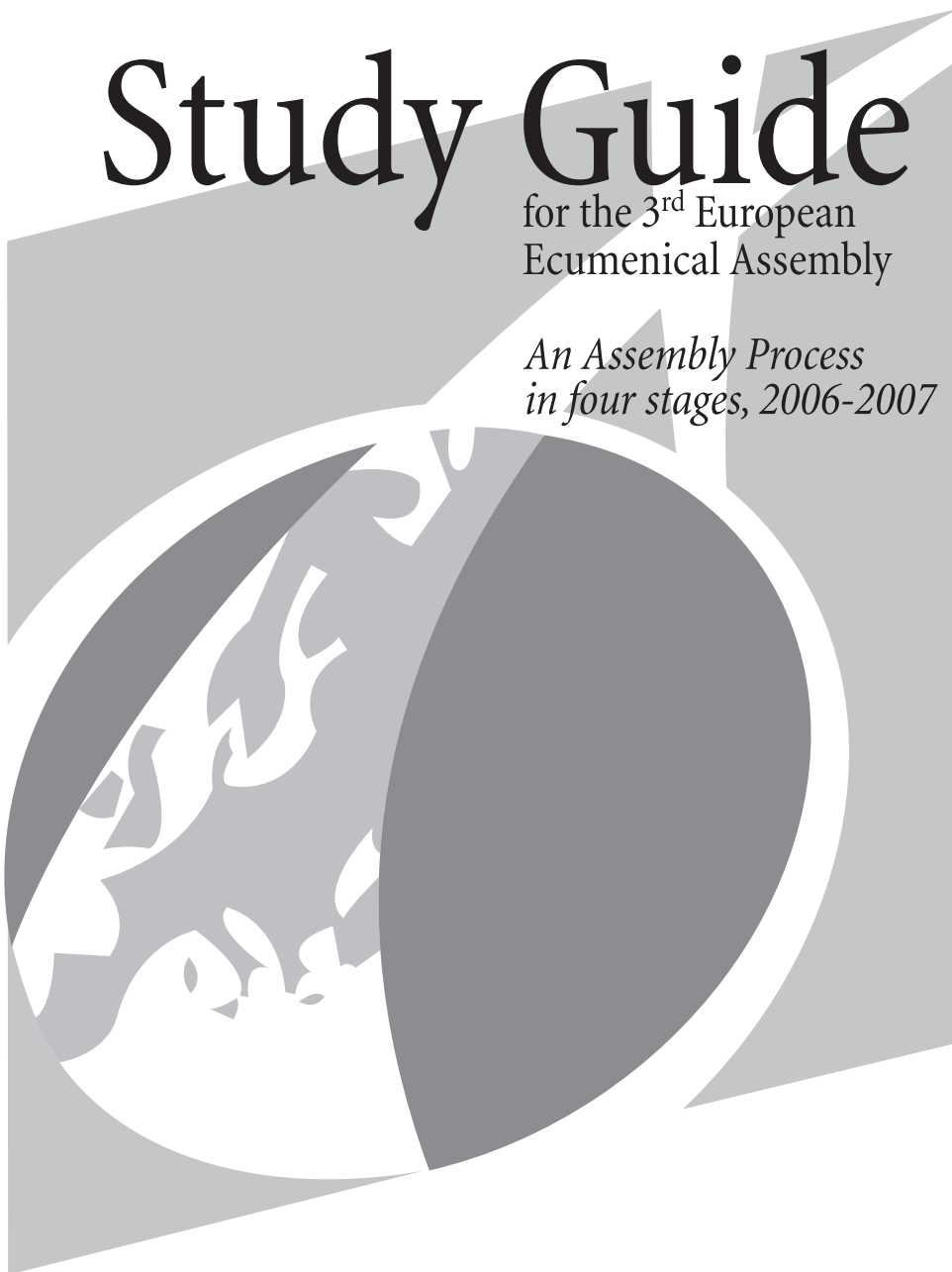


Study Guide

for the 3rd European
Ecumenical Assembly

*An Assembly Process
in four stages, 2006-2007*



Conference of European Churches (CEC)
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Introduction

Aldo Giordano and Colin Williams

In January 2002, the Joint Committee of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) started to think about how to structure a Third European Ecumenical Assembly following those at Basle (1989) and Graz (1997). Many aspects were considered. We came to the conclusion that the urgent need for Europe today is a new common Christian witness.

