavano a Cracovia. I loro nomi e i luoghi di nascita in forma polacco-latina vengono elencati su vecchi registri dell'università. Anche Niccolò Copernico (*Copernicus*) è menzionato. Fu allievo del professor Bylica, a Cracovia studiò l'astronomia. L'uni-

versità diede alla cultura europea centinaia di scienziati di altissimo livello: matematici, fisici, medici, avvocati, astronomi, storici e filosofi di cultura. Tra loro possiamo menzionare il famoso Paweł Włodkowic, rettore dell'Università di Cracovia che durante il Concilio di Costanza molto apertamente e con tutto il suo prestigio di scienziato si schierò in favore della tolleranza religiosa allora insolita e con molto coraggio presentò l'idea che i popoli europei dell'est pagani non fossero animali selvaggi che bisognava convertire con fuoco e spada. Era necessario che godessero degli stessi diritti dell'uomo come cristiani.

Włodkowic fu un classico esempio di tolleranza e libertà di pensiero polacco. Le sue tesi erano rivolte contro l'ordine teutonico tedesco, che allora con fuoco e spada convertiva indigeni del nord slavo e dei paesi prussiani e baltici. Nel corso dei secoli l'ordine diventò un terribile e compromettente peso per il cristianesimo europeo, per il suo simbolo, la croce, e anche per la Chiesa, a nome della quale lottavano. Finora, dopo tante generazioni e secoli, la denominazione "cavaliere teutonico" è per ogni polacco un insulto orribile e, purtroppo, spesso sinonimo di ciò che è tedesco.

Nei terreni in cui si erano stabiliti cavalieri teutonici, nacquero i prussiani che nel territorio polacco screditarono universalmente tutto ciò che era tedesco. Nello sviluppo storico essi vengono rappresentati dai nomi seguenti: Alberto di Prussia, Federico detto il Grande, Bismarck e finalmente Hitler all'apice della lista.

Federico II agli occhi della nazione polacca compare come il principale ideatore della spartizione della Polonia, e indubbiamente non senza ragione. Per 150 anni la nazione polacca di molti milioni di persone ha vissuto spartita tra tre maggiori imperi: la Prussia, la Russia e l'Austria, fino al 1918, quando dopo la conclusione della Prima guerra mondiale, è potuta rinascere; estremamente esaurita, ha ripreso l'esistenza dello stato tormentato da molte difficoltà.

Dopo un breve ventennio di indipendenza (1918-1939), si è scatenato quello che eufemisticamente si chiama la Seconda guerra mondiale e che per noi è sinonimo di distruzione e sterminio totale. Sopra la nostra povera patria è calata una notte terribile, mai conosciuta da generazioni. Il periodo viene comunemente definito come "occupazione tedesca" e con quel nome è entrato nella storiografia tedesca. Tutti eravamo impotenti e indifesi. Il paese coperto di campi di concentramento, sopra i quali di giorno e di notte si diffondeva il fumo dei crematori. Oltre 6 milioni di cittadini polacchi, molti d'origine ebraica, hanno dovuto pagare con la loro vita in quel periodo di occupazione. La parte dell'intelligenza è stata semplicemente distrutta; 2 mila di preti e 5 vescovi (un quarto dell'Episcopato di allora) sono stati uccisi nei campi di concentramento. Centinaia di preti e decine di migliaia della popolazione civile sono state fucilate nel momento dello scoppio della guerra (in una sola diocesi di Chełmno 278 sacerdoti). Durante la guerra la diocesi di Breslavia ha perso il 48% dei suoi preti, il 47% nella diocesi di Chełmno. Tanti sono stati traslocati. Sono state chiuse molte scuole superiori e università e seminari. Ogni divisa tedesca, non solo quella delle SS, incuteva spavento nei polacchi, è diventata anche causa dell'odio per i tedeschi.

Tutte le famiglie polacche dovevano piangere la morte dei loro vittime. Non vogliamo elencare tutto, per non riaprire la ferita non ancora cicatrizzata. Se ricordiamo qui quella terribile notte polacca, lo facciamo solo per capire meglio noi stessi e il nostro modo di pensare. Cerchiamo di dimenticare. Speriamo che il tempo, il grande *kairos* divino, guarisca le ferite spirituali.

Dopo tutto che è successo nel passato remoto e che purtroppo nel passato prossimo, non stupisce che tutta la nazione polacca senta l'importanza dell'elementare bisogno di sicurezza e che sempre con sfiducia guarda i vicini dell'ovest più prossimi. L'atteggiamento spirituale è, lo possiamo dire, un problema delle nostre generazioni che, se Dio vuole, con un po' di buona volontà scomparirà e deve scomparire. Nei momenti politici e spirituali delle sofferenze della Nazione più difficili, nella sua secolare divisione la Chiesa cattolica e la Vergine sono state sempre il nostro soccorso e simboli dell'unità nazionale, come lo è stata la famiglia polacca. Durante le lotte di liberazione nazionali nei tempi difficili i polacchi salivano le barricate con i loro simboli: Sui vessilli di libertà aquile bianche da una parte e l'immagine di Maria Vergine dall'altra. La loro divisa è sempre stata: "Per la nostra e vostra libertà".

Ecco un breve schizzo della storia millenaria dello sviluppo della cultura polacca, con particolare attenzione al vicinato polacco-tedesco. Il carico che aggrava i rapporti reciproci è sempre grande, viene aumentato dal cosiddetto "ferro rovente" del vicinato. La frontiera sull'Oder e Neisse è, come lo possiamo ben capire, per i tedeschi un frutto molto amaro dell'ultima guerra, della distruzione di massa, come lo è anche la sofferenza di migliaia di profughi e espulsi tedeschi (ciò in conseguenza dell'ordine degli alleati pronunciato dagli imperi vincitori a Potsdam nel 1945). La maggior parte della popolazione ha abbandonato i territori per paura del fronte russo ed è fuggita all'ovest. Per la nostra patria, che è uscita da questo sterminio di massa non come uno stato vincitore, bensì come stato esausto, la questione è diventata esistenziale (e non come problema di maggiore "zona di vita"). Peggio ancora: volevano che la nazione di 30 milioni di cittadini abitasse in una sorta di "Governatorato Generale" degli anni 1939-1945, privo dei terreni occidentali e quelli orientali, dai quali fino al 1945 milioni di persone sono dovuti fuggire nei "terreni occidentali di Potsdam". D'altronde, dove potevano recarsi, se il Governatorato Generale insieme alla capitale a Varsavia erano sotto le macerie. Un'ondata di distruzione dell'ultima guerra ha attraversato il paese non una volta sola, come in Germania, ma dal 1914 ciò è successo molte volte, da una all'altra parte, e come cavalieri dell'Apocalisse ha lasciato sempre macerie, distruzione, indigenza, malattie, epidemie, lacrime, morte e continui complessi di vendetta e odio.

Cari Fratelli tedeschi, non ve la prendete con noi per quest'elenco di tutto ciò che è successo nell'ultimo momento del nostro *Millennio*. Lo facciamo non per accusare ma piuttosto per giustificarci. Sappiamo benissimo, quanti cittadini tedeschi si trovavano sotto la pressione nazionalsocialista inumana. Ci sono note sofferenze interiori terribili, a quali una volta venivano esposti vescovi probi e

responsabili, basti ricordare il cardinale Faulhaber, von Galen e Preysing. Sappiamo dei martiri della "rosa bianca", degli attivisti del movimento di resistenza del 20 luglio, sappiamo quanti laici e sacerdoti hanno offerto la loro vita (Lichtenberg, Metzger, Klausener e tanti altri). Migliaia di tedeschi, sia cristiani che comunisti, condivideva nei campi di concentramento la sorte dei nostri fratelli polacchi.

Ciononostante, malgrado la situazione aggravata in modo così disperato dal passato, proprio in questo momento, carissimi fratelli, ci rivolgiamo a voi: cerchiamo di dimenticare. Senza polemica, senza guerra fredda, ma iniziamo il dialogo che oggi cercano di raggiungere il concilio e papa Paolo VI. E se in tutte e due le parti troveremo buona volontà, ci pare che non possiamo dubitarne, un dialogo serio deve compiersi e col passare del tempo deve dare risultati, malgrado tutto, nonostante il "ferro rovente".

Proprio durante il concilio sembra necessario che, obbligati del momento, cominciamo un dialogo sulla piattaforma vescovile del lavoro pastorale, senza ulteriori indugi, per conoscerci meglio, per conoscere meglio le nostre usanze, culto religioso, stile di vita e condizionamento culturale del passato.

Abbiamo cercato di prepararci bene insieme al popolo di Dio polacco alla festività del *Millennio* con la cosiddetta Grande Novena, sotto l'alto patronato della Madonna. Per nove anni (1957-1965) secondo le parole *per Mariam ad Jesum* abbiamo predicato in tutta la Polonia, coinvolgendo il sacerdozio per occuparci di questioni pastorali importanti e contemporanei e di compiti sociali, come per esempio pericoli sociali, ricostruzione della coscienza nazionale, matrimonio e vita familiare, catechesi ecc.

Tutta la nazione credente ha partecipato in modo spirituale e molto attivo al concilio attraverso preghiere, offerte, opere di penitenza. Durante il concilio nelle parrocchie sono state organizzate funzioni di supplica. La santa immagine della Vergine Maria, come pure i confessionali di Czestochowa, per intere settimane sono stati assaliti da delegazioni di tutte le parrocchie polacche che attraverso offerte personali e preghiere cercavano di contribuire al concilio.

Finalmente quest'anno, l'ultimo anno della Grande Novena ci siamo messi sotto la protezione di Maria: vescovi, sacerdoti, persone consacrate e tutti gli stati della nostra nazione credente. Davanti a enormi pericoli sia di natura morale che sociale che minacciano l'anima della nostra nazione nonché della sua esistenza biologica, ci può solo salvare l'aiuto e la grazia del nostro Salvatore che vogliamo ricevere attraverso sua Madre. Pieni di fiducia puerile ci lanciamo nelle Sue braccia. Solo così possiamo essere internamente liberi, pronti al suo servizio e al tempo stesso come bambini liberi, e perfino come "schiavi di Dio", come disse San Paolo.

Vi preghiamo, pastori cattolici del popolo tedesco, perché a modo vostro festeggiate insieme a noi il nostro *Millennio* cristiano: sia con preghiere o indicando un giorno appropriato a tale scopo. Per ogni gesto vi saremo molto grati. Vi preghiamo inoltre affinché vogliate salutare, esprimendo la nostra gratitudine,

i fratelli evangelici tedeschi che insieme a voi si sforzano a trovare soluzione ai nostri problemi.

In questo spirito più cristiano ma anche molto umano, porgiamo le nostre mani verso di voi seduti qui sulle panche del concilio che volge al termine, nonché vi perdoniamo e chiediamo perdono. Se voi, vescovi tedeschi e padri del concilio, in fratellanza stringerete le mani, solo allora potremo con coscienza pulita celebrare il nostro *Millennio* in modo più cristiano possibile.

Vi invitiamo cordialmente a partecipare alle celebrazioni in Polonia. Che ci guidi il Salvatore misericordioso e Maria Vergine, regina della Polonia, *Regina Mundi* e *Mater Ecclesiae*.

Roma, li 18 novembre 1965

POLISH BISHOPS' ADDRESS TO THEIR GERMAN BROTHERS ON THE CHRISTIAN PASTORAL OFFICE



MOST REVEREND COUNCIL BROTHERS,
Honored Brothers, let us permit ourselves, before the Council is concluded, to share with you, our nearest Western neighbors, with the cheerful news that next year – Anno Domini 1966 – the Christian Church in Poland along with the whole Polish nation are to celebrate the *Millenium* of their christening and national and political existence.

We hereby invite you in a brotherly and solemn manner to take part in the church celebrations of the Polish *Millenium*. The climax of Polish *Te Deum laudamus* will be in early May 1966 at Our Lady of Jasna Gora Church.

Let the herein reasoning provide a historical as well as updated commentary to our *Millenium*, and maybe with God's help will bring our two nations closer in the mutual dialogue.

This is a historical fact that in the year 966 Polish Duke Mieszko I, influenced by his wife, the Czech Princess Dombrovka, received, along with his court, the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, as the first Polish duke. Since that time the Christian missionary action has spread carried out by the Christian apostles across Poland. Boleslaw Chrobry (Boleslaw the Bald), a son and successor of Mieszko, continued the Christianization work launched by his father and the then Pope Sylvester II gave him a consent to establish the Polish church hierarchy and the first archdiocese in Gniezno, with suffragan bishoprics in Cracow, Wroclaw, and Kolobrzeg. Until 1821 the archdiocese in Gniezno was under the authority of the bishopric of Wroclaw.

In 1000, Otton III, the ruler of the Roman Empire, along with Boleslaw the Bald went as pilgrims to the grave of the martyr Saint Adalbert, who died as a martyr on the territory of Baltic Prussians. The rulers – Roman emperor and fu-

ture Polish king – covered a long distance barefoot to see holy relics in Gniezno – they worshipped them with great piety and internal emotion.

This is what the historical beginnings and foundations of Christian Poland as well as national and political unity looked like. They provided the basis for future rulers, kings, bishops, and priests to develop and consolidate religious, national, and political unity over a thousand years. Christian symbiosis of the Church and state has existed in Poland since the very beginning and has actually never been broken. Gradually "Polish" was associated with "Catholic" and such mindset became prevalent in the Polish people. Moreover, this gave birth to the Polish religious style, where religious and national factors were always interwoven and inseparable, which, of course, had its advantages and disadvantages.

Moreover, this religious style of life has always included – as its primary manifestation – Polish Marian cult. The oldest Polish churches were dedicated to the Holy Mother (including the archbishop cathedral in Gniezno); the oldest Polish song, a kind of a "lullaby of the Polish nation," has been the Marian song "*Bogurodzica Dziewica, Bogiem slawiona Maryja*" ["God bearer and virgin, Mary blessed of God"], which is still performed. According to the tradition, its beginnings are associated with Saint Adalbert, just as the legend associates Polish white eagle with the Gniezno nest. Such traditions and folk legends, which are entwined like an ivy vine around the national and Christian aspects and make up the fabric that cannot be torn apart without being damaged. It is them that elucidate and - to a large degree - determine later history of the Polish culture as well as all our national and cultural development.

This is how recent German historiography finds Poland's beginnings significant in political and cultural terms: "Encounter with the empire of Otto the Great, which took place a thousand years ago, enabled Poland to become part of the Latin Christian society, and owing to the impressive political astuteness of Mieszko I and Boleslaw the Bald, became an equal member of the Otto III empire – the empire based on the universal concept of incorporation all non-Byzantine world into the European Christendom, which contributed critically to the formation of Eastern Europe." Thus, the basis and conditions for future fruitful German-Polish relations and spreading the Occident culture were provided.

Unfortunately, these relations were not always that fruitful at the later stages of our history and in recent centuries metamorphosed into hereditary neighbors' hostility, which will be discussed later.

