
Council of Europe: Holy See marks 50 years as observer. Mgr. Duffé, Europe as a “community of communities”

(Strasbourg) Human rights and respect for human dignity are the focus of the Colloquium “Building Europe Together” ending in Strasbourg today. The event marks the 50th anniversary of the Holy See’s observer status at the Council of Europe. At the premises of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Strasbourg, Mgr. Bruno-Maria Duffé, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, offered a reflection on the reasons why, nearly 75 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “the moral authority of this framework now seems to have lost its relevance”. Four developments have led to such authority “being weakened”: an “individualistic understanding of human rights” and the loss of “the sense of mutual protection”; the “undermining of the rule of law”; the logic of the “unlimited” which drives development, knowledge, and the exploitation of resources and people; and the “resurfacing of the fear of the future and of the other”. Mgr. Duffé suggested four ways to counter these trends: a “new conception of human dignity”, one that is rooted in the “uniqueness and specificity” of each person; a new conception of law and the legal obligation flowing from it based on justice seen as a “balance between different groups and as sharing”. The third suggestion is to promote a vision of the future that rejects the unlimited. And finally, to support a “new experience of hospitality” open to the possibility of “being rich together”. For Mgr. Duffé, the starting point is the chance for Europe to be a “community of communities” and for people in Europe to live the “charism of being together” in the words of Pope Francis.

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