Europe is a continent with the potential to create space within which the different Christian Churches can meet, share mutual testimonies and decide how to work together serving the needs of our society. We recognized that it is time to set out humbly on the journey to find anew a light to guide us along the path of reconciliation and inspire us to overcome any temptation to turn back. Despite all the difficulties, which we know too well, there is no going back on our common calling to walk together along the ecumenical path. CCEE and CEC have a responsibility to make their own specific contributions. Our particular contribution lies in building up a European network capable of bringing together the majority of churches and

communities that exist on the continent.

The theme we have chosen has received large consensus: *The light of Christ shines upon all. Hope for renewal and unity in Europe*. The entire assembly process and its aims are guided by this Christological reference-point (John 8:12). The symbol of light is particularly significant both in the Eastern and Western Christian traditions. The sub-title points out the role of the Gospel of Christ in present-day Europe, while not losing sight of the fact that the primary responsibility of the churches is to bring about renewal and unity within themselves.

Rather than concentrate on a one-off event, we have opted for a two-year assembly process, almost a sort of European "pilgrimage" which will culminate in the Sibiu Assembly in September 2007.

With faith in the fact that God accompanies us in this project and trusting in the communion and prayers of so many people, we have given ourselves two major objectives for our journey:

The **first objective** is to help us discover, in the crucified and risen Christ, new light which will guide us along the path of reconciliation among Christians



in Europe. In this we are taking up anew the central theme of the 1997 Graz Assembly.

The assembly process will not deal directly with present doctrinal questions between the churches. That is not our task. It will instead be an opportunity to celebrate, think about and witness together, as Christians, to faith in Jesus Christ - the light who shines upon all - and the discipleship which flows from this.

We recognize that "being converted" together to Christ appears to be the essential secret to proceeding together on the path of unity. That means that we feel the need to deepen awareness of, and respect for, the different denominational spiritual traditions which are to be found on our continent. With this in mind, the stages of the assembly process also represent a symbol of our meeting with the riches of the different Christian traditions in Europe.

In all of this, it is important to express the communion which already exists among Christians in Europe. The process will be accompanied by the *Charta Oecumenica* (see box on page 10), which constitutes an agenda which the churches have given themselves to deepen collaboration and find common commitments for the future of Europe. The possibility of meeting and entering into dialogue with each other, which the assembly process offers, will be able to generate trust, remove any fears and encourage overcoming forms of tension and difficulties still in existence between the churches.

In a concrete way we wish to strength-

en and broaden the European ecumenical network. The primary players in the process and the assembly are the ecumenical delegates of the churches, Episcopal Conferences, communities and ecumenical bodies. We have great trust in the role to be played in this journey by the different ecumenical experiences which the Holy Spirit has given Europe in recent years. Special attention is to be paid to the younger generations.

The **second objective** is rediscovering the gift of light which the Gospel of Christ is for Europe today. The 1989 Basle Assembly focused on the theme of peace and justice. Taking into account the major challenges for churches coming from European culture and society, the assembly process leading to Sibiu wants to contribute to:

- giving back to the Christians of the continent confidence in the possibility of living the Gospel in a culture marked by secularization;
- rediscovering and deepening Christian and ecclesial identity in order to equip ourselves for a truer and more authentic dialogue with present-day culture;
- responding to the profound questions which our society has to pose to us about the things of the spirit, the search for meaning in life, the expectations of men and women today, and especially the expectations of the younger generations;
- dealing with common questions faced by our generation (freedom of religion, migration, peace, solidarity, etc.), revealing the intrinsic and dynamic relationship between the

spiritual-liturgical dimension and diaconal-social commitment;

- deepening the encounters and dialogue between the religions present throughout the continent;
- progressing and shedding light on the process of European unification (in this process the Churches are aware that there exists a Europe which has wider borders than the European Union and which goes beyond its political and economic horizons);
- becoming aware of Europe's responsibility towards other continents.

These are the themes, already in evidence in the *Charta Oecumenica*, which we wish to take up again and deepen together in these next two years. They will be examined in the course of the meetings of the Churches' delegates that are scheduled to take place in Rome in January 2006 and in Wittenberg in February 2007.

They will be examined throughout Europe during the national or regional meetings which will take place over the next two years.