The inclusion of the new Polish kingdom into the West – effected with a help of the Papacy whom the Polish kings always served – resulted in the comprehensive and dynamic exchange between Poland and Western nations, particularly South-German, Burgundy, Flanders, Italy, France in Middle Ages as well as the Italian cities-states of the Renaissance, and Austria. Certainly, as the youngest state in the European Christian community Poland was, at least initially, rather a recipient than a donor. The trade exchange was not the only basis for the relations that developed in those times between Kalisz and Cracow - the

royal capital in the Middle Ages - and Bamberg, Speyer, Mainz, Prague, Cologne, Lyon, Clairvaux and Ghent. The Benedictines, Cistercians, and later mendicant orders who came to Poland, a young Christian country, from Western Europe enjoyed an impressive growth here. In those times we adopted the German Magdeburg Law that considerably contributed to the foundation of our towns. German merchants, architects, artists and settlers also streamed to Poland and a large number of them became Polish; yet, they retained their German family names. Next to the big Cracow church of Saint Mary you can still find the epitaphs of numerous German families dating back to the Middle Ages, that in time became Polish. Unfortunately, Hitler and his followers drew the conclusion that Cracow and all the Polish territory was the area of German settlements and should be treated as a part of Germany. A classic example of the German - Polish cultural and artistic cooperation in the late Middle Ages was a world-famous sculptor Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz) from Nuremberg who spent nearly all his professional life in Cracow and all his works were inspired by the spirit of Polish environment. He founded the artistic school there, where all generations of artists influenced and enriched the Polish culture.

Poles showed a deep respect for their Western Christian brothers who arrived here as the envoys of the real culture and never ignored their no-Polish origin. We owe much to the Western culture, including the German one.

Apostles and saints also came to us from the West and they are probably the most valuable gifts we have ever received from that part of Europe. We can still feel their blessed activities in a large number of places. Those most famous include Saint Bruno of Querfurt, called the "Bishop of Pagans," who - in agreement with Boleslaw the Bold - carried out the work of evangelization of the Slavic and Lithuanian North-East. Others include Saint Hedwig (Jadwiga), the Duchess of Silesia, born in Andechs, wife of the Polish Piast ruler of Silesia, Henryk Brodaty (Henry the Bearded), the founder of the Cistercian female order in Trzebnica, where she was buried. Jadwiga became the greatest 13th-century benefactress of the Polish people in Silesia - a western region that was then part of Poland. It is a fact almost historically confirmed that she learnt Polish language to help poor Poles. After she died and was soon afterwards canonized, crowds of Polish and German people streamed to her grave in Trzebnica (later spelt Trebnitz). They still do and no one accuses our great saint of being of the German origin. Instead, she is by and large found - except a handful of fanatic nationalists - to be the best manifestation of the Christian bridge built between Poland and Germany. We are glad that so many Germans share this point of view. It is saints who are the best builders of the bridges between nations - they have sincere intentions and clean hands and do not seek robbing a brotherly nation of the language, customs, land or any assets. Instead, they offer valuable cultural assets and, which is even more valuable, they offer themselves and thereby plant a seed of their personality in the fertile soil of the neighboring, missionary country; this seed produces, according to the words spoken by the

Savior, hundredfold fruit for the next generations. This is how we perceive Saint Hedwig of Silesia and all the other missionaries and martyrs who came here from the West to spread Christianity, including the apostle and martyr Adalbert - of Prague. This is what the huge difference between true Christian mission of spreading the culture and the so-called colonialism, rightly condemned today, consists in.

Following the year 1200, when Poland became more and more Christian regarding its population and institutions, Polish saints began to emerge. As early as in the 12th century, the bishop of Cracow Stanislaus Szczepanowski, confessor and martyr, was murdered at the altar by King Boleslav Smialy (Boleslaw the Brave) who later died as a pious penitent in exile in a monastery in Upper Austria). At the Saint Stanislaus' tomb in the Cracow Cathedral, a majestic song in his honor was composed, which is still sung in Latin across Poland: *Gaude Mater Polonia, prole faecunda nobili*.

Then a triple star of the Polish saints emerged on the firmament. They came from the family of Odrowaz (old family that had a seat on the Oder River, in Upper Silesia). The greatest one - Saint Hyacinth (Jacek in Polish) - was a Dominican apostle who travelled across Eastern Europe from Moravia to the Baltic Sea, from Lithuania to Kiev. His relative, the Blessed Czeslaw, also Dominican, defended the city of Wroclaw against Mongols. Today he rests in the reconstructed church of Saint Adalbert (Wojciech), worshiped by the pious people as the patron of the city rebuilt after 1945.

The third family member, Blessed Bronislawa, Czeslaw's sister, member of the Silesian order of Saint Norbert, rests in Cracow.

A number of stars on the firmament of Polish saints was on a constant increase: Blessed Cunegunda in Nowy Sacz, Blessed Bogumil and Jolanta in Gniezno, Blessed Ladyslaw in Masovia, Sainly Jadwiga at the royal castle in Cracow - new Polish Jadwiga awaiting canonization. Later saints and martyrs include Saint Stanislaus Kostka, a Jesuit novice in Rome, Saint Jan Kanty, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Saint Andrzej Bobola, a martyr from eastern Poland, canonized in 1938, Franciscan Father Maksymilian Kolbe, a martyr from the concentration camp in Auschwitz, who voluntarily sacrificed his life for his brother. Nowadays, nearly 30 Polish candidates are awaiting canonization or beatification in Rome. Our nation worships his saints and finds them the most noble fruit Christian nation can bear.

The above-mentioned Cracow university was, along with Prague, the first such educational institution in Eastern European. Founded in 1363 by the King Casimir the Great was throughout ages the center of radiation of the Polish and European culture in the best meaning of this word. In the 15th and 16th centuries, when Silesian and Piast lands were no longer part of the Polish Kingdom, thousands of students and professors coming from Wroclaw, Raciborz, Gliwice, Glogow, Nysa, Opole, and many other Silesian towns studied and taught in Cracow. Their family names and names of their birthplaces can be found in the

old university registers. Mikolaj Kopernik (*Nicolaus Copernicus*) name is also mentioned there. He was an astronomy student taught by Professor Bylica. Other Cracow students who contributed to the European culture include top-class mathematicians, physicians, doctors, lawyers, astronomers, historians, and philosophers of culture. One of them was famous Pawel Wlodkowic, Rector of the Jagiellonian University, who, during the sessions of the Council of Konstanz, promoted religious and human tolerance with great openness and defended his point of view with the highest scientific authority, which was incredible in those times. An act of great personal courage was his opinion that the pagan Eastern-European peoples are not the wild animals to be converted with fire and sword since they enjoy the same natural human rights as Christians.

In a way, Włodkowic's opinions provided a classical manifestation of the tolerant and liberal Polish thought. His theses were directed against the German order of Teutonic Knights – the so-called *Knights of the Cross* – who tried to convert natives in the Slavic North and Prussian states with fire and sword. Over the centuries they became a horrible and most embarrassing load for the European Christianity and its symbol – the cross – but also the Church in whose name they acted. Even today, after so many generations and years Poles find the expression "*Knight of the Cross*" a fearsome insult and, unfortunately, for ages identified, all too often, with Germandom.

Later, the lands settled by Teutonic Knights became the homeland of Prussians whose actions brought shame to everything that is German on the Polish territory. In the historical development they are represented by such people as Prince Albert of Prussia, Friedrich the Great (Friedrich II), Bismarck, and finally Hitler (which was a kind of its climax).

Friedrich the Great was recognized by the Polish nation as the main initiator of the partitions of Poland and this opinion was to a large extent justified. For 150 years millions of Poles lived in the partitions done by the then three powers – Prussia, Russia, and Austria. It was not until 1918, when the World War I ended, that Poland could slowly rise from the grave, extremely weak, facing huge problems, yet ready to start again its sovereign existence.

After a short, 20-year long, period of independence (1918-1939), a disaster – euphemistically called the World War II – came and although the German invasion was definitely not provoked by Poles, it was designed as an act of total destruction and extermination of the Polish nation. A horribly black night fell over our poor Homeland. We had not seen such black night for generations. It is commonly called the "German occupation" and under such term has become part of the Polish history. We all were hopeless and defenseless. Concentration camps were set up across Poland, where crematory chimneys smoked days and nights. Over 6 million Polish citizens, whose majority was of the Jewish origin, paid the highest price for the occupation. A huge number of the intelligentsia prominent representatives was exterminated; 2 000 priests and 5 bishops (a fourth part of the then Episcopate members) were murdered in the concentration camps. Hun-

dreds of priests and tens of thousands of civilians were executed at their places of residence when the war broke out (just in Chelmno diocese 278 were murdered). The diocese of Włocławek lost 48 percent of priests and the diocese of Chelmno – 47 percent. A large number of priests were displaced. All universities, high schools and seminaries were closed down. Each German uniform, not just that of SS, filled Poles with horror but also became an object of hatred toward Germans. All Polish families mourned those who were Germans' victims. We do not want to enumerate all the damages to avoid reopening the wounds that have not been healed yet. We remind you of that horrible Polish night so that you could easier understand us and our present mindset... We try to forget. We hope that time – this great divine *kairos* – will allow for healing spiritual wounds.

After all that happened in the past, unfortunately not distant one, it is difficult to be surprised that all Polish nation feels significance of the elementary need for security and still takes a mistrustful attitude toward its closest Western neighbors. Such mental attitude is – one might say – a problem of our generations, which, God willing, and with some goodwill will disappear and must disappear. During the most severe political crises and spiritual sufferings of the nation, over its century-long split-ups and dilemmas, the Catholic Church and Holy Virgin, along with the Polish family, were always the anchor of salvation and symbols of the national unity. In all the battles for freedom during the times of oppression Poles mounted the barricades with their symbols: white eagle on one side and a picture of Holy Mother on the other side of the freedom's banners. Their motto has always been: "*For your and our liberty.*"

This is the outline of the history of the 1000-year long development of the Polish culture, with particular reference to the Polish – German neighborhood. Our relations are still considerably strained and this is enhanced by the thorny problem of our neighborhood. We can well understand that for Germans the Polish border on the Oder and Neisse Rivers is a bitter fruit of the last war, mass extinction, just as the suffering of millions of German refugees and expellees. (This was the consequence of the inter-allied order of the victorious powers, issued at the Potsdam conference in 1945). The majority of the German population left those lands in fear of the Russian front and fled to the West. As our Homeland emerged from that mass extinction not as victorious but an extremely weak country, this is the question of existence and not a larger "*Lebensraum.*") What is worse, there were plans to compress the 30-million nation into the corridor of some "*Generalgouvernement*" from the years 1939 – 1945: without western as well as eastern lands. Since 1945, millions of Poles were forced to leave eastern lands and move to the „Potsdam western land." On the other hand, they had nowhere to go, as the so-called *Generalgouvernement* laid in rubble and ruins. Waves of destruction of the last war did not engulf the country just once, as they did in Germany, but since 1914 – like the knights of Apocalypse – many times back and forth, each time leaving behind ashes, ruins, diseases, plagues, tears, death, and a growing sense of revenge and hatred.

Dear German Brothers, do not hold it against us that we enumerate the events from the last stage of our Millennium. We are not going to accuse you but rather justify ourselves. We know very well how many Germans lived under the inhuman, national – socialist pressure. We know about terrible internal torments the righteous and responsible German bishops suffered – to name only three of them: Cardinal Faulhaber, von Galen or Preysing. We know about the “*White Rose*” martyrs, the resistance fighters of the 20 July, a large number of priests and laics who sacrificed their lives (Lichtenberg, Metzger, Klausener, and many others). Thousands of Germans – Christians as well as communists – shared the fate of their Polish brothers in the concentration camps...

And in spite of it all, despite the situation almost hopelessly burdened with the past, we are calling to you – our honorable Brothers - let us try to forget. No polemics, no more Cold War but rather the beginning of a dialogue the Council and Pope Paul VI are striving for. If goodwill is found on both sides – and no one should doubt about it – a serious dialogue must certainly succeed and in time bear good fruit, notwithstanding any thorny problems.

It seems to be our imperative, here, at the Council, to initiate the dialogue based on the bishops’ pastoral platform without hesitation, to better know our folk traditions, the religious cult, and a style of life, that are all rooted in the past and conditioned by this cultural past.

We have sought through the so-called Great Novena, under the high patronage of the holiest Virgin Mary, to prepare ourselves and the entire Polish Christian community for Millennium celebrations. For nine years (1957 through 1965) we have acted in the spirit of the words *per Mariam ad Jesum* to dedicate the pulpits across Poland, along with the whole institutional body of the church, to the crucial contemporary pastoral problems and social tasks, such as social dangers, reconstruction of the national conscience, marriage institution, family life, religious education, and the like.

Moreover, all the Polish Christians have taken an active part in the Council through prayers, sacrifices, and acts of repentance. Propitiatory services were held in all parishes During the Council sessions. In Czestochowa, the holy picture of the Mother of God, as well as confession booths and their Communion benches were besieged for weeks by the parish delegations who wanted to help the Council by personal sacrifice and prayer.

Finally, this year – the last of Great Novena – we have consecrated ourselves to the Mother of God: bishops, priests, members of religious orders, and all Polish laity. It is only help and grace of our Savior that can protect us against enormous moral and social dangers threatening the soul of our nation and its biological existence. We want to ask this help and grace through the intercession of His Mother, the Holiest Virgin Mary. Full of child-like trust we throw ourselves into Her arms. It is only in this way that we can become free internally as servants or even “God’s slaves” (as Saint Paul puts it) but at the same time free children.

We ask you, the Catholic shepherds of the German nation, to seek in your own way to join in our celebration of Christian *Millenium*: be it through prayer or be it through a special memorial day. We shall be grateful to you for each and every such gesture. Moreover, we ask you to extend our greetings and appreciation to the German Evangelical Brethren who are trying along with you and us to find solutions to our problems.

In this most Christian but also human spirit, we reach out our hands to you, sitting here on the benches of the Council, which is soon to be concluded, granting forgiveness and asking for forgiveness. And if you, the German bishops and Council Fathers, grasp our hands in a brotherly manner, we will be able to celebrate our *Millenium* with clear conscience and in a true Christian spirit.

We invite you most cordially to come to Poland to our celebration. May the merciful Savior and the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Poland, *Regina Mundi* and *Mater Ecclesiae* grant this.

Rome, 18 November 1965



PRZEWIELEBNI BRACIA SOBOROWI!
Niech nam wolno będzie, czcigodni Bracia, zanim jeszcze Sobór zostanie zamknięty, ogłosić Wam, naszym najbliższym zachodnim sąsiadom, radosną wieść, iż w przyszłym roku - w roku Pańskim 1966 - Kościół Chrystusowy w Polsce, a wraz z nim cały Naród polski, obchodzić będzie *Millenium* swego chrztu, a jednocześnie Tysiąclecie swego narodowego i państwowego istnienia.

