
Pope in Hungary: “The future of Europe is hope, not war”

In a world where “we seem to be witnessing the sorry sunset of that choral dream of peace, as the soloists of war now take over”, Europe’s role “is crucial”, provided it recovers the European spirit: the excitement and vision of its founders. In his [first address](#) in the land of Hungary, where he returned after having visited the Magyar country for six hours a year and a half ago, on the occasion of the closing of the conclusions of the Eucharistic Congress, **Pope Francis** chose The Pearl of the Danube to address the whole of Europe, where “nationalism is on the rise” and, where, even on the international level, it seems that politics is experiencing a “regression towards a kind of adolescent belligerence.” Indeed, the future of the European continent, especially the cause of peace, as confirmed during the recitation of the [Regina Coeli](#) prayer after the Holy Mass celebrated in Budapest's Kossut Lajos Square before a crowd of 50,000 people, was the central theme of Pope Francis’ 41st apostolic journey. “Blessed Virgin, watch over the peoples who suffer so greatly”, Francis prayed after thanking all those who contributed to making his journey possible, along with the Hungarian people who welcomed him so warmly during these past three days: “In a special way, watch over the neighbouring, beleaguered Ukrainian people and the Russian people, both consecrated to you. Instil in the hearts of peoples and their leaders the desire to build peace and to give the younger generations a future of hope, not war, a future full of cradles not tombs, a world of brothers and sisters, not walls and barricades.” **“Peace – he said in the meeting with authorities - will never come as the result of the pursuit of individual strategic interests**, but only from policies capable of looking to the bigger picture, to the development of everyone: policies that are attentive to individuals, to the poor and to the future, and not merely to power, profit and present prospects.”

“At this historical juncture, Europe is crucial”,

Francis said, “for thanks to its history, it represents the memory of humanity; in this sense, it is called to take up its proper role, which is to unite those far apart, to welcome other peoples and to refuse to consider anyone an eternal enemy.” **“It is vital, then, to recover the European spirit”**, the appeal: “the excitement and vision of its founders, who were statesmen able to look beyond their own times, beyond national boundaries and immediate needs, and to generate forms of diplomacy capable of pursuing unity, not aggravating divisions.”

“At the present time, those dangers are many indeed; but I ask myself, thinking not least of war-torn Ukraine, where are creative efforts for peace?”,

is the Pope’s provocative question. “I think of a Europe that is not hostage to its parts, neither falling prey to self-referential forms of populism nor resorting to a fluid, if not vapid, “supranationalism” that loses sight of the life of its peoples.” It’s the Pope’s dream for our continent, that he urged not to take “the baneful path taken by those forms of ‘ideological colonization’ that would cancel differences, as in the case of the so-called gender theory, or that would place before the reality of life reductive concepts of freedom, for example by vaunting as progress a senseless “right to abortion”, which is always a tragic defeat.” The Pope called on believers not to yield to a sort of “collaborationism with a politics of power”, and to welcome “a **sound sense of laicity** that does not degenerate into the widespread ‘laicism’ that is allergic to any aspect of the sacred, yet ready to sacrifice itself at the altars of profit.”

The issue of acceptance and welcome “needs to be confronted together, as a community, not least because, in the present situation, its effects will be felt, sooner or later, by all of us.”

In the closing remarks of his first speech, Francis thus highlighted the issue of reception and welcome of other peoples, that needs to be confronted “without excuses or delay”: “It is urgent then, as Europe, to work for secure and legal corridors and established processes for meeting an epochal challenge that is ineluctable and needs to be acknowledged, in order to prepare a future that, unless it is shared, will not exist.” **“Thank you too, for having welcomed – not only with generosity but also with enthusiasm – so many refugees from Ukraine”**, was the Pope’s tribute at the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Budapest, during the [meeting with poor people and refugees](#). Francis thus made yet another appeal for welcome in his homily at the [Mass celebrated in Budapest’s Kossut Lajos Square](#).

“How sad and painful it is to see closed doors”,

he denounced. The Pope’s list is long and detailed: “the closed doors of our selfishness with regard to others; the closed doors of our individualism amid a society of growing isolation; the closed doors of our indifference towards the underprivileged and those who suffer; **the doors we close towards those who are foreign or unlike us, towards migrants or the poor**. Closed doors also within our ecclesial communities: doors closed to other people, closed to the world, closed to those who are ‘irregular’ closed to those who long for God’s forgiveness.” “Please, brothers and sisters, let us open those doors!”, the exhortation: “Let us try to be – in our words, deeds and daily activities – like Jesus, an open door: a door that is never shut in anyone’s face, a door that enables everyone to enter and experience the beauty of the Lord’s love and forgiveness.” A crowd of over 10,000 young people attended the meeting at the “Papp László Budapest Sportaréna” (Budapest Sports Hall), almost a foretaste of the next WYD to be held in Lisbon the coming August. “Those who dare win the price”, Francis told them quoting a Hungarian proverb in response to the question “how does one win in life?”. For the Pope, “Just as in sports, there are two basic steps. First, aim high, then train”, but through dialogue with Jesus, “who is the best of coaches.” “He constantly invites you to be a team player, never alone but with others: in the Church, in the community, sharing your experiences with others.”

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