Finally, they will be taken up at the Assembly in Sibiu. Our hope is that the delegates attending Sibiu will be people who will want to run with all these issues and to make things happen in their domestic ecumenical sphere when they return home. Our prayer too is that the networks of people from all the nations of the continent and from all the churches, Episcopal Conferences and communities, who will be a source of strength for each other during the process, will continue to support each

other in the years following our time together at Sibiu.

We hope that the Study Guide presented here may be useful to many people and communities in starting out with us on this European adventure which we perceive as both human and divine. It goes along the path from Basle to Graz to Sibiu; it reflects theologically on the theme of the new ecumenical assembly; it considers the role of Christians and the churches for Europe today; it asks about Europe's responsibilities towards other continents; it presents the various stages of the assembly process and finally offers material and useful information.

We are grateful for being able to begin this journey with so many sisters and brothers. We really do not know in advance where it will take us, but we are certain that our journey is in the heart of our Father in Heaven.



From Basel to Sibiu via Graz

Viorel Ionita



Basel, May 1989 – Christians from all over Europe gathered in Basel for the first European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA1). Women and men, young and old, lay and clergy, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant. You could sense something of the longing for peace. The churches from Eastern Europe, especially, told about their hopes for peace and justice, for change in Europe. They related to the 1983 Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Vancouver, Canada, which recommended that all churches should enter into a “conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation”.

The EEA1 process was initiated by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) as a response to the Vancouver call for justice, peace and integrity of creation (JPIC). CEC encouraged their member churches “to give support to the convening of an ecumenical Peace Assembly embracing the churches in all the signatory states of the Helsinki Final Act. We believe this will bring closer the day when Christians will speak with one voice to a world crying out for peace. Such a meeting would, we hope, promote the necessary dialogue between pacifists

and non-pacifists. May it bring nearer the day when our young people will no longer be called upon to learn the skills of war. May all, who are called to military service by their nation, seek God’s will and be given strength to do that will”. At the same time CEC invited the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) to join in the venture and after thorough study this invitation was accepted. So CEC and CCEE prepared the Basel Assembly as equal partners. The aim and purpose of the European Convention “Peace and Justice”, as EEA1 was first called, was to express the commitment of European Christians to peace, justice and integrity of creation. Both the preparatory process and the assembly itself took place “in the scope of a world-wide conciliar process for JPIC”. Ecumenical meetings in different European countries preceded the EEA1 and a world convocation on JPIC followed in Seoul, Korea, in 1990.

The theme of the EEA1 in Basel was *Peace and Justice*. The meeting started on Monday 15, May 1989 (Pentecost Monday) and ended on 21 May (Trinity Sunday according to the Western calendar). It was attended by 700 delegates from

every country in Europe, delegated guests, consultants, staff with various responsibilities, media representatives and thousands of visitors. It was an event designed, above all, for its participants. The atmosphere in which they met was one of solidarity, understanding, Christian hope and responsibility and it left its mark on them all. To experience such an event, you really had to be there and share in it.

The EEA1 facilitated the first encounter of Christians from all over Europe since the great schism of 1054 between East and West, and was constituted by elements of both a study conference and a church rally. A shared Christian faith spontaneously gave rise to trust and solidarity. On the soil of encounters of this kind, real peace and increasing justice can grow. Many say that the eastern European churches were especially inspired to take part in the movements for freedom and democracy. It was in that very year, 1989, that the Hungarian government opened its borders towards Austria and the churches in eastern Germany played a central role in the non-violent movement that ended in the fall of the Berlin wall. So the prayer in the preparatory process towards Basel, which was subsequently reproduced thousands of times, was heard: "We thank you that the peoples of the East and the peoples of the West share a common home in Europe. Lord, help us to know that peace between East and West in Europe will help to solve many conflicts outside Europe". In this spirit the Christians were prepared, at least in some parts of Europe, for the changes

which took place in Central and Eastern Europe only a few months after the EEA1. These radical changes in Europe affected the ecumenical follow-up process of the Basel Assembly.

Among the concrete results of the EEA1 were three suggested steps for the continuation of its work:

- To have annual periods of a week to 10 days as a time of prayer, discussion and action for justice, peace and integrity of creation.
- To establish a joint ecumenical working group to promote the conciliar process after Basel.
- To hold a second European Ecumenical Assembly in about five years time.