Niniejszym zapraszamy Was w sposób braterski, a zarazem najbardziej uroczysty, do udziału w uroczystościach kościelnych polskiego *Millenium*. Punkt kulminacyjny polskiego *Te Deum laudamus* przypadnie na początek maja 1966 r. na Jasnej Górze, u Matki Bożej, Królowej Polski.

Następujące wywody niechaj posłużą jako historyczny i równocześnie bardzo aktualny komentarz do naszego *Millenium*, a może nawet przy pomocy Bożej jeszcze bardziej zbliżą one oba nasze Narody do siebie w drodze wzajemnego dialogu.

Jest faktem historycznym, że w roku 966 książę polski Mieszko I pod wpływem swej małżonki, czeskiej królowny Dąbrówki, przyjął jako pierwszy książę polski wraz ze swoim dworem święty sakrament chrztu. Od tej chwili szerzyło się chrześcijańskie dzieło misyjne - już od pokoleń w naszym kraju prowadzone przez chrześcijańskich apostołów na całym obszarze Polski. Syn i następca Mieszka, Bolesław Chrobry, prowadził dalej dzieło chrystianizacji rozpoczęte przez jego ojca i uzyskał od ówczesnego Papieża Sylwestra II zgodę na utworzenie własnej, polskiej hierarchii z pierwszą metropolią w Gnieźnie i trzema jej sufraganiami: w Krakowie, Wrocławiu i Kołobrzegu. Aż do 1821 r. Gnieznu jako metropolii bez przerwy podlegało biskupstwo wrocławskie.

W roku 1000 ówczesny władca Rzymskiego Imperium, cesarz Otton III, udał się wraz z Bolesławem Chrobrym jako pielgrzym do grobu męczennika Św. Wojciecha, który kilka lat przedtem poniósł śmierć męczeńską wśród bałtyckich Prusów. Obaj władcy, rzymski i przyszedł polski król (był on na krótko przed swoją śmiercią koronowany na króla), odbyli długi odcinek drogi boso do świętych relikwii w Gnieźnie, które uczcili z wielką pobożnością i wewnętrznym wzruszeniem.

Takie są dziejowe początki Polski chrześcijańskiej i zarazem początki narodowej i państwowej jedności. Na tych podstawach ową jedność w sensie chrześcijańskim, kościelnym, narodowym i zarazem państwowym, poprzez wszystkie pokolenia rozbudowywali dalej władcy, królowie, biskupi i kapłani przez 1000 lat. Symbioza chrześcijańska Kościoła i państwa istniała w Polsce od początku i nigdy właściwie nie uległa zerwaniu. Doprowadziło to z czasem do powszechnego niemal wśród Polaków sposobu myślenia: co „polskie”, to i „katolickie”. Z niego to zrodził się także polski styl religijny, w którym od początku czynnik religijny jest ściśle spleciony i zrosnięty z czynnikiem narodowym, z wszystkimi pozytywnymi, ale również i negatywnymi stronami tego problemu.

Do tego religijnego stylu życia należy również od dawien dawna - jako główny jego wyraz - polski kult maryjny. Najstarsze polskie kościoły poświęcone są Matce Boskiej (między innymi również gnieźnieńska katedra metropolitalna); najstarszą polską pieśnią, można powiedzieć „kołysanką Narodu polskiego”, jest do dziś śpiewana pieśń maryjna „Bogurodzica Dziewica, Bogiem sławiona Maryja”. Tradycja wiąże jej powstanie ze Św. Wojciechem, podobnie jak legenda łączy polskie białe orły z gnieźnieńskim gniazdem. Takie i tym podobne tradycje i legendy ludowe, które oplatają jak powój wydarzenia dziejowe, spłoty tak ściśle ze sobą czynnik narodowy i chrześcijański, że nie da się ich po prostu bez szkody od siebie oddzielić. One to właśnie naświetlają, a nawet w dużej mierze nadają swe piętno całym późniejszym dziejom polskiej kultury, całemu rozwojowi narodowemu i kulturalnemu.

Najnowsza historiografia niemiecka nadaje naszym początkom następujące polityczne i kulturalne znaczenie: „Przez zetknięcie się z imperium Ottona Wielkiego przed tysiącem lat Polska weszła do łacińskiej społeczności chrześcijańskiej, a dzięki podziwu godnej zręczności politycznej Mieszka I, a następnie Bolesława Chrobrego, Polska stała się równouprawnionym członkiem imperium Ottona III, imperium opartego na uniwersalnej koncepcji - objęcia całego niebizantyjskiego świata, przez co wniosła decydujący wkład do ukształtowania się Europy wschodniej”. Tym samym dano podstawą i stworzono warunki do przyszłych owocnych stosunków niemiecko-polskich oraz do szerzenia kultury zachodniej.

Niestety, w późniejszym toku dziejów stosunki niemiecko-polskie nie zawsze pozostały owocne, a w ostatnich stuleciach przekształciły się w swego rodzaju dziedziczną wrogość sąsiedzką, o czym będzie mowa później.

Związanie nowego polskiego królestwa z Zachodem, i to w oparciu o papieżstwo, któremu królowie polscy stale oddawali się do dyspozycji, spowodowało

wało w średniowieczu żywą po każdym względem i nad wyraz bogatą wymianę między Polską i narodami zachodnimi, szczególnie z krajami południowo-niemieckimi, ale również i z Burgundią, Flandrią, Włochami, a później z Austrią, Francją oraz morskimi państwami okresu Odrodzenia. Przy czym, naturalnie, Polska, jako młodszy twór państwowy - najmłodszy wśród starszych braci chrześcijańskiej Europy - początkowo była stroną bardziej biorącą niż dającą. Pomiedzy Kaliszem i Krakowem, królewską stolicą w średniowieczu, a Bambergią, Spirą, Moguncją, Pragę, Paryżem, Kolonią, Lyonem, Clairvaux i Gandawą dokonywała się nie tylko wymiana towarów. Z Zachodu przybywali benedyktyni, cystersi, a później zakony żebracze, i natychmiast osiagali w Polsce, kraju dopiero co zdobytym dla chrześcijaństwa, wspaniały rozrost.

W średniowieczu doszło do tego niemieckie prawo magdeburskie, które oddało wielkie usługi przy zakładaniu polskich miast. Przybywali też do Polski niemieccy kupcy, architekci, artyści, osadnicy, z których bardzo wielu spolonizowało się; pozostawiono im ich niemieckie nazwiska rodzinne. Przy wielkim krakowskim kościele mieszczan pod wezwaniem Najświętszej Maryi Panny znajdujemy i dziś jeszcze napisy nagrobne licznych rodzin niemieckich z okresu średniowiecza, które z czasem wszystkie spolszczyły się, z czego Hitler i inni ludzie niesławnej pamięci wysunęli po prostu wniosek, że Kraków i cała Polska były jakby jedynie niemieckim terenem osadniczym, wobec czego muszą być odpowiednio do tego traktowane. Klasycznym przykładem niemiecko-polskiej współpracy w dziedzinie kultury i sztuki w późnym średniowieczu jest światowej sławy rzeźbiarz Wit Stwosz z Norymbergi, który przez całe niemal swe życie działał w Krakowie; wszystkie znajdujące się tam jego dzieła inspirował genius loci polskiego otoczenia. Stworzył on w Krakowie własną szkołę artystyczną, która przez całe pokolenia wywierała swój wpływ i wzbogacała polską ziemię.

Polacy głęboko szanowali swych braci z chrześcijańskiego Zachodu, którzy przybywali do nich jako posłowie prawdziwej kultury. Polacy nie pomijali milczeniem ich niepolskiego pochodzenia. Mamy zaiste wiele do zawdzięczenia kulturze zachodniej, a w tym i niemieckiej.

Z Zachodu też przybyli do nas apostołowie i święci. Oni to należą do wartości najcenniejszych, którymi obdarzył nas Zachód. Błogosławioną działalność społeczną odczuwamy na wielu miejscach dziś jeszcze. Do najbardziej znanych zaliczamy Św. Brunona z Kwerfurtu, zwanego biskupem pogan, który w porozumieniu z Bolesławem Chrobrym dokonał dzieła ewangelizacji słowiańskiego i litewskiego północnego wschodu. Szczególnie znana jest Św. Jadwiga, księżniczka śląska, urodzona w Andechs, małżonka polskiego, piastowskiego władcy Śląska, Henryka Brodatego, założycielka klasztoru żeńskiego zakonu cysterskiego w Trzebnicy, gdzie znajduje się jej grób. Stała się ona największą dobrodziejką ludu polskiego w XII w. na terenie ziem zachodnich, należących wówczas do Polski piastowskiej na Śląsku. Jest rzeczą niemal historycznie stwierdzoną, że nauczyła się ona mowy polskiej, by móc służyć prostemu ludowi polskiemu. Po jej śmierci i jej szybkiej kanonizacji, do miejsca jej wiecznego

spoczynku w Trzebnicy, której nadano później nazwę Trebnitz, płynęły tłumy polskiego i niemieckiego ludu. Dziś jeszcze robią to całe tysiące i nikt nie zarzuca naszej wielkiej świętej, że była pochodzenia niemieckiego. Przeciwnie, uważa się ją na ogół, pomijając nacjonalistycznych fanatyków, za najlepszy wyraz budowania chrześcijańskiego pomostu między Polską i Niemcami. Cieszymy się, że i po niemieckiej stronie słyszy się często ten sam pogląd. Pomosty między narodami budują najlepiej właśnie ludzie święci, tylko tacy, którzy mają szczerą intencję i czyste ręce. Nie dążą oni do zabrania czegokolwiek bratniemu narodowi: ani języka, ani obyczajów, ani ziemi, ani dóbr materialnych. Przeciwnie, przynoszą mu najbardziej wartościowe dobra kulturalne i oddają zazwyczaj to, co jest najcenniejsze i co sami posiadają: siebie samych, i w ten sposób rzucają nasienie swej własnej osobowości na żyzny grunt nowej ziemi sąsiedniego, misyjnego kraju; nasienie to przynosi, zgodnie ze słowami Zbawiciela, stokratne owoce, i to na całe pokolenia. Tak właśnie patrzymy w Polsce na św. Jadwigę Śląską, patrzymy na wszystkich innych misjonarzy męczenników, którzy przybywszy z krajów położonych na Zachodzie, działali w Polsce, jak to było z apostołem męczennikiem Adalbertem-Wojciechem z Pragi na czele. Na tym właśnie polega również najgłębsza różnica między prawdziwie chrześcijańską misją niesienia kultury a tak zwanym kolonializmem, dziś słusznie potępianym.

Po roku 1200, gdy polska ziemia stawała się w swych ludziach i instytucjach coraz bardziej chrześcijańska, ziemia ta wydała własnych świętych polskich. Już w XII w. biskup krakowski, Stanisław Szczepanowski, wyznawca i męczennik, został zamordowany przy ołtarzu przez króla Bolesława Śmiałego (król ten zmarł następnie na wygnaniu jako świątobliwy pokutnik w pewnym klasztorze Górnej Austrii). Przy grobie św. Stanisława w królewskiej katedrze w Krakowie powstała majestatyczna pieśń ku jego czci, śpiewana dziś wszędzie w Polsce po łacinie: *Gaudę Mater Polonia, prole faecunda nobili*.

Następnie ukazała się na firmamencie potrójna gwiazda polskich świętych z rodziny Odrowążów (stary ród, który przez wieki miał swą siedzibę nad Odrą, na Górnym Śląsku). Największy spośród nich to św. Hiacynt - po polsku Jacek - apostoł dominikański, który krokami olbrzyma przemierzył całą wschodnią Europę od IVIoraw do Bałtyku i od Litwy po Kijów. Krewny jego, bł. Czesław, również dominikanin, który bronił ówczesnego Wrocławia przed Mongołami, a w dzisiejszym Wrocławiu spoczywa w grobowcu w nowo wybudowanym kościele św. Wojciecha, jest czczony przez pobożną ludność jako patron miasta odbudowującego się z gruzów od 1945 r.

W Krakowie spoczywa wreszcie bł. Bronisława, według tradycji siostra bł. Czesława, norbertanka ze Śląska.

Coraz więcej gwiazd ukazuje się na firmamencie świętych. W Sączu bł. Kunegunda, w Gnieźnie bł. Bogumił i bł. Jolanta, na Mazowszu Ładysław, a na zamku królewskim w Krakowie świątobliwa Jadwiga, nowa polska Jadwiga, która czeka na kanonizację. Później doszli nowi święci i męczennicy - św. Stanisław Kostka, nowicjusz jezuitów w Rzymie, św. Jan Kanty, profesor Uniwer-

sytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie, św. Andrzej Bobola, męczennik we wschodniej Polsce, kanonizowany w roku 1938, oraz inni święci, aż do franciszkanina O. Maksymiliana Kolbe, męczennika obozu koncentracyjnego w Oświęcimiu, który dobrowolnie oddał życie za swego brata. Obecnie czeka w Rzymie na kanonizację, względnie beatyfikację, około 30 polskich kandydatów. Naród nasz otacza wciąż swoich świętych, uważa ich za najbardziej szlachetny owoc, jaki wydać może kraj chrześcijański.

Wspomniany wyżej polski uniwersytet krakowski był obok Pragi pierwszą tego rodzaju uczelnianą całym obszarze wschodnioeuropejskim. Założony w roku 1363 przez Króla Kazimierza Wielkiego był przez wieki środkiem promieniowania nie tylko polskiej, ale również ogólnoeuropejskiej kultury w najlepszym tego słowa znaczeniu. W XV i XVI wieku, kiedy śląskie ziemie piastowskie przestały należeć do Królestwa Polskiego, studiowały i nauczały w Krakowie tysiące studentów i profesorów z Wrocławia, Raciborza, Gliwic, Głogowa, Nysy, Opola i z wielu innych miast Śląska. Nazwiska ich i nazwy ich miejsc urodzenia figurują w polsko-łacińskim narzeczu w starych rejestrach uniwersytetu. Także Mikołaj Kopernik (Copernicus) jest tam wymieniony po nazwisku. Studiował on astronomię w Krakowie u profesora Bylicy. Uniwersytet ten wydał kulturze europejskiej setki uczonych najwyższej klasy naukowej: matematyków, fizyków, lekarzy, prawników, astronomów, historyków i filozofów kultury. Znajduje się między nimi również słynny Paweł Włodkowic, rektor uniwersytetu krakowskiego, który podczas obrad Soboru w Konstancji z całą otwartością i najwyższym autorytetem uczonego głosił niesłychaną na owe czasy religijną i ludzką tolerancję i z wielką odwagą osobistą reprezentował pogląd, że pogańskie ludy wschodnioeuropejskie nie są dziką zwierzyną, którą należy i wolno nawracać ogniem i mieczem. Maja one bowiem naturalne prawa ludzkie tak samo jak chrześcijanie.

