
Churches in Europe: CCEE plenary assembly in Belgrade, “Pilgrims of hope. For a synodal and missionary Church”

“Pilgrims of hope. For a synodal and missionary Church”. This theme was the background for the work of the Plenary Assembly of the Council of Bishops’ Conferences of Europe that took place in Belgrade from 24th to 27th June, convened by mgr. Ladislav Nemet, archbishop of Belgrade and deputy president of CCEE. The assembly, that was opened by the address of the archbishop of Belgrade and the apostolic nuncio to Serbia, mgr. Santo Gangemi – a release from CCEE states –, went on with a discussion of the situation in Europe, as described by the reports of mgr. Mariano Crociata, bishop of Latina and president of the Commission of Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (Comece); of mgr. Noël Treanor, apostolic nuncio to the European Union; of mgr. Marco Ganci, Observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe. And with speeches from the presidents of the CCEE Commissions, who presented the work and programmes of their commissions. In his opening speech, mgr. Gintaras Grušas, archbishop of Vilnius and president of CCEE, mentioned the opening of the new CCEE headquarters in Rome, intended to “strengthen cooperation and exchanges of European bishops with each other and with the Holy See, and to give new pastoral impetus and ecumenical momentum, especially in the jubilee year and along the synodal way”. In his speech, president Grušas also mentioned the ecumenical initiatives that CCEE is carrying out. One of the most outstanding is the updating of the European Ecumenical Charter, signed in 2001 along with the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the new version of which should be signed on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2025, the year the date of Easter will be the same for all Christians. Finally, mgr. Grušas called everyone to get ready for the Jubilee that is now just around the corner, so that “it may be an event of grace for our communities and for our countries, and so that it may be an opportunity to testify that Christ is man’s only hope”. The assembly was also attended by card. Robert Francis Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, who gave a lecture on “The dimension of Evangelisation and mission of the Church in Europe”, taking his cue from the events of the last few weeks, first and foremost the European election and the worldwide crises, including the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East. The meeting of the CCEE members with the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Porfirije, was quite significant too. On 21st September 2024, to coincide with the International Day of Peace, the bishops called everyone to pray for the victims of war and to invoke peace upon Ukraine, the Holy Land and Sudan. The next Plenary Assembly will be held in Lisbon from 8th to 10th October 2025.

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