In February 1995 CEC and CCEE began to work towards a Second European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA2) planned for 1997, on the theme: *Reconciliation: Gift of God and Source of New Life*. The EEA2 took place in Graz, Austria, from 23–29 June 1997. The letter of invitation underlined that the EEA2 should be a gathering of "the whole people of God and all people in our society". With this perspective, the EEA2 brought together 700 official delegates from 124 CEC member churches and of the 34 Bishops' Conferences of the CCEE. Participants also included around 150 representatives from ecumenical and church organisations and movements, guests from other continents and other religious communities, and more than 10,000 Christians from all over Europe attended.

In the framework of daily prayers and Bible study open to all participants, the programme of the EEA2 included on the



one hand the Assembly of the official delegates and on the other hand a dialogue programme open to all participants. "Dialogue" was the key term for the concept and the implementation of the Graz assembly. "In meeting and sharing with others, in discussing and celebrating together, in confrontation and commonalities, in the discovery of being different as well as in the practice of mutual acceptance, the EEA2 made it possible that many Christians from Eastern Europe and their churches met people from other contexts and other confessions for the first time. Likewise, for people from Western Europe, it was often a new experience to meet different attitudes to faith and different ways of think-

ing"¹. The Graz assembly opened up new perspectives of dialogue and encounter between all churches in Europe.

The EEA2 adopted a final message, a "Basic Text" which described the main statements on the Assembly theme and developed ethical directions for thinking, and a set of "Recommendations for Action". The second recommendation for action invited all churches in Europe to "develop a common study document containing basic ecumenical duties and rights. From this a series of ecumenical guidelines, rules and criteria could be developed which would help the churches, those in positions of responsibility and all members, to distinguish between proselytism and Christian witness, as



The Charta Oecumenica

The *Charta Oecumenica* was signed on 22 April 2001 by the then Presidents of CEC and CCEE, Metropolitan J  r  mie and Cardinal Miloslav Vlk respectively. The eight-page document is subtitled "Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe". Its 12 points contain basic declarations on strengthening the churches' common faith; intensifying their sharing in catechetical and pastoral work; promoting greater cooperation in Christian education and theological

training; deepening spiritual community among the churches through prayer, and getting to know one another's worship and other forms of spiritual life. The churches are to make visible their commitment as a community to defend human rights and to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation; and to share in responsibility for the building of Europe, especially in the area of reconciliation and in developing a community of values such as humane attitudes, social consciousness and solidarity throughout Europe. Other important concerns are relations with Judaism and Islam. The document also encourages

encounters with other religions and world views in what is increasingly recognised as Europe's pluralistic society.

The *Charta Oecumenica* seeks to stimulate anew the churches' common witness to their faith throughout Europe. It not only enumerates areas of cooperation, but also calls on the churches to commit themselves to work in these areas, by receiving the concerns described in the document and implementing them at practical levels in their church and national life. The *Charta* has been translated into over thirty languages. It can be downloaded from the EEA3 website at www.eea3.org

well as between fundamentalism and genuine faithfulness, and help to shape the relationships between majority and minority churches in an ecumenical spirit.” This recommendation was the starting point for the *Charta Oecumenica* process, which can be considered as the most important follow-up action of the EEA2. After a large process of studying and discussing it as a draft, the *Charta Oecumenica* was signed at the Strasbourg Encounter (22 April 2001) and since then has become the ecumenical document which has been the most widely distributed and discussed in Europe so far.

The fourth chapter of the *Charta Oecumenica* affirms that at the “European level it is necessary to strengthen co-operation between CEC and CCEE and to hold further European Ecumenical Assemblies”. Following this recommendation the *Charta* is taken as a framework for the process towards the EEA3 as well as for the assembly in Sibiu itself. In this perspective the *Charta* is the most important link between the EEA2 in Graz and the EEA3 in Sibiu. The assembly in 2007 in Sibiu will be an important step in the ecumenical journey of the churches in Europe in the 21st century.

European Ecumenical Assemblies, *Charta Oecumenica*: a short bibliography

Peace with Justice. The official documentation of the European Ecumenical Assembly, Basel, Switzerland. 15-21 May, 1989. Published by the Conference of European Churches, Geneva 1989, 337 pages.