Włodkowic był niejako klasycznym wyrazem tolerancyjnej i wolnościowej myśli polskiej. Jego tezy kierowały się przeciwko niemieckim rycerzom zakonnym, tak zwanym Krzyżakom, którzy wówczas na słowiańskiej północy oraz w krajach pruskich i bałtyckich właśnie ogniem i mieczem nawracali tubylców. Stali się oni w ciągu wieków strasliwym i w najwyższym stopniu kompromitującym ciężarem dla europejskiego chrześcijaństwa, dla jego symbolu - krzyża, a także i dla Kościoła, w imieniu którego występowali. I dziś jeszcze, po wielu pokoleniach i wiekach, określenie „krzyżak” jest dla każdego Polaka budzącym przestraszanie wyzwiskiem i, niestety, od dawna aż nazbyt często identyfikowanym z tym, co niemieckie.

Z terenów, na których osiedlili się Krzyżacy, zrodzili się następnie ci Prusacy, którzy doprowadzili do powszechnego skompromitowania na ziemiach polskich wszystkiego, co niemieckie. W dziejowym rozwoju reprezentują ich następujące nazwiska: Albert Pruski, Fryderyk zwany Wielkim, Bismarck i wreszcie Hitler jako punkt szczytowy.

Fryderyk II uchodzi w oczach całego Narodu polskiego za głównego inicjatora rozbiorów Polski, i to bez wątpienia nie bez racji. Przez 150 lat wielomi-

lionowy Naród polski żył pod zaborem dokonany przez trzy ówczesne mocarstwa: Prusy, Rosję i Austrię, aż mógł wreszcie w 1918 r., w chwili zakończenia pierwszej wojny światowej, znowu powoli powstać z grobu; do ostatecznych granic osłabiony, rozpoczął na nowo wśród największych trudności swą egzystencję państwową.

Po krótkiej, bo około 20 lat trwającej niepodległości (1918-1939 r.), rozpętało się bez jego winy nad Narodem polskim coś, co eufemistycznie nazywa się drugą wojną światową, co jednak było dla nas, Polaków, pomyślane jako akt totalnego zniszczenia i wytępienia. Nad naszą biedną Ojczyzną zapadła strasznie ciemna noc, jakiej nie doznaliśmy od pokoleń. Powszechnie nazywa się ona u nas okresem „niemieckiej okupacji” i pod tą nazwą weszła do polskiej historii. Wszyscy byliśmy bezsilni i bezbronni. Kraj pokryty był obozami koncentracyjnymi, z których dniem i nocą dymyły kominy krematoriów. Ponad 6 milionów obywateli polskich, w większości pochodzenia żydowskiego, musiało zapłacić życiem za ten okres okupacji. Kierownicza warstwa inteligencji została po prostu zniszczona; 2 tysiące kapłanów i 5 biskupów (jedna czwarta ówczesnego Episkopatu) zostało mordowanych w obozach. Setki kapłanów i dziesiątki tysięcy osób cywilnych zostały rozstrzelane na miejscu w chwili rozpoczęcia wojny (tylko w diecezji chełmińskiej 278 kapłanów). Diecezja wrocławska straciła w czasie wojny 48% swych księży, diecezja chełmińska - 47%. Wielu innych wysiedlono. Zamknięto wszystkie szkoły średnie i wyższe, zlikwidowano seminaria duchowne. Każdy niemiecki mundur SS nie tylko napawał Polaków upiornym strachem, ale stał się przedmiotem nienawiści do Niemców. Wszystkie rodziny polskie musiały opłakiwać tych, którzy padli ich ofiarą. Nie chcemy wyliczać wszystkiego, aby na nowo nie rozrywać nie zabliźnionych jeszcze ran. Jeśli przypominamy tę strasliwą polską noc, to jedynie po to, aby nas dziś łatwiej było zrozumieć, nas samych i nasz sposób dzisiejszego myślenia... Staramy się zapomnieć. Mamy nadzieję, że czas - ten wielki boski kairos - pozwoli zagoić duchowe rany.

Po wszystkim, co stało się w przeszłości, niestety, tak świeżej przeszłości - trudno się dziwić, że cały Naród polski odczuwa wagę elementarnej potrzeby bezpieczeństwa i że wciąż jeszcze z nieufnością odnosi się do swych najbliższych sąsiadów na zachodzie. Ta duchowa postawa jest - można powiedzieć - problemem naszych pokoleń, który, co daj Boże, przy dobrej woli zniknie i zniknąć musi. W najcięższych chwilach politycznych i duchowych udręk Narodu, w jego wielowiekowym rozdarciu Kościół katolicki i Święta Dziewica były zawsze dla niego kotwicą ratunku i symbolem narodowej jedności, podobnie jak była nim polska rodzina. We wszystkich walkach wolnościowych w czasach ucimienia szli Polacy ze swymi symbolami na barykady: białe orły pojednaj strońnie, obraz Matki Bożej po drugiej na sztandarach wolności. Dewizą ich było zawsze: „Za naszą i waszą wolność”.

Oto w ogólnym zarysie obraz tysiącletniego rozwoju polskiej kultury, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem sąsiedztwa polsko-niemieckiego. Obciążenie obustronnych stosunków ciągle jeszcze jest wielkie, a potęguje je tak zwane

„gorące żelazo” tego sąsiedztwa. Polska granica na Odrze i Nysie jest, jak to dobrze rozumiemy, dla Niemców nad wyraz gorzkim owocem ostatniej wojny, masowego zniszczenia, podobnie jak jest nim cierpienie milionów uchodźców i przesiedleńców niemieckich. (Stało się to na międzyaliancki rozkaz zwycięskich mocarstw, wydany w Poczdamie 1945 r.). Większa część ludności opuściła te tereny ze strachu przed rosyjskim frontem i uciekła na Zachód. Dla naszej Ojczyzny, która wyszła z tego masowego mordowania nie jako zwycięskie, lecz krańcowo wyczerpane państwo, jest to sprawa egzystencji (nie zaś kwestia większego „obszaru życiowego”). Gorzej - chciano by 30-milionowy naród wcisnąć do korytarza jakiegoś „Generalnego Gubernatorstwa” z lat 1939 - 1945, bez terenów zachodnich, ale i bez terenów wschodnich, z których od roku 1945 miliony polskich ludzi musiały odpłynąć na „poczdamskie tereny zachodnie”. Dokąd zresztą mieli wtedy pójść, skoro tak zwane Generalne Gubernatorstwo razem ze stolicą Warszawą leżało w gruzach, w ruinach. Fale zniszczenia ostatniej wojny przeszły przez kraj nie tylko jeden raz, jak w Niemczech, lecz od 1914 r. wiele razy, to w jedną, to w drugą stronę, jak apokaliptyczni rycerze, pozostawiając za każdym razem ruiny, gruzy, nędzę, choroby, zarazy, łzy, śmierć oraz rosnące kompleksy odwetu i nienawiści.

Drodzy Bracia niemieccy, nie bierzcie nam za złe wyliczanie tego, co wydarzyło się w ostatnim odcinku czasu naszego tysiąclecia. Ma to być nie tyle oskarżenie, co raczej własne usprawiedliwienie. Wiemy doskonale, jak wielką część ludności niemieckiej znajdowała się pod nieludzką, narodowosocjalistyczną presją. Znane nam są okropne udręki wewnętrzne, na jakie swego czasu byli wystawieni prawi i pełni odpowiedzialności niemieccy biskupi, wystarczy bowiem wspomnieć kardynała Faulhabera, von Galena i Preysinga. Wiemy o męczennikach „Białej Róży”, o bojownikach ruchu oporu z 20 lipca, wiemy, że wielu świeckich i kapłanów złożyło swoje życie w ofierze (Lichtenberg, Metzger, Klausener i wielu innych). Tysiące Niemców, zarówno chrześcijan jak i komunistów, dzieliło w obozach koncentracyjnych los naszych polskich braci...

I mimo tego wszystkiego, mimo sytuacji obciążonej niemal beznadziejnie przeszłością, właśnie w tej sytuacji, czcigodni Bracia, wołamy do Was: próbujmy zapomnieć. Żadnej polemiki, żadnej dalszej zimnej wojny, ale początek dialogu, do jakiego dziś dąży wszędzie Sobór i Papież Paweł VI. Jeśli po obu stronach znajdzie się dobra wola - a w to nie trzeba chyba wątpić - to poważny dialog musi się udać i z czasem wydać dobre owoce, mimo wszystko, mimo „gorącego żelaza”.

Właśnie w czasie Soboru wydaje nam się nakazem chwili, abyśmy zaczęli dialog na pasterskiej platformie biskupiej, i to bez ociążania się, byśmy się nawzajem lepiej poznali - nasze wzajemne obyczaje ludowe, kult religijny i styl życia, tkwiące korzeniami w przeszłości i tą przeszłością kulturalną uwarunkowane.

Staraliśmy się przygotować wraz z całym polskim Ludem Bożym na uroczystości Tysiąclecia przez tak zwaną Wielką Nowennę, pod wysokim patronatem Najświętszej Maryi Panny. Przez dziewięć lat (1957-1965) używaliśmy -

w myśl słów per Mariam ad Jesum - kazalnicy w całej Polsce, a także całego duszpasterstwa, dla zajmowania się ważnymi, współczesnymi problemami duszpasterskimi i zadaniami społecznymi, jak na przykład społeczne niebezpieczeństwa, odbudowa sumienia narodowego, małżeństwo i życie rodzinne, katechizacja itp.

Cały wierzący Naród brał też duchowy i bardzo żywy udział w Soborze przez modlitwy, ofiary i dzieła pokutne. W czasie obrad soborowych odprawiano we wszystkich parafiach błagalne nabożeństwa. Święty obraz Matki Bożkiej, jak i konfesjonały i stoły, przy których komunikowano w Częstochowie, były przez całe tygodnie obleżone przez delegacje parafialne z całej Polski, które przez osobistą ofiarę i modlitwę chciały pomóc Soborowi.

Wreszcie w tym roku, ostatnim Wielkiej Nowenny, oddaliśmy się wszyscy pod opiekę Matki Bożej: biskupi, kapłani, osoby zakonne, jak i wszystkie stany naszego wierzącego Narodu. Przed ogromnymi niebezpieczeństwami tak moralnej, jak też i socjalnej natury, które zagrażają duszy naszego Narodu oraz jego biologicznej egzystencji, może nas uratować tylko pomoc i łaska naszego Zbawiciela, którą chcemy uprosić za pośrednictwem Jego Matki, Najświętszej Maryi Panny. Pełni dziecięcej ufności rzucamy się w Jej ramiona. Tylko tak możemy być wewnętrznie wolni, jako oddani na służbę, a jednocześnie jako wolne dzieci - a nawet jako „niewolnicy Boga” - jak to nazywa św. Paweł.

Prosimy Was, katolicy Pasterze Narodu niemieckiego, abyście na własny sposób obchodzili z nami nasze chrześcijańskie *Millenium*: czy to przez modlitwy, czy przez ustanowienie w tym celu odpowiedniego dnia. Za każdy taki gest będziemy Wam wdzięczni. I prosimy Was też, abyście przekazali nasze pozdrowienia i wyrazy wdzięczności niemieckim Braciom Ewangelikom, którzy wraz z Wami i z nami trują się nad znalezieniem rozwiązania naszych

W tym jak najbardziej chrześcijańskim, ale i bardzo ludzkim duchu, wyciągamy do Was, siedzących tu, na ławach kończącego się Soboru, nasze ręce oraz udzielamy wybaczenia i prosimy o nie. A jeśli Wy, niemieccy biskupi i Ojcowie Soboru, po bratersku wyciągnięte ręce ujmiecie, to wtedy dopiero będziemy mogli ze spokojnym sumieniem obchodzić nasze *Millenium* w sposób jak najbardziej chrześcijański.

Zapraszamy Was na te uroczystości jak najserdeczniej do Polski. Niech tym kieruje miłosierny Zbawiciel i Maryja Panna, Królowa Polski, *Regina Mundi* i *Mater Ecclesiae*.

Rzym, dnia 18 listopada 1965 r.

HIRTENBRIEF DER POLNISCHEN BISCHÖFE AN IHRE DEUTSCHEN AMTSBRÜDER UND DIE ANTWORT DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHÖFE



HOCHWÜRDIGE KONZILSBRÜDER!

Es sei uns gestattet, ehrwürdige Brüder, ehe das Konzil sich verabschiedet, unseren nächsten westlichen Nachbarn die freudige Botschaft mitzuteilen, daß im nächsten Jahr - im Jahre des Herrn 1966 - die Kirche Christi in Polen und mit ihr zusammen das gesamte polnische Volk das Millennium seiner Taufe und damit auch die Tausendjahrfeier seines nationalen und staatlichen Bestehens begehen wird.

Wir laden Sie hiermit in brüderlicher, aber auch zugleich in feierlichster Weise ein, an den Kirchenfeiern des polnischen Millenniums teilzunehmen; der Höhepunkt des polnischen *Te deum laudamus* soll Anfang Mai 1966 auf der Jasna Góra, bei der heiligen Mutter Gottes, der Königin Polens, stattfinden.

Die folgenden Ausführungen mögen als historischer und zugleich auch sehr aktueller Kommentar unseres Millenniums dienen und vielleicht auch mit Hilfe Gottes unsere beiden Völker im gegenseitigen Dialog einander noch näherbringen.

Es steht geschichtlich einwandfrei fest, daß im Jahr 966 der polnische Herzog Mieszko I. durch Einfluß seiner Gemahlin, der tschechischen Königstochter Dombrowka, zusammen mit seinem Hofstaat als erster polnischer Herzog das heilige Sakrament der Taufe empfing.

Von diesem Augenblick an wurde das christliche Missionswirken in Polen - seit Generationen durch christliche Apostel schon vorher in unserem Land verkündet - im ganzen polnischen Volksraum verbreitet.

Der Sohn und Nachfolger Mieszkos, Bolesław Chrobry (der Tapfere) setzte das Christianisierungswerk seines Vaters fort und erwirkte vom damaligen Papst Silvester II. die Errichtung einer eigenen polnischen Hierarchie mit der

ersten Metropole in Gniezno (Gnesen) und drei Suffraganbistümern Kraków, Wrocław, Kołobrzeg (Krakau, Breslau, Kolberg). Bis 1821 blieb Gniezno weiterhin Metropole des Breslauer Bistums. Im Jahre 1000 begab sich der damalige Herrscher des Römischen Imperiums, der Kaiser Otto III., zusammen mit Bolesław Chrobry als Pilger zum Märtyrerschrein des heiligen Wojciech-Adalbert, der einige Jahre vorher bei den baltischen Preußen den Märtyrertod erlitten hatte. Die beiden Herrscher, der römische und der zukünftige polnische König (er wurde kurz vor seinem Tode zum König gekrönt), gingen barfuß eine weite Strecke Weges zu den heiligen Gebeinen in Gniezno, die sie alsdann mit großer Andacht und innerer Ergriffenheit verehrten.

Das sind die geschichtlichen Anfänge des christlichen Polens und zugleich auch die Anfänge seiner nationalen und staatlichen Einheit. Auf diesen Fundamenten - christlich, kirchlich, national und staatlich zugleich - wurde sie durch alle Generationen weiter ausgebaut von Herrschern, Königen, Bischöfen und Priestern, 1000 Jahre hindurch. Die Symbiose Christentum, Kirche, Staat bestand in Polen seit Anfang und wurde eigentlich nie gesprengt. Sie erzeugte mit der Zeit die fast allgemeine polnische Denkart: Polnisch ist zugleich katholisch. Aus ihr heraus entstand auch der polnische Religionsstil, in dem seit Anfang an das Religiöse mit dem Nationalen eng verwoben und verwachsen ist, mit allen positiven, aber auch negativen Seiten dieses Problems.

Zu diesem religiösen Lebensstil gehört auch seit jeher als sein Hauptausdruck der polnische Marienkult. Die ältesten polnischen Kirchen sind der Mutter Gottes geweiht (u.a. die Gnesener Metropolitan-Kathedrale); das älteste polnische Lied, sozusagen das Wiegenlied des polnischen Volkes, ist ein bis heute noch gesungenes Marienlied: "Bogurodzica-dziewica, Bogiem Sławiona Maryja" (Gottesgebärerin - Jungfrau Maria). Die Tradition bringt sein Entstehen mit dem heiligen Wojciech zusammen, ähnlich wie die Legende es mit den polnischen weißen Adlern im Nest von Gniezno tut. Diese und ähnliche Traditionen und Volkslegenden, welche die Geschichtstatsachen wie Efeu umranken, haben das Gemeinsame von Volk und Christentum so eng miteinander verwoben, daß man sie einfach schadlos nicht auseinanderbringen kann. Von ihnen her wird alles spätere polnische Kulturgeschehen, die gesamte polnische nationale und kulturelle Entwicklung, bestrahlt, ja sogar zu einem Großteil geprägt.

Die allerneueste Geschichtsschreibung gibt diesen unseren Anfängen folgende politische und kulturelle Bedeutung: "In der Begegnung mit dem Imperium Ottos des Großen vor einem Jahrtausend hat sich Polens Eintritt in die lateinische Christenheit vollzogen, und durch die bewundernswert geschickte Politik Mieszkos I. und sodann Bolesław des Tapferen ist es zu einem gleichberechtigten Glied des universal konzipierten, auf Erfassung der gesamten nicht-byzantinischen Welt gerichteten Imperium Romanum Ottos III. geworden, womit Polen einen entscheidenden Beitrag zu der Gestaltung des östlichen Europa geleistet hat..."

Damit war die Grundlage gelegt und die Form und Voraussetzung geschaffen für die kommenden fruchtbaren deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen und die Ausbreitung der abendländischen Kultur.

Leider sind die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen im späteren Verlauf der Geschichte nicht immer fruchtbar geblieben und haben sich sozusagen in den letzten Jahrhunderten in eine Art nachbarliche "Erbfeindschaft" verwandelt. Darüber später.

Der Anschluß des neuen polnischen Königreiches an das Abendland, und zwar mit Hilfe des Papsttums, dem sich die polnischen Könige immer wieder zur Verfügung stellten, brachte im Mittelalter einen in jeder Hinsicht regen und äußerst reichen Austausch zwischen Polen und den abendländischen Völkern, insbesondere mit den süddeutschen Ländern, aber auch Burgund und Flandern, mit Italien und später mit Frankreich und Österreich und den italienischen Renaissancestaaten, wobei natürlicherweise Polen als jüngerer Staatsgebilde, als jüngster von den älteren Brüdern des christlichen Europas, anfangs mehr der nehmende als der gebende Teil war.

Es wurden zwischen Kalisz und Kraków, der polnischen Königsstadt des Mittelalters, und zwischen Bamberg, Speyer, Mainz, Prag, Paris, Köln und Lyon und Clairvaux und Gent nicht nur Waren ausgetauscht. Es kamen aus dem Westen die Benediktiner, die Zisterzienser und später die Bettelorden und erhielten in Polen, im christlichen Neuland, sofort einen schwunghaften Auftrieb; dann kam im Mittelalter das deutsche Magdeburger Recht dazu, das bei polnischen Stadtgründungen große Dienste leistete. Es strömten auch nach Polen deutsche Kaufleute, Architekten, Künstler und Siedler, von denen sehr viele im polnischen Volkstum aufgingen: Ihre deutschen Familiennamen ließ man ihnen. In der großen Krakauer Bürgerkirche St. Maria finden wir noch heute die Grabinschriften zahlreicher deutscher Familien aus dem Mittelalter, die mit der Zeit alle polnisch geworden sind, woraus Hitler und andere - unseligen Gedenkens - den einfachen Schluß zogen, daß Kraków und ganz Polen nur eine deutsche Siedlung seien und demgemäß behandelt werden müssen. - Das klassische Beispiel deutsch-polnischer Zusammenarbeit in Kultur und Kunst im hohen Mittelalter ist wohl der weltberühmte Bildhauer Veit Stoß aus Nürnberg (Wit Stwosz), der fast sein ganzes Leben lang in Kraków wirkte; seine Werke dort sind alle vom Genius loci der polnischen Umgebung inspiriert: Er schuf in Kraków eine eigene Kunstlerschule, die noch Generationen hindurch nachwirkte und das polnische Land befruchtete.

Die Polen haben ihre Brüder aus dem christlichen Westen, die als Boten der wahren Kultur zu ihnen kamen, sehr geehrt und verschwiegen niemals ihre nichtpolnische Stammesherkunft. Wir haben der abendländischen - auch der deutschen - Kultur wahrhaftig sehr viel zu verdanken.

Es kamen auch aus dem Westen zu uns Apostel und Heilige, und sie gehören wohl zu dem Wertvollsten, was uns das Abendland geschenkt hat. Ihr segensreiches soziales Wirken spüren wir vielerorts noch heute. Zu den

bekanntesten zählen wir den heiligen Bruno von Querfurt, "Bischof der Heiden" genannt, der den slawischen und litauischen Nordosten im Einvernehmen mit Bolesław Chrobry evangelisierte. Dann ganz besonders die heilige Hedwig (Jadwiga), Herzogin von Schlesien, aus Andechs gebürtig, Gemahlin des polnischen Piastenfürsten Heinrich des Bärtigen (Brodaty) von Schlesien und Gründerin des Zisterzienserinnenklosters von Trzebnica (Trebnitz), wo sie ihre Grabstätte gefunden hat. Sie ist im 13. Jahrhundert die größte Wohltäterin des polnischen Volkes in den damaligen Westgebieten des Piastenspolens, in Schlesien, geworden. Es steht historisch ziemlich fest, daß sie, um dem polnischen einfachen Volk dienen zu können, sogar die polnische Sprache lernte. Nach ihrem Tode und ihrer baldigen Heiligsprechung strömten ohne Unterlaß Scharen des polnischen und deutschen Volkes zu ihrer Grabstätte in Trzebnica - später Trebnitz genannt. Und sie tun es noch heute zu Tausenden und Abertausenden. Niemand macht unserer großen Landesheiligen den Vorwurf, daß sie deutschen Geblütes war; im Gegenteil, man sieht sie allgemein - von einigen nationalistischen Fanatikern abgesehen - als den besten Ausdruck eines christlichen Brückenbaues zwischen Polen und Deutschland an -, wobei wir uns freuen, auch auf deutscher Seite recht oft dieselbe Meinung zu hören. Brücken bauen zwischen Völkern können eben am besten nur heilige Menschen, nur solche, die eine lautere Meinung und reine Hände besitzen. Sie wollen dem Brudervolke nichts wegnehmen, weder Sprache noch Gebräuche, noch Land, noch materielle Güter; im Gegenteil: Sie bringen ihm höchst wertvolle Kulturgüter, und sie geben ihm gewöhnlich das Wertvollste, was sie besitzen: sich selbst, und werfen damit den Samen ihrer eigenen Persönlichkeit in den fruchtbaren Boden des neuen Missionsnachbarlandes; dieser trägt dann gemäß dem Heilandswort hundertfache Früchte, und zwar Generationen hindurch. So sehen wir in Polen die heilige Hedwig von Schlesien, so sehen wir auch alle anderen Missionare und Märtyrer, die, aus den westlich gelegenen Ländern kommend, in Polen wirkten mit dem schon erwähnten Märtyrerapostel Wojciech-Adalbert aus Prag an der Spitze. Darin besteht auch wohl der allertiefste Unterschied zwischen echter christlicher Kulturmission und dem sogenannten, heute zu Recht verpönten Kolonialismus.

Nach dem Jahre 1200, als das polnische Land immer christlicher wurde in seinen Menschen und Institutionen, wuchsen ihm eigene polnische Heilige heran.

Schon im 12. Jahrhundert war es der Bischof Stanislaus Szczepanowski von Kraków, Bekenner und Märtyrer, vom König Bolesław dem Verwegenen am Altare erschlagen. (Der König selbst starb als heiligmäßiger Büsser in der Verbannung in einem Kloster in Oberösterreich.) Am Grabe des heiligen Stanislaus in der königlichen Domkirche von Kraków entstand das majestätische Lied zu seiner Ehre, heute überall in Polen lateinisch gesungen: "Gaude mater Polonia, prole foecunda nobili..."

Dann erschien am Firmament das heilige polnische Dreigestirn aus der Familie der Odrowaz (ein altes Geschlecht, das lange Jahrhunderte an der Oder in

Oberschlesien seinen Sitz hatte). Der größte von ihnen ist der heilige Hyazinth - polnisch Jacek genannt -, ein Dominikanerapostel, der ganz Osteuropa von Mähren bis zum Baltikum, von Litauen bis Kiew mit Riesenschritten durchmaß. Sein Verwandter, der selige Czesław, ebenfalls Dominikaner, der die damalige Stadt Wrocław gegen die Mongolen verteidigte und im heutigen Wroclaw, in der neuerbauten Wojciech-(Adalbert-)Kirche begraben ist, wird von der frommen Bevölkerung als Patron der aus den Trümmern von 1945 wiedererstandenen Stadt verehrt. Und schließlich ruht in Kraków die selige Bronisława, der Tradition nach Schwester des seligen Czesław, eine Norbertanerin aus Schlesien.

Die Sterne am Heilighimmel werden immer mehr: In Sącz die selige Kunigunde, in Gniezno Bogumil und die selige Jolanta, in Masowien Władysław, auf der Königsburg in Kraków die heiligmäßige Königin Jadwiga, eine neue polnische Hedwig, die auf ihre Heiligsprechung wartet. Später kamen neue Heilige und Märtyrer dazu: der heilige Stanislaus Kostka, Jesuitennovize in Rom, der heilige Johannes Kantius, Professor an der Jagiellonischen Universität in Kraków, der heilige Andreas Bobola, Märtyrer in Ostpolen, 1938 heiliggesprochen, und andere Heilige bis zum Franziskanerpater Maximilian Kolbe, dem Märtyrer vom Konzentrationslager Auschwitz, der sein Leben für seine Mitbrüder freiwillig hingab. Gegenwärtig warten in Rom etwa 30 polnische Kandidaten auf ihre Heilig- und Seligsprechung. - Unser Volk ehrt seine Heiligen und betrachtet sie als die edelste Frucht, die ein christliches Land hervorbringen kann.

Die obengenannte polnische Universität in Kraków war die erste dieser Art neben Prag im ganzen osteuropäischen Raum. Gegründet schon im Jahre 1363 von König Kasimir dem Großen (Kazimierz Wielki), war sie Jahrhunderte hindurch Zentrum nicht nur politischer, sondern auch universaler europäischer Kulturstrahlung nach allen Richtungen, im besten Sinne des Wortes. - Im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, als die schlesischen Piastenländer nicht mehr zum polnischen Königreich gehörten, studierten in Kraków und dozierten daselbst Tausende von Studenten und Professoren aus Wratislavia (Breslau), Raciborz (Ratibor), Gliwice (Gleiwitz), Glogow (Glogau), Nyse (Neisse), Opole (Oppeln) und vielen anderen Städten Schlesiens. Ihre Namen und die Namen ihrer Geburtsorte sind in diesem polnisch-lateinischen Idiom in den alten Universitätsregistern verzeichnet. Auch Nicolaus Kopernik (Copernicus) wird da namentlich angeführt. Er studierte in Kraków Astronomie beim Professor Martin Bylica. Hunderte von Gelehrten von höchstem wissenschaftlichen Rang hat diese Universität hervorgebracht und der europäischen Kultur geschenkt: Mathematiker, Physiker, Mediziner, Rechtsgelehrte, Astronomen, Historiker und Kulturphilosophen. Unter ihnen befindet sich auch der berühmte Paulus Włodkowic, Rektor der Krakauer Universität, der auf dem Konzil in Konstanz frank und frei, mit höchster Gelehrtenautorität, eine für damalige Zeiten unerhörte religiöse und humane Toleranz lehrte und mit großem persönlichem Mut den Standpunkt vertrat: Die heidnischen Völker Osteuropas seien kein Freiwild, das man mit

Feuer und Schwert bekehren soll und darf. Sie haben natürliche Menschenrechte genauso wie die Christen...

Włodkowic war sozusagen der klassische Ausdruck des polnischen toleranten und freiheitlichen Denkens. Seine Thesen waren gegen die deutschen Ordensritter, die sogenannten "Kreuzritter", gerichtet, die damals im slawischen Norden und in den preußischen und baltischen Ländern die dortigen Ureinwohner eben mit Feuer und Schwert bekehrten und für das europäische Christentum und sein Symbol, das Kreuz, aber auch für die Kirche, in deren Namen sie auftraten, im Laufe der Jahrhunderte eine furchtbare und äußerst kompromittierende Belastung geworden sind. Noch heute, nach vielen Generationen und Jahrhunderten, ist die Bezeichnung "Krzyżak" (Kreuzritter) Schimpfwort und Schreckgespenst für jeden Polen und wird leider nur allzuoft von alters her mit dem Deutschtum identifiziert. - Aus dem Siedlungsgebiet der "Kreuzritter" sind später jene Preußen hervorgegangen, die alles Deutsche in polnischen Landen in allgemeinen Verruf brachten. Sie sind in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung repräsentiert durch folgende Namen: jener Albrecht von Preußen, Friedrich der sog. Große, Bismarck und schließlich Hitler als Endpunkt.

Friedrich II. wird seit jeher vom ganzen polnischen Volk als der Haupturheber der Teilung Polens angesehen, und zweifellos nicht ganz zu Unrecht. Hundertfünfzig Jahre lebte das polnische Millionenvolk aufgeteilt von den drei damaligen Großmächten: Preußen, Rußland und Österreich, bis es 1918 am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges langsam aus seinem Grabe hervorkommen konnte; bis zum äußersten geschwächt, begann es damals wieder unter größten Schwierigkeiten eine neue eigenstaatliche Existenz...