Rüdiger Noll and Stefan Vesper, editors, **Reconciliation. Gift of God and Source of New Life.** Documents from the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz. Published by CCEE and CEC, Verlag Styria, Graz 1998, 331 pages.

Charta Oecumenica. Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe. CEC, Geneva, and CCEE, St. Gallen 2001, 13 pages.

Viorel Ionita and Sarah Numico, editors, **Charta Oecumenica. A Text, a Process and a Dream of the Churches in Europe.** WCC Publications, Geneva 2003, 113 pages.

¹ *Reconciliation. Gift of God and Source of New Life. Documents from the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz*, edited by Rüdiger Noll and Stefan Vesper, Verlag Styria, 1998

A letter from Sibiu

Elfriede Dörr

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings to you from Sibiu/Hermannstadt/Nagyszeben! People here are looking forward to welcoming you as our guests for the Third European Ecumenical Assembly.

Sibiu is a pleasant city in Transylvania. At its heart is the charming medieval "old town" with its many squares, colourful markets and variety of church towers, from which the newer areas, built in the "socialist" style, do not detract. "Sibiu" is the Romanian name, the most commonly used, in all other languages as well; but it also has a German name, "Hermannstadt", and a Hungarian name, "Nagyszeben". It is home to about 170,000 people: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews and Roma. The majority of them belong to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The year 2007 will be an especially important one for our city as:

- Sibiu will be cultural capital of Europe, together with Luxembourg;
- Romania may possibly become a member of the European Union;
- following Basel in 1989 and Graz in 1997, the next European Ecumenical Assembly will be held in Sibiu.

In an eastern European city such as ours,

- where different Christian traditions get along well together in a majority Orthodox country;
- where different ethnic groups can influence one another's cultural identity;
- where there is still a living memory of dictatorship, and people's faces show the strains of the transformation we have undergone;
- where people watch the political developments in Europe with longing and fear, and
- where people are searching for ways to meet the challenges of our time on the basis of their faith, Christians of all churches and confessions have great hopes for this ecumenical Assembly.

They are also affected, in their expectations and hopes, by the uncertainty caused by the latest developments in relations among the churches worldwide, which have not failed to make an impression on church members in Sibiu.

So people in Sibiu are wondering: will the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, with all its organisation and plan-

ning, allow the Holy Spirit to work through it? Can such an outstanding church meeting reveal the different churches to one another in a new way?

Has the time come for a new beginning: for us to exhort *one another* in the spirit of Christ? for words of encouragement and consolation out of love? for the fellowship of the Spirit, which reaches farther than we can see from our church towers? Will the light of Christ shine through and transform our minds, so that each of us is no longer looking to his or her own interests, but to those of others (cf. Philippians 2:1-4)?

Will Christians then be able to go, strengthened and encouraged, inspired and excited, moved and changed, from Sibiu back home again?

Come, let us all make this part of the prayers of our churches!

For further information regarding Sibiu:

www.sibiu.ro (Website of the Sibiu mayor's office in Romanian, German and English)

www.sibiu2007.ro (Website on the cultural capital of Europe in Romanian and English)

www.ulbsibiu.ro/en/facultati/teologie

(Website of the Orthodox Faculty of Theology in Sibiu, in English)

www.ev-theol.ro (Website of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Sibiu, in German)

www.evangel.ro/hermannstadt (parish Website of the Evangelical Lutheran Church A.B. in Sibiu, in German)

www.sibiu.ro/de/biserici/htm;

www.sibiu.ro/en/biserici/htm; (Information in Romanian, German and English on the Orthodox Cathedral, the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek -Catholic Church etc.)

www.sibiu2007.ro/en/churches.htm (Information in Romanian and English on some churches in Sibiu)



The light of Christ shines upon all: communion, witness and spiritual renewal

Daniel of Moldavia and Bucovina

The light of Christ shines through living communion with him. The central theme of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, which will be held in Sibiu, Romania in the year 2007, has a deep significance for the faith, the life and the mission of the churches in Europe.

According to the faith of the apostles and of the Church universal, Christ is the light of the world, that is, the ultimate meaning of the whole creation, of all human history, of the entire life of the Church and the entire life of its members (cf. Colossians 3:1-3 and Galatians 2:20). All things were created through him (cf. John 1:3), in him and for him (cf. Colossians 1:16).