Nach kurzer Unabhängigkeit von etwa 20 Jahren (1918 bis 1939) brach über das polnische Volk ohne seine Schuld das herein, was man euphemistisch einfach als Zweiten Weltkrieg bezeichnet, was aber für uns Polen als totale Vernichtung und Ausrottung gedacht war. Über unser armes Vaterland senkte sich eine furchtbare finstere Nacht, wie wir sie seit Generationen nicht erlebt hatten. Sie wird bei uns allgemein "deutsche Okkupationszeit" genannt und ist unter diesem Namen in die polnische Geschichte eingegangen. Wir waren alle macht- und wehrlos. Das Land war übersät mit Konzentrationslagern, in denen die Schlote der Krematorien Tag und Nacht rauchten. Über sechs Millionen polnischer Staatsbürger, darunter der Großteil jüdischer Herkunft, haben diese Okkupationszeit mit ihrem Leben bezahlen müssen. Die führende polnische Intelligenzschicht wurde einfach weggefegt. Zweitausend polnische Priester und fünf Bischöfe (ein Viertel des damaligen Episkopates) wurden in Lagern umgebracht. Hunderte von Priestern und Zehntausende von Zivilpersonen wurden bei Ausbruch des Krieges an Ort und Stelle erschossen (778 Priester allein in der Diözese Kulm). Die Diözese Włocławek allein verlor im Kriege 48 Prozent ihrer Priester, die Diözese Kulm 47 Prozent. Viele andere waren ausgesiedelt. Alle Mittel- und höheren Schulen waren geschlossen. Die Priesterseminarien waren aufgehoben. Jede deutsche Uniform, nicht nur die SS, wurde für

alle Polen nicht nur ein Schreckgespenst, sondern auch Gegenstand eines Deutschenhasses. Alle polnischen Familien hatten ihre Todesopfer zu beklagen. Wir wollen nicht alles aufzählen, um die noch nicht vernarbten Wunden nicht wieder aufzureißen. Wenn wir an diese polnische, furchtbare Nacht erinnern, dann nur deswegen, damit man uns heute einigermaßen versteht, uns selbst und unsere heutige Denkart... Wir versuchen zu vergessen. Wir hoffen, daß die Zeit - der große göttliche Kairos - die geistigen Wunden langsam heilen wird.

Nach alledem, was in der Vergangenheit geschehen ist - leider erst in der allerneuesten Vergangenheit -, ist es nicht zu verwundern, daß das ganze polnische Volk unter dem schweren Druck eines elementaren Sicherheitsbedürfnisses steht und seinen nächsten Nachbarn im Westen immer noch mit Mißtrauen betrachtet. Diese geistige Haltung ist sozusagen unser Generationsproblem, das, Gott gebe es, bei gutem Willen schwinden wird und schwinden muß. In den schweren politischen und geistigen Nöten des Volkes, in seiner jahrhundertelangen Zerrissenheit sind die katholische Kirche und die Heilige Jungfrau immer der Rettungsanker und das Symbol der nationalen Einheit des Volkes geblieben, zusammen mit der polnischen Familie. In allen Freiheitskämpfen während der Unterdrückungszeit gingen die Polen mit diesen Symbolen auf die Barrikaden, die weißen Adler auf der einen Seite - die Muttergottes auf der anderen Seite der Freiheitsfahne. Die Devise war immer: "Für eure und unsere Freiheit."

Das ist etwa - in ganz allgemeinen Abrissen gezeichnet - die tausendjährige Entwicklung der polnischen Kulturgeschichte mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft. Die Belastung der beiderseitigen Verhältnisse ist immer noch groß und wird vermehrt durch das sogenannte "heiße Eisen" dieser Nachbarschaft. Die polnische Westgrenze an Oder und Neiße ist, wie wir wohl verstehen, für Deutschland eine äußerst bittere Frucht des letzten Massenvernichtungskrieges - zusammen mit dem Leid der Millionen von Flüchtlingen und vertriebenen Deutschen (auf interalliierten Befehl der Siegermächte - Potsdam 1945! - geschehen). Ein großer Teil der Bevölkerung hatte diese Gebiete aus Furcht vor der russischen Front verlassen und war nach dem Westen geflüchtet. - Für unser Vaterland, das aus dem Massenmorden nicht als Siegerstaat, sondern bis zum äußersten geschwächt hervorging, ist es eine Existenzfrage (keine Frage "größeren Lebensraumes!"); es sei denn, daß man ein über 30-Millionen-Volk in den engen Korridor eines "Generalgouvernements" von 1939 bis 1945 hineinpressen wollte - ohne Westgebiete; aber auch ohne Ostgebiete, aus denen seit 1945 Millionen von polnischen Menschen in die "Potsdamer Westgebiete" hinüberströmen mußten. Wo sollten sie auch damals hin, da ja das sogenannte Generalgouvernement zusammen mit der Hauptstadt Warschau in Schutt und Trümmern lag. Die Vernichtungswellen des letzten Krieges sind nicht nur einmal, wie in Deutschland, sondern seit 1914 mehrere Male über die polnischen Lande hinweggebraust, und zwar hin und zurück wie apokalyptische Reiter, und haben jedesmal Schutt und Trümmer, Armut,

Krankheit, Seuchen und Tränen und Tod und wachsende Vergeltungs- und Haßkomplexe hinterlassen.

Seid uns wegen dieser Aufzählung dessen, was im letzten Abschnitt unserer tausend Jahre geschehen ist, liebe deutsche Brüder, nicht gram! Es soll weniger eine Anklage als vielmehr eine eigene Rechtfertigung sein! Wir wissen sehr wohl, wie ganz große Teile der deutschen Bevölkerung jahrelang unter übermenschlichem nationalsozialistischem Gewissensdruck standen, wir kennen die furchtbaren inneren Nöte, denen seinerzeit rechtschaffene und verantwortungsvolle deutsche Bischöfe ausgesetzt waren, um nur die Namen Kardinal von Faulhaber, von Galen, von Preysing zu erwähnen. Wir wissen um die Märtyrer der weißen Rose, die Widerstandskämpfer des 20. Juli, wir wissen, daß viele Laien und Priester ihr Leben opferten (Lichtenberg, Metzger, Klausener und viele andere). Tausende von Deutschen teilten als Christen und Kommunisten in den Konzentrationslagern das Los unserer polnischen Brüder...

Und trotz alledem, trotz dieser fast hoffnungslos mit Vergangenheit belasteten Lage, gerade aus dieser Lage heraus, hochwürdige Brüder, rufen wir Ihnen zu: Versuchen wir zu vergessen! Keine Polemik, kein weiterer kalter Krieg, aber der Anfang eines Dialogs, wie er heute vom Konzil und von Papst Paul VI. überall angestrebt wird. Wenn echter guter Wille beiderseits besteht - und das ist wohl nicht zu bezweifeln -, dann muß ja ein ernster Dialog gelingen und mit der Zeit gute Früchte bringen - trotz allem, trotz heißer Eisen. - Es scheint uns gerade im ökumenischen Konzil ein Gebot der Stunde zu sein, daß wir diesen Dialog auf bischöflicher Hirtenebene beginnen, und zwar ohne Zögern, daß wir einander näher kennenlernen, unsere gegenseitigen Volksbräuche, den religiösen Kult und Lebensstil, in der Vergangenheit verwurzelt und gerade durch diese Kulturvergangenheit bedingt.

Wir haben versucht, uns mit dem gesamten polnischen Gottesvolk auf die Tausendjahrfeier durch die sogenannte große Novene unter dem hohen Patronat der allerseligsten Jungfrau Maria vorzubereiten. Neun Jahre hindurch (1957 bis 1965) haben wir im Sinne des "per Mariam ad Jesum" die Kanzel in Polen, aber auch die gesamte Seelsorge auf wichtige moderne Seelsorgeprobleme und soziale Aufgaben eingesetzt: Jugendseelsorge, sozialer Aufbau in Gerechtigkeit und Liebe, soziale Gefahren, nationale Gewissenserforschung, Ehe und Familienleben, katechetische Aufgaben und ähnliche.

Das ganze gläubige Volk nahm auch geistig regsamsten Anteil am Ökumenischen Konzil durch Gebet, Opfer und Bußwerke. Während der Konzilssitzungen fanden jeweils in allen Pfarrgemeinden Bittandachten statt, und das heilige Bild der Muttergottes sowie die Beichtstühle und Kommunionbänke in Czestochowa waren wochenlang belagert von Pfarrdelegationen aus ganz Polen, die durch persönliches Opfer und Gebet helfen wollten.

Schließlich haben wir uns in diesem Jahr, dem letzten der großen Novene, alle der Mutter Gottes geweiht, Bischöfe, Priester, Ordensleute sowie alle Stände unseres gläubigen Volkes. Vor den ungeheuren Gefahren moralischer und so-

zialer Art, welche die Seele unseres Volkes, aber auch seine biologische Existenz bedrohen, kann uns nur die Hilfe und Gnade unseres Erlösers retten, die wir durch die Vermittlung seiner Mutter, der allerseligsten Jungfrau, herabflehen wollen. Voll kindlichen Vertrauens werfen wir uns in ihre Arme. Nur so können wir innerlich frei werden als dienende und zugleich freie Kinder - ja sogar als "Sklaven Gottes", wie es der heilige Paulus nennt.

Wir bitten Sie, katholische Hirten des deutschen Volkes, versuchen Sie auf Ihre eigene Art und Weise, unser christliches Millennium mitzufeiern, sei es durch Gebet, sei es durch einen besonderen Gedenktag. Für jede Geste dieser Art werden wir Ihnen dankbar sein. Überbringen Sie auch, wir bitten Sie darum, unsere Grüße und unseren Dank den deutschen evangelischen Brüdern, die sich mit uns und mit Ihnen abmühen, Lösungen für unsere Schwierigkeiten zu finden.

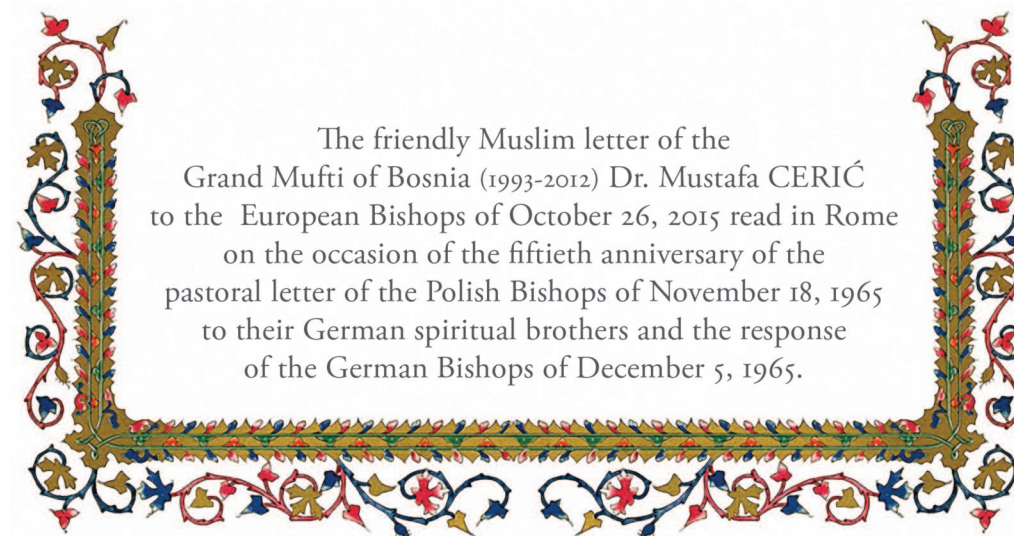
In diesem allerchristlichsten und zugleich sehr menschlichen Geist strecken wir unsere Hände zu Ihnen hin in den Bänken des zu Ende gehenden Konzils, gewähren Vergebung und bitten um Vergebung. Und wenn Sie, deutsche Bischöfe und Konzilsväter, unsere ausgestreckten Hände brüderlich erfassen, dann erst können wir wohl mit ruhigem Gewissen in Polen auf ganz christliche Art unser Millennium feiern. Wir laden Sie dazu herzlichst nach Polen ein.

Das walte der barmherzige Erlöser und die Jungfrau Maria, die Königin Polens, die Regina Mundi und Mater Ecclesiae.

Rom, 18. November 1965



SVJETSKI BOŠNJAČKI KONGRES
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BOSANSKI

Prijateljsko pismo bosanskog reisu-l-uleme i vrhovnog muftije (1993-2012) dr. Mustafe CERIĆA europskim biskupima od 26. oktobra 2015. godine pročitano u Rimu povodom pedesete godišnjice slanja pastirskog pisma poljskih biskupa od 18. novembra 1965. godine njihovoj duhovnoj braći te odgovora njemačkih biskupa od 5. decembra 1965. godine.



*Mi prihvatamo vas i želimo da vi prihvatite nas...
Europa je i vaš i naš dom,
u vašem i našem miru,
u vašoj i našoj sigurnosti,
u vašem i našem prijateljstvu.*



Poštovani prijatelji,

Počašćen sam pozivom Nj. E. ambasadora Piotra Nowina-Konopka da aktivno sudjelujem u činu sjećanja na povijesno pastirsko pismo kojeg su poljski biskupi uputili njemačkim biskupima i na njihov odgovor poljskim biskupima prije pedeset godina.

Pastirsko pismo biskupa u svakom čovjeku dobre volje budi danas osjećaj mira i prijateljstva. Zaista, ovo pismo pobuđuje iskrenu želju za pomirenjem među braćom.

Rim je pravo mjesto za ovo povijesno sjećanje.

Ali ovo nije samo pravo mjesto. Ovo je i pravo vrijeme za poticaj svima u svijetu da uzmu pouku i prime poruku iz ovog pastirskog pisma: pouku da je bolje srce koji voli nego ono koje mrzi; i poruku da je bolja ruka koja piše lijepu riječ nego ona koja ubija.

Cijenjeni biskupi,

Potaknut primjerom vaše bratske i pastirske ljubavi u Europi, osjetio sam potrebu i slobodu da vama, europskim biskupima, napišem pismo u ime moje vjere islama, moje kulture Bošnjaka i povijesnog iskustva moje zemlje Bosne. Ovo pismo je prijateljsko. Prvo ubistvo je bilo bratoubilačko. Kabil je ubio svog brata Habila. Isāa, a.s., su prihvatili i slijedili prijatelji, njegovi učenici, apostoli. Oni nisu bili njegova braća, već su bili njegovi prijatelji po ljubavi. Dakle, ljubav prijatelja može biti jača i od ljubavi braće po krvi.

Prve muslimane u Mekki progonila su njihova braća. Utočište i zaštitu pružio im je kršćanski kralj Abesinije Negus. On je bio i ostao povijesni simbol prijateljstva između muslimana i kršćana. U tome je, vjerovatno, primordijalna tajna kur'anske pouke i poruke muslimanima: *- Zasigurno ćeš shvatiti da su (vam) najbliži prijatelji oni koji vjeruju i koji kažu: "Mi smo kršćani", zato što među njima ima svećenika i monaha. I zato što nisu oholi.* (Kur'an, 5:82).