In him, the whole universe is revealed as the gift of God through the eternal Son who became a human being within time and in the world. At the end of human history and of the present universe, Christ will judge all nations and all generations (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).

Consequently, all this means that our faith in Christ, as Creator of the world and Head of the Church, demands of Christians that we look upon, understand and love the whole creation. All

human history and the whole of human life is viewed through the eyes of Christ, with the thoughts of Christ and with the heart of Christ. Christians will be able to do this to the extent that Christ lives in them and guides their lives through his Holy Spirit.

Christ is the one to whom we call in prayer, to whom we listen in the Gospels, whom we receive through communion in the sacraments of the church, the foretaste of the Kingdom of God, and through carrying out the commandments to love God and our neighbour. In other words, to be and to do what Christ asks of us, we must place ourselves in living communion with Christ. Thus, nothing can take the place of the spiritual life as the basis for any authentic Christian social life and mission.

The light of Christ shines forth especially through the mission of the Church and the witness of Christians.

Christ, the same who said "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), also said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). He further exhorted his disciples, saying: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that



they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The Christian missions of Europe, which received the light of Christ and transmitted it to so many generations and nations, should rejoice over the fruits of that light which they transmitted to others in the past. Today, however, Europe finds itself humbled as it passes through its deep crisis of faith and the desert of secularisation. But it is also our conviction that only the deepening of life in Christ can renew in Europe the strength to seek, receive and communicate intensely the creative and saving light of Christ to the contemporary world.

The light of Christ makes itself known through spiritual renewal and unity among Christians. Spiritual renewal requires a great deal of humility and love, creativity and patience, as well as conversion, turning to the Biblical sources, and communion through prayer with the Holy Apostles, the martyrs and missionaries of the Church in every age. It also necessitates real co-operation among all the churches in presenting a common witness in the face of today's challenges.

The spiritual apathy of secularised Europe can only be cured by a *renewed and deepened spirituality*, which is cultivated in the fruitful silence of humble hearts and of monastic and local church communities, and of Christian organisations, in prayer, seeking salvation and sanctity. Thus the experience of the "desert" or of solitude, which is ours in a secularised society, can become a space

that blossoms in the encounter with the living God and in the renewal of human life. Within this ordeal of the secularised society with its plurality of confessions and religions, the Christian tradition will be lived out and understood. This should not be thought of as a spiritually empty repetition of exterior forms, but rather as a renewed and creative faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ, in a deepened perception of the mystery of God's love for humankind, as one and in its diversity.

In our contemporary society, characterised by decaying materialistic individualism and the total take over of economic globalisation, the churches are called upon to defend and promote the distinct identities of persons and of peoples in communion. In the light of this eternal communion with the Trinitarian God, the Creator of humankind: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

The light of Christ shines *in the churches* when they are at prayer, in their diaconal and social work, in their work through dialogue and co-operation.

The light of Christ shines *in the life of Christian families*, when they call upon God's love to bless and sanctify the love of married couples. This blessing is through the birth and upbringing of children in the faith, especially these days when Europe is the only continent where the death rate is higher than the birth rate, where more funerals are held than baptisms and betrothals!

The light of Christ also shines wherever *love and solidarity* overcome individual and collective, national and continental selfishness. It is through our



sharing and solidarity that we may heal the poverty and despair of the unemployed and migrants, of the sick and marginalised, of older persons and those who are exploited.

The light of Christ also shines *wherever scientific research encounters the search for meaning and for sanctity*, and where the intelligence of reason is united with a loving heart to preserve and cultivate the beauty of the creation and the dignity of the human person.

The light of Christ shines *in the passion for truth, in the struggle for justice and in work for peace and reconciliation* at the local level and throughout the world.



Spiritual repentance and hope. True repentance, which renews the Christian life, becomes the source of missionary

action and of hope. Since the Europe of military and religious wars, of quarrels and divisions among the churches, of conflicts between reason and faith, has often obscured the light of the Gospel, it is all the more necessary today in Europe to work *for dialogue, reconciliation, co-operation and communion between churches and peoples*.

But this communion is a divine gift which we keep in “vessels of clay”, that is, in our fragile and finite, sinful human nature, which is always in need of strengthening and support by the grace and the light of Christ.