Poštovani prijatelji,

Ovaj kur'anski opis vaše pastoralne skromnosti obavezuje me da vas poštujem i prihvatim kao prijatelje. Svjestan sam da je bilo i da će biti nekih koji čitaju Kur'an sa namjerom da se potakne na neprijateljsvo. Ja vam pišem ovo pismo u ime većine muslimana koji čitaju Kur'an i nalaze u njemu razloge za prijateljstvo. Razumjet ćete, stoga, da za mene nema snažnije motivacije od ove kur'anske da vam ponudim prijateljstvo, kao i da primim vaše.

Također, razumjet ćete da je za mene privilegija da vam se, kao jedan od onih koji su preživjeli genocid u zemlji Bosni, obraćam sa porukom prijateljstva i pozivom na etiku zajedništva. Prošlost, u kojoj je bilo grešaka, ne možemo promijeniti, ali možemo utjecati da nam budućnost bude bolja od prošlosti u duhu zajedništva na koje nas obavezuje Božja riječ od Adema, Nuha, Ibrahima, Musāa, Isāa i Muhmmeda, a.s.

Ako je u prošlosti i bilo moguće graditi i ograđivati zidovima ekskluzivne prostore poput krišćendoma i islamdoma, danas to više nije moguće. Ne samo u Europi, već nigdje u svijetu ni jedna vjera, ni jedna kultura, ni jedna nacija ne može biti u izolaciji. Sve vjere, kulture i nacije u svijetu su *a priori* upućene jedna na drugu i zato je nužno da se međusobno upoznaju. Tu istinu Kur'an Časni posebno naglašava: *- O ljudi, Mi vas od jednog muškarca i jedne žene stvaramo i na narode i plemena vas dijelimo da biste se međusobno upoznali. Najbolji među vama je onaj sa najdosljednijim moralom. Bog sve zna.* (Kur'an, 49:13).

Cijenjeni biskupi,

Dopustite mi da kažem da naša Europa danas nije niti na margini od središta Jerusalema i Svete Zemlje niti je Europa centar svijeta. Europa je danas u zajedništvu sa samom sobom i sa cijelim svijetom. Dakako, Europa je u specifičnom zajedništvu sa islamskim svijetom prostorno, povijesno, kulturno i ekonomski. U stvari, europska i islamska civilizacija su sudbinski spojene poput sijamskih blizanaca. Svaki pokušaj njihovog razdvajanja izaziva bol i patnju i kod jednog i kod drugog civilizacijskog kruga. Prema tome, svi postajemo svjesni da bi nasilno razdvajanje europske i islamske civilizacije, kao sijamskih blizanaca, dovelo do instatne smrti obe ili samo jedne. Niko ne zna koje. Zbog toga, europska i islamska civilizacija nemaju izbor već da se međusobno upoznaju i prihvate u duhu obostranog prijateljstva, utemeljnog na svijesti o pravu svakog čovjeka na život, vjeru, slobodu, imetak i čast.

Stoga, osjećam slobodu da vas pozovem da ne zatvaramo europska vrata ispred onih koji traže utočište kod nas, niti da podižemo zidove protiv onih koji nam dolaze zato što su im uništili dom i domovinu. Europa je preživjela sve što je živ čovjek mogao preživjeti: beskrajne podjele, dugotrajne ratove, nepodnošljive patnje, bespoštedne progone... Ali, Europa se dizala iz pepela od Vestfalije (1648) do Maastrichta (1992) i pokazala cijelom svijetu da je sposobna za mir i suživot, da je spremna da usvoji etiku zajedništva.

Svakako, vaša pisma, poštovani biskupi, iz 1965. godine su uveliko pridonijeli da Europa bude ono što danas jeste - kontinent mira, suživota, socijalne pravde i blagostanja za sve ljude dobre volje. Zato je neobjašnjivo zašto se potkraj dvadesetog stoljeća na tlu ove i ovakve Europe u mojoj zemlji Bosni dogodio genocid protiv mog naroda, koji baštini hiljadugodišnju tradiciju vrijednosti na kojima počiva današnja Europa, a to su vrijednosti ljudske časti i dostojanstva, ljudskog prava i slobode, ljudskog mira i suživota te vrijednost jединства u različitosti.

Ako je papa Franjo rekao da je Sarajevo Jerusalem Europe, onda Europa ima pravo da bude ponosna da ima Sarajevo, kao što je Sarajevo ponosno što pripada otvorenoj i slobodnoj Europi, u kojoj se "nikad više" ne smije ponoviti ni holokaust ni genocid.

Poštovani europski biskupi,

Očito, svi smo u strahu. Vi u Europi ste u strahu od širenja straha od islama. A mi muslimani u Europi smo u strahu od onih koji šire strah od nas ovdje i sada. Ako iko, onda Europa ima iskustvo o lažnim strahovima od drugog i drugačijeg. O tome upravo govore vaša pisma, koja ste napisali da biste oslobodili sebe i druge od lažnog straha od samih sebe i od drugih i drugačijih. Zato vaša pisma imaju povijesnu važnost ne samo za vas biskupe, već za sve Europljane, koji vjeruju da su istina, pravda, mir i pomirenje vrijednosti prvoga reda. Stoga se nadam, cijenjeni biskupi, da će te razumjeti ovo pismo, koje potpisuju ugledni muftije, imami i muslimanski intelektualci u Europi, kao glas razuma i spoznaje da su nam Adem i Hava zajednički otac i majka. Nije moguće da svi sve znamo jedni o drugima, ali je moguće da jedni druge prihvatimo onakvim kakvi se sami jedni drugima predstavljamo bez predrasuda i bez straha.

Mi prihvatamo vas i želimo da vi prihvatite nas bez straha i bez predrasuda.

Nije samo znanje, potrebna i volja da prihvatimo jedni druge u duhu općeg dobra za sve nas ovdje i sada u Europi, koja nema potrebe da bude u strahu od bilo koga i bilo čega, najmanje od islama i muslimana, koji u svom imenu nose značenje *miroljubivog čovjeka*.

Prije kraja ovoga pisma donosim vam nekoliko citata iz Kur'ana Časnog, koji govore o našem duhovnom zajedništvu i koji nas oslobađaju straha jednih od drugih:

- I Mi rekosmo: - O Ademe, živite, ti i žena tvoja, u džennetu i jedite u njemu koliko god želite i odakle god hoćete, ali se ovom drvetu ne približujte pa da sami sebi nepravdu nanesete! (2:35). *Recite: - Mi vjerujemo u Boga i u ono što se objavljuje nama, i u ono što je objavljeno Ibrahimu, i Ismailu, i Ishaku, i Jakubu, i unucima, i u ono što je dato Musao i Isau, i u ono što je dato vjerovjesnicima od Gospodara njihova; mi ne pravimo nikakve razlike među njima, i mi se samo Njemu pokoravamo.* (2:136). *I kada meleki rekoše: - O Merjema, tebe je Bog odabrao i čistom stvorio, i boljom od svih žena na svijetu učinio.* (3:42). *A ona reče: - Gospodaru moj, kako ću imati dijete kad me nijedan muškarac nije ni dodirnuo? - Eto tako. Bog stvara što hoće. Kada nešto odluči, On samo zato rekne: "Budi!" - I ono bude.* (3:47). *A kada meleci rekoše: - O Merjema, Bog ti javlja radosnu vijest, Njegovom Riječju: ime će mu biti Mesih, Isa, sin Merjemin, biće viđen i na ovom i na onom svijetu i jedan od Boga bliskih;* (3:45).

Na kraju, poštovani biskupi, pozivam vas da mi se pridružite u ovoj molitvi, koju sam više puta izgovorio na kolektivnoj dženazi u Potočarima kod Srebrenice pred dušama žrtava genocida:

*Bože Milostivi, ako mi zaboravimo Tebe, nemoj Ti zaboraviti nas;
 Ako pogriješimo, podari nam snagu Ademovog (a.s.) pokajanja;
 Ako nas zamrači krivovjerje, osvijetli nam put Ibrahimovim (a.s.) pravovjerjem;
 Ako nas zadesi nesreća, pouči nas Nuhovoj (a.s.) lađi spasa;
 Ako nas uhvati strah od silnika, osposobi nas Musaovom (a.s.) pravdom;
 Ako nam se ponudi mržnja, spasi nas Isaovom (a.s.) ljubavlju;
 Ako budemo protjerani iz domova naših, osnaži nas Muhamedovom (a.s.) željom za
 povratkom domovima našim.*

U nadi da ćemo se susretati uvijek u miru i razumijevanju, primite iskrene izraze
 mojeg osobnog poštovanja.

Dr. Mustafa CERIĆ
 Reis-u-ulema Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini
 (1993-2012)

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The friendly Muslim letter of the Grand Mufti of Bosnia (1993-2012) Dr. Mustafa CERIĆ to the European Bishops of October 26, 2015 read in Rome on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the pastoral letter of the Polish Bishops of November 18, 1965 to their German spiritual brothers and the response of the German Bishops of December 5, 1965



Dear Friends,

I am honoured by the invitation of His Excellency Ambassador Piotr Nowin-Konopak to actively participate in the remembrance of the historic pastoral letter that the Polish Bishops had addressed to the German Bishops and their response to the Polish Bishops fifty years ago.

This pastoral letter of the bishops evokes in each and every man a sense of good will for peace and friendship. Indeed, this letter awakens a sincere desire for reconciliation among brothers.

Rome is the right place for this historical memory.

But, this is not only the right place. This is also the right time for an incentive to all people of good heart in the world to learn a lesson and accept the message of this pastoral letter: the lesson is that the heart of love is better than the heart of hate; and the message is that the hand of good healer is better than the hand of evil killer.

Dear Eminences,

Inspired by the example of your fraternal and pastoral love in Europe, I felt the need and the freedom to write you, the European Bishops, this letter on behalf of my faith Islam, my Bosniak culture and the historical experience of my homeland Bosnia. This letter is an expression of friendship. As you know, the first murder was fratricidal. Cain killed his brother Abel. Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him, was accepted and followed by his friends, his disciples, the apostles, *Al-Hawariyyun*. They were not his relative brothers. They were his friends in love. Thus, the love of friends can be even stronger than the love of brothers by blood.

The first Muslims in Mecca were persecuted by their brothers. In order to save themselves from their brothers, they found refuge in the Christian friend, the king of Abyssinia, Negus. Thus, the king Negus has become a historic symbol of friendship between Muslims and Christians. Perhaps, here lies the primordial wisdom of the Qur'anic guidance to the Muslims: - *You will surely find the nearest of them in affection to (you) the believers who say: "We are Christians." That is because among them are priests and monks. And because they are not arrogant.* (Qur'an, 5:82).

Dear Friends,

This Qur'anic description of your pastoral modesty requires my acceptance of and respect for you as my friends. I am aware that there have been and there will be some who read the Qur'an with the intention of encouraging an enmity. I write to you on behalf of the majority of Muslims who read the Qur'an and they find there the reasons for friendship. You will understand, therefore, that for myself, there is no stronger motivation than the Qur'an to offer you my friendship, and to receive yours.

You will also understand that it is my privilege, as one of genocide survivors in Bosnia, to address you with a message of friendship and to invite you to the common virtue of ethics of sharing. What is life but sharing? Our mistakes of the past we cannot change. But, we can influence that our future be better than our past in the spirit of the ethics sharing as we are taught by the eternal word of God from Adam through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus to Muhammad, peace be upon all of them.

If it was possible in the past to build walls and hedge exclusive spaces such as Christendom and Islamdom, today this is no longer possible. Not only in Europe, but also anywhere in the world no one religion, no one culture, no one nation can be in isolation. All religions, cultures and nations of the world rely a priori on each other and therefore it is necessary that we know each other. This truth has been highlighted in the Holy Quran in this way: - *O men! Behold, We have created you*

all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware. (49:13).

Dear Eminences,

Allow me to tell you that our Europe today is not on the margins of the centre of Jerusalem and the Holy Land nor is Europe the centre of the world today. Europe today is together with itself and the whole world. Indeed, Europe is in a specific relationship with the Islamic world: geographically, historically, culturally and economically. In fact, the European and Islamic civilizations are fused by a destiny like Siamese twins. Any attempt of their separation causes pain and suffering in both of these two civilizational circles. Therefore, we are all aware that a severe surgical separation of the European and Islamic civilizations, as in the case of Siamese twins, would lead to the instant death of both or one only. No one knows which one. Because of this, the European and Islamic civilizations do not have a choice but to know and accept each other in the spirit of mutual friendship, based on the consciousness of the right of all men and women to life, religion, freedom, property and dignity.

Thus I feel free to call you up that we don't close our European doors to those seeking refuge with us. I call that we don't build walls against those who come to us because their homes and homeland have been destroyed. Europe has survived all that the living human being could have survived: the endless divisions, long lasting wars, unbearable suffering, merciless persecution... But Europe rose from its ashes from Westphalia (1648) to Maastricht (1992) and showed the whole world that it is capable of peace and coexistence, that it is ready to adopt the ethics of sharing.

Your Eminences,

Certainly, your letters from 1965 have greatly contributed to Europe being what it is today - a continent of peace, coexistence, social justice and prosperity for all people of good will. Therefore, it is inexplicable why at the end of the twentieth century on the territory of this Europe as it is, a genocide was allowed to happen against my people in Bosnia, the land with a thousand years of great human values which are the essence of today's Europe, the values of old human good and dignity, human rights and freedoms, human peace and coexistence and the value of unity in diversity.

If Pope Francis said that the city of Sarajevo is the Jerusalem of Europe, then Europe has the right to be proud of its Sarajevo in the same way as the city of Sarajevo is proud to belong to an open and free Europe, where the cry of "Never Again" to Holocaust and Genocide must become embedded in the minds of all of us.

Dear European bishops,

Obviously, we are all in fear. You in Europe are in fear of a spreading fear of Islam. And we Muslims in Europe are in fear of those who spread the fear from us here and now. If anyone has it, it is Europe that has an experience of the false fears from those who are different. This is precisely what your letters are all about: the call to freedom from false fears of you yourselves and of the others who are different from you. It is because of that that your letters have a historic importance not only for you as bishops, but also for all Europeans, who believe that truth, justice, peace and reconciliation are values of the first order. So, I hope that you will understand this letter, signed by prominent muftis, imams and Muslim intellectuals in Europe, as the voice of reason and knowledge that Adam and Eve are our common father and mother. It is not possible that we know everything about each other, but it is possible that we accept one another in the way as we present ourselves to each other without prejudice or fear.

We accept you and we beg for your acceptance of us without prejudice or fear.

It is not enough that we have an awareness of each other. It is necessary that we have a willingness to accept one another in a spirit of common good for all of us here and now in Europe, which has no reason to be afraid of anyone or anything, least of all Islam and Muslims, who in their names carry the meaning of the *Peaceful Man*.

Here, my dear friends, I would like to bring you a few quotes from the Holy Quran which tells us of our spiritual common ground and thus releases us of the fear from one another:

And We said: *"O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat ye freely of the fruits thereof where ye will; but come not near this tree lest ye become wrongdoers."*

[2:35] Say O Muslims: *"We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered."* [2:136] And when the angels said: *"O Mary! Lo! God hath chosen thee and made thee pure, and hath preferred thee above all women of creation."* [3:42] [Jesus said:] *"And I come confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful some of that which was forbidden unto you. I come unto you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to God and obey me."* [3:50] She [Mary] said: *"My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me?"* He [Gabriel] said: *"So it will be. God createth what He will. If He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! And it is."* [3:47] And remember when the angels

said: “O Mary! Lo! God giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near to God.” [3:45]

Finally, I would like you to join me in this prayer that I have repeatedly recited at the collective funeral in Potočari nearby Srebrenica for the souls of the victims of Genocide:

Dear God, if we forget Thee, Do not forget us!

If we make a mistake, give us the strength the repentance of Adam!

If we are darkened by false belief, enlighten us with the true faith of Ibrahim!
If disaster befalls us, teach us how to build the Noh's Ark of salvation!

If we are caught with the fear of tyrants, empower us with the justice of Moses!
If we are offered hatred, save us with the love of Jesus!

If we were expelled from our homes, strengthen us with Muhammad's desire to return to our homes!

Dear God, may peace be upon all of the Prophets of God, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses Jesus and Muhammad!

Your Eminences, in the hope that we will meet always in peace and understanding, please accept my sincere expressions of love and respect.



Mustafa Cerić, PhD
Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community
of Bosnia and Herzegovina
(1993-2012)

Endorsed by



Prof. Muhamed Filipović, PhD
President Bosniak Academy of Science and Arts
BANU



Muamer Zukorlić
Mufti of Sandžak - Serbia



Mevludin Dudić, PhD
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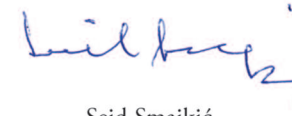
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Imam of Munich - Germany



Nedžad Grabus, PhD
Mufti of Ljubljana - Slovenia



رسالة صداقة موجهة من د. مصطفى تسيريتش، رئيس العلماء والمفتي العام في البوسنة والهرسك (1993 2012) إلى أساقفة أوروبا بتاريخ 26 أكتوبر 2015، والتي قرنت في روما بمناسبة الذكرى السنوية الخمسين للرسالة الرعوية التي أرسلها أساقفة بولندا في 18 نوفمبر 1965 إلى إخوانهم في الدين وجواب الأساقفة الألمان عليها في 5 ديسمبر 1965.

**"نحن نقبل بكم، ونريد أن تقبلوا أنتم بنا"
"أوروبا بيتكم وبيتنا، السلام فيها لكم ولنا، والأمان فيها لكم ولنا،
والصداقة فيها لكم ولنا"**

أيها الأصدقاء الموقرون،

لقد تشرفت بالدعوة التي وجهها إلي سعادة السفير بيوتر كوفينا (Piotr Nowina-Konopka) للمشاركة في إحياء ذكرى الرسالة الرعوية التاريخية التي أرسلها الأساقفة البولنديون إلى الأساقفة الألمان وردّم عليها قبل خمسين عاماً.

إن رسائل الأساقفة الرعوية توقظ اليوم عند أصحاب النوايا الحسنة مشاعر السلام والصداقة. وحقا إن تلك الرسالة توقظ الرغبة الصادقة في المصالحة بين الإخوة.

وروما هي خير مكان لإحياء هذه الذكرى التاريخية.

وليس المكان هو المكان الأفضل وحسب، بل إنه الزمان الأمثل لتشجيع الجميع في العالم كي يأخذوا العبرة ويقبلوا فحوى تلك الرسالة الرعوية: العبرة بأن القلب المحب خير من القلب المبغض، والفحوى بأن اليد التي تخط الكلم الطيب خير من اليد التي تقتل.

أيها الأساقفة الموقرون،

إن أخوتكم ومحبتكم الرعوية في أوروبا، جعلتني أحس بالحاجة والحرية أن أكتب إليكم، أساقفة أوروبا، رسالة باسم ديني، دين الإسلام، وثقافتني البوسناقية والتجربة التاريخية لبليدي البوسنة. إنها رسالة صداقة. إن أول جريمة قتل كانت قتل الأخ لأخيه، إذ قتل قابيل أخاه هابيل. وقد آمن بعيسى عليه السلام واتبعه أصدقاؤه وتلامذته. إنهم لم يكونوا إخوانه، بل كانوا أصدقاؤه في المحبة. لذا يمكن لمحبة الصديق أن تكون أقوى من محبة الأخ الشقيق.

وقد تعرض المسلمون الأوائل في مكة المكرمة للمطاردة من إخوانهم، فوجدوا الملجأ والحماية عند النجاشي ملك الحبشة النصراني، الذي كان وما يزال رمزا للصداقة بين المسلمين والنصارى. وهذا ما تؤكد الآية القرآنية {... وَلَنَجِدَنَّهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِيِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ} (المائدة، 82).

التي لا حصر لها، والحروب الطويلة الأمد، والآلام التي لا تحتمل، والاضطهاد الذي لا هوادة فيه... ولكن أوروبا كانت دائما تنهض من تحت الرماد، من ويستفاليا [Westphalia] (1648) إلى ماستريخت [Maastricht] (1992) وأظهرت للعالم أجمع بأنها أهل للسلام والتعايش، وأهل لكي تتبنى أخلاق العيش المشترك.

من المؤكد، أيها الأساقفة المحترمون، أن رسائلكم من عام 1965 قد ساهمت كثيرا في أن تصبح أوروبا على ما هي عليه اليوم قارة السلام والتعايش والعدالة الاجتماعية والازدهار لجميع الناس المحبين للخير. لذا من غير الواضح لماذا شهدت الأرض الأوروبية في أواخر القرن العشرين ارتكاب جريمة الإبادة الجماعية في بلدي البوسنة، ضد شعبي الذي يرضى منذ أكثر من ألف عام القيم التي تقوم عليها أوروبا اليوم، وهي: الشرف والكرامة الإنسانية، وحق الإنسان وحرية، والسلام والتعايش الإنساني، وكذلك قيمة الوحدة مع التنوع.

إذا كان البابا فرانيو قد قال إن سراييفو هي أورشليم أوروبا، فلأوروبا الحق أن تتفخر بوجود سراييفو فيها، كما تتفخر سراييفو بأنها تتبع لأوروبا المنفتحة والحررة، والتي "لا ينبغي أبدا" أن يتكرر فيها حدوث المحرقة أو الإبادة الجماعية.

أيها الأساقفة الأوروبيون المحترمون،

من الواضح أننا كلنا نعيش في خوف. أنتم في أوروبا تخافون من انتشار الخوف من الإسلام. ونحن المسلمون في أوروبا نخاف من أولئك الذي ينشرون الخوف منا هنا والآن. ولا أظن أحدا مثل أوروبا جرب الخوف من الغير ومن المختلف. وهذا ما تحدث عنه رسائلكم التي كتبتوها لتحرروا أنفسكم والآخرين من الخوف الكاذب من أنفسكم ومن الغير والمختلف. لذا فإن رسائلكم تتمتع بأهمية تاريخية، ليس بالنسبة لكم أنتم الأساقفة فقط، بل لجميع الأوروبيين، الذين يؤمنون بأن الحقيقة والعدل والسلام والتصالح هي قيم من المرتبة الأولى. عليه فإنني أمُل، أيها الأساقفة المحترمون، أنكم ستفهمون هذه الرسالة التي يوقع عليها مفتون وأئمة ومفكرون مسلمون في أوروبا، على أنها صوت العقل والوعي بأننا مشتركون في أبوينا آدم وحواء. إنه من غير الممكن أن يعرف كل منا كل شيء عن الآخر، ولكن من الممكن أن يقبل كل منا الآخر تماما كما يقدم أحدها نفسه للآخر، بدون أحكام مسبقة وبدون خوف.

إننا نقبل بكم، ونريد أن تقبلوا بنا، بدون خوف وبدون أحكام مسبقة.

إن العلم بالشيء لا يكفي، بل نحتاج للإرادة، كي يقبل أحدها الآخر في روح من الخير العام لنا جميعا هنا والآن في أوروبا، التي لا داعي لها أن تخاف أحدا أو شيئا، وخاصة الإسلام والمسلمين، لأنهم يحملون في اسمهم معنى الإنسان المحب للسلام.

وقبل ختام هذه الرسالة، أقدم إليكم بعض الآيات القرآنية الكريمة التي تتحدث عن عيشنا الروحي المشترك وعن تحررنا من أن يخاف أحدها الآخر:

أيها الأصدقاء الموقرون،

إن هذا الوصف القرآني لتواضعكم الرعوي يلزمني باحترامكم وقبولكم أصدقاء. وإنني أدرك أنه هناك من يقرأ القرآن بنية التحريض على العدوان. وأنا أكتب إليكم هذه الرسالة باسم غالبية المسلمين الذين يقرؤون القرآن ويجدون فيه أسباب الصداقة. عليه، لعلكم ستدركون أنه لا دافع عندي أقوى من هذا الدافع القرآني لأعرض عليكم صداقتي وأقبل صداقتكم.

وستدركون أيضا بأنني، أنا أحد الذين عايشوا الإبادة الجماعية في البوسنة، أشعر بالتمني أن أتوجه إليكم برسالة الصداقة والدعوة إلى أخلاق العيش المشترك. إننا لا نقدر على تغيير الماضي الذي لا يخلو من الأخطاء، ولكننا نستطيع التأثير في مستقبلنا لنجعله أفضل من ماضينا، في روح العيش المشترك التي ألزمتنا بها كلمة الله ابتداء من آدم، ونوح، وإبراهيم، ومرورا بموسى وعيسى وانتهاء بمحمد عليهم السلام.

وإذا كان ممكنا في الماضي بناء الجدران لتحويط الأراضي الخاصة، كدار النصرانية ودار الإسلام، فإن هذا اليوم غير ممكن. ولا يمكن لأي دين أو ثقافة أو شعب، أن يكون منعزلا، سواء في أوروبا أو في العالم كله. إن جميع الأديان والثقافات والشعوب في العالم محتوم عليهم أن يختلطوا فيما بينهم، لذا لا بد لهم أن يتعارفوا فيما بينهم. وهذا ما يؤكد القرآن الكريم بشكل خاص: **يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ** (الحجرات، 13).

أيها الأساقفة الموقرون،

اسمحوا لي أن أقول، إن قارتنا الأوروبية اليوم، ليست على الهامش قياسا إلى القدس والأرض المقدسة، وليست مركز العالم. إن أوروبا اليوم في عيش مشترك مع ذاتها ومع العالم بأسره. وإن أوروبا في عيش مشترك خاص مع العالم الإسلامي، مكانيا، وتاريخيا، وثقافيا، واقتصاديا. وفي الحقيقة، فإن الحضارتين الأوروبية والإسلامية مترابطتين مصيريا كالتوأمين السياميين. وإن أي محاولة لفصلهما تسبب الكثير من الآلام والمعاناة عند هاتين الدائرتين الحضاريتين. عليه، فإننا كلنا ندرك أن فصل هاتين الحضارتين بالقوة، كالتوأمين السياميين، سيجلب الموت السريع لكليهما أو لإحدهما. ولا أحد يعرف أيهما. لذا لا خيار أمام الحضارتين الأوروبية والإسلامية إلا أن تتعارفا فيما بينهما وتقبل إحداها بالآخرى، في روح الصداقة المتبادلة القائمة على اليقين بأن كل إنسان لديه الحق بالحياة والمعتقد والحرية والمال والعرض.

لذا، أسمح لنفسي أن أدعوكم إلى أن لا نغلق أبواب أوروبا أمام أولئك الذين يطلبون الملجأ عندنا، وأن لا نقيم الجدران في وجه القادمين إلينا بعد أن أتاهم من دمر بيوتهم وأوطانهم. إن أوروبا عاشت كل المحن التي يمكن لإنسان حي أن يعيشها: الانقسامات

{وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ} (البقرة، 35). {قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ} (البقرة، 136). {وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ} ل آل عمران، 42). {قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ} (آل عمران، 47). {إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ} (آل عمران، 45).

وختاما، أيها الأساقفة المحترمون، أدعوكم لمشاركتي هذا الدعاء، الذي تلوته أكثر من مرة ونحن نصلي الجنازات الجماعية في مقبرة بوتوتشاري في سربرينيتسا على أرواح ضحايا الإبادة الجماعية:

يا رب يا رحيم، إذا نسيناك، فلا تنسانا؛

وإذا عصيناك، فأعطنا عزيمة آدم عليه السلام على التوبة؛

وإذا أعمانا الشرك، فأثر طريقنا بإيمان إبراهيم عليه السلام؛

وإذا أصابتنا مصيبة، فعلمنا النجاة في سفينة نوح عليه السلام؛

وإذا أصابنا الخوف من الظالم، فاعمرنا بعدالة موسى عليه السلام؛

وإذا عُرِضت علينا البغضاء، فنجنا بمحبة عيسى عليه السلام؛

وإذا أخرجنا من ديارنا، فقونا بإرادة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم بالعودة إلى ديارنا.

وعلى أمل أن نلتقي دائما في سلام وتفاهم، تقبلوا مني خالص عبارات التقدير.

د. مصطفى تسيريتش، رئيس العلماء والمفتي العام في البوسنة والهرسك
(2012 1993)

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الشيخ يعقوب سالكيتسا، كبير الأئمة في مجلس المشيخة الإسلامية في زينيتسا في البوسنة والهرسك

أ. د. سداد ديزداريفيتش، أستاذ الثقافة والحضارة الإسلامية في كلية التربية الإسلامية بجامعة زينيتسا في البوسنة والهرسك

د. منصور فاليفاتس، معيد أول في قسم التفسير في كلية التربية الإسلامية بجامعة زينيتسا في البوسنة والهرسك

الإمام الشيخ جمال سالكيتش، زينيتسا، شيخ التكية النقشبندية في بيهاري زينيتسا في البوسنة والهرسك



affederiz ve af hileriz

Chúng tôi tha thứ và cũng mong chờ sự thứ tha

私たちは許します、そして許しを請います

прощаємо та просимо прощення

Opriščamo in prosimo opruščenja

ame maaf kare che ane maafi maange che

Мы прощаем и просим прощение

rdoniamo e chiediamo perdono

حاملنا مكنم ببلطن و ،مكل حمسن

מכתחילת
או מכל ויחלוס ונא

Oprištame a prosime o oprušteni

Wij vergeven en wij vragen



iertam si cerem iertare

我们宽恕和请求宽恕

Nosotros perdonamos y pedimos perdón

ми опраштамо и тражимо опрошта

Wir vergeben und bitten um Vergebung

Wybaczam i prosimy o wybaczenie

مىنك ىم ششخب بىلط امش زا و مىشخب ىم ار امش ام

We forgive and ask for forgiveness

Oprištame a prosime o opruštenie

mes atleidžiam ir prašom atleidimo

Táimid ag logh agus a irraidh maithiúnas

Ние простуваме и бараме да ни биде простено!

Nós perdoamo - vos e pedimos - vos perdão

FINITO DI STAMPARE NEL MESE DI MAGGIO 2016