Consequently, the chief spiritual duty of Christ’s churches in Europe is not to consider our continent self-sufficient, without the light of Christ to transmit to others and without receiving it also from others.

The light of Christ shines upon all: the crucified and risen Son and the trinitarian light

Piero Coda

Light from light. Light is a universal symbol among all peoples and all religious traditions and schools of thought: it is a symbol of being, knowing and living. It refers in fact to the Sun which is the visible source of light for humanity and which, as Saint Francis sang, "of You, Most High, bears the likeness".

Jesus used the symbol of light to express the mystery of his person and mission: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:13). From the first page of the book of Genesis to the last page of the book of Revelation, the Christological symbol of light runs through the whole account of creation and salvation history like a golden thread.

The word that created the beginning breaks through the silence and proclaims: "Let there be light. And there was light". (Genesis 1:3). In the fullness of time, the "true light, the light that enlightens all men" (John 1:9), comes into the world, is made flesh and pitches his tent in our midst (cf. John 1:7,14). The face of Christ shines like the sun on Mount Tabor (cf. Matthew 17:2), and whoever follows him "will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"

(John 8:12). At the end of time, the holy city, Jerusalem, "comes down out of heaven from God. It has the glory of God" (Revelation 21:10-11): the city "has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Revelation 21:23).

In the dense and evocative language of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is the "light of the world" because in him there is the fullness of life received from the Father (cf. John 5:26; 13:3; 14:9-10; 16:15), which He, in turn, passes on to men so that they too may live by it and be enlightened by it (cf. John 17:1-2, 22). This life which is light is love: the love with which the Father loves the Son and the Son mankind, so that people, too, may love one another (cf. John 15:9, 12-17): in fact, "Whoever says 'I am in the light', while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling" (1 John 2:9-10).

"Light from light": thus the Church confesses the mystery of faith which contains the revelation of God and the destiny of humanity. The Son, Jesus Christ, is the "reflection of God's glory and the



exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:3), Light from Light, in fact, true God from true God. And the Spirit is Light, which comes from the Father (cf. John 15:26) and is given to humanity by means of the crucified and risen Son, so that people, too, may freely become what God has called them to be: "children of light" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:5)

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, which Christ reveals, is the foundation of humanity's salvation and participation in the very life of God. In the mystery of the Trinity is the ever-new and inexhaustible origin of that humanism which has impregnated the precious heritage of the Hebrew, Greek and Latin traditions and – with the gradual combination of different peoples and nations – has boosted Europe's spiritual, cultural and social growth and characterised its originality and contribution to the universal array of civilisations.

The Light that never sets. "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The Most Holy Trinity is the purest light of love, and creation, too, the blessed fruit of its deepest love, is per se clothed in goodness and beauty (cf. Genesis 1:31). Darkness is born in the heart of man when he allows himself to be seduced by the snares of the tempter who wants to separate him from God and his fellow creatures (cf. Genesis 3:1-12).

When the Father's light comes to shine in the world, the darkness neither recognises nor welcomes it (cf. John 1:5, 10-11). In fact it seems as if darkness covers the earth (cf. Matthew 27:45-46) and the sun's light fails (cf. Luke 23:44),

when the Son, nailed to the cross, lets out to God his cry of abandonment and breathes his last (cf. Mark 15:34-37; Matthew 27:46-50).

But in reality the descent of the light into the abyss of darkness reveals the dawn of the resurrection, communicating to mankind the secret of the Trinity's love. "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father" (John 10:17-18).

The Son does not simply act "as if" he had to give his life: he really offers it up, "right to the end" (cf. John 10:15-17; Philippians 2:8). And thus he takes it up again. For the life he received from the Father is love: one has it when one gives it away. In this way the Son obeys the Father, in fact doing what he has seen the Father do (cf. John 5:19): who, having life in Himself, has given it to the Son, so that the Son, too, may have it in himself and pass it on to others. This is what happens in the Eucharist (cf. John 6:57).

The light does not oppose the darkness that shelters in the heart of man and in the drama of history from above and from outside: but it penetrates deep down, to overcome darkness and put it to flight from below and from within. This is the unprecedented and foolish logic of love, its weak and helpless omnipotence.

From now, and for ever, the light flourishes in the very heart of the world, into which Christ has come down and made His home: like leaven which makes dough rise, like salt which gives flavour

(cf. Mark 9:50), like the humble rays of a sun still shining in the morning mists that enfold them, but already foreshadow the midday light.

Europe is the West, the land of sunset. One could say that here sunrise and sunset are destined to meet. From when the apostle Paul responded to the invitation of the Macedonians (cf. Acts 16:9-10) who appeared to him in a dream and called the Christian faith to set out on the roads of Europe, and, from here, on to the roads of the whole world.

Thus Europe experienced the dawn of a new civilisation which, breathing with both lungs, has given humanity countless and extraordinary fruits. But it has also known the darkness of sunset: division between Christians, fratricidal wars, exploitation of other peoples, the shoah, the eclipse of God, humanity losing its way.

But Christ, "the true light which shines upon all" (John 1:9), has made even this sunset his own and has lived through it in the darkness of the cross. In him, then, even that darkness is destined for a new dawn: if his disciples know how to leave the camp to go towards Him (cf. Hebrews 13:13), becoming in Him "all things to all people" (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

The rainbow of the new covenant.

"For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light" (Ephesians 5:8). The disciples are called to witness to and spread the light of Christ, because they themselves, in Him, are transformed by light in all they are, all they think and all they do. "To walk in the light" is to walk in

communion with Christ and in communion with each other (cf. 1 John 1:5-7). This new covenant between God and humanity in the love of Christ, light of the world, is our hope for renewal and unity.

A new rainbow of peace, justice and fraternity which binds heaven to earth, a "sign of the covenant" which God makes between himself and humanity and between humanity and every living being for all future generations (cf. Genesis 9:12). The rainbow is the creation which welcomes in Mary, through her *fiat*, the *fiat* of the Creator. "Mary", wrote Anthony of Padua in his sermon on the feast of the Annunciation, "was 'as a bright rainbow' in the conception of the Son of God. (...) So, when the Sun of Justice, the Son of God, entered this day into the 'cloud' of the glorious Virgin, the Virgin herself became 'as a bright rainbow', the sign of the covenant of peace and reconciliation, amid clouds of glory".

In the rainbow, in which the one light of love is refracted into the seven colours of the rainbow and their infinite shades, each colour proclaims a way of expressing and incarnating love, which is light, in the many forms of personal and social, spiritual and cultural experience, in the relationship between men and women, peoples and civilisations, the human family and the created world which offers them a home. Is this not what Europe and the world want today from Christ, the "true light that shines upon all" (John 1, 9)?

A new way of perceiving, relishing, relating, living and thinking is revealed: God and humanity, God and creation, who join together in Christ crucified and



risen, who is transfigured and transfigures all flesh in the Holy Spirit. There appears an artistic and technical way of thinking and doing things, an ethical and social way of acting, which finds its complete expression in the living relationship with others, with things, with God, with ourselves.

A new symbolism appears, which does not refer simply to the unattainable beyond, but makes the experience of God's love present, something that can be

shared. In Christ God's love has made its home among us: "for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20). Once again, what is essential is to witness together to what Irenaeus of Lyon taught: "the glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God". In the Risen Christ, the true light which shines upon all (cf. John 1:9), the promise becomes reality.



Hope for renewal and unity in Europe

Gennadios of Sassima

Europe: land of differences and divisions. In our times we often hear it said that the world has become a “global village”. In fact, this metaphor is highly misleading for it reflects the perspective of a very small élite. The overwhelming majority of the world’s population still see the earth – and thus the world – as a vast expanse far beyond their comprehension, much less their control.

But we are living on an old continent, full of history, which used to be called Europa – an immense “village” where different religions, cultures and civilizations have been confronted for centuries. Today more and more Christians and churches on this old continent, where a variety of differences and differentiations still exist in the host of countries which form the Europe of today, find themselves confronted by the new and deeply challenging aspects of “globalization”. This globalization is faced by a vast majority of people, especially the poor, but at the same time Christians and churches are looking and searching for renewal and new concepts of unity. What have we to say and to respond to this European phenomenon and reality?

If we look back at this old continent of Europe, at two thousand years of either political or Christian history, we shall at the same time be overwhelmed both by joy and disappointment. The fact that Christendom exists, even divided, and still survives, is a reality.

This is by no means a simple matter to be taken for granted. The Church was born into a hostile world and suffered severe persecutions not only in the first centuries, but still in our times. And in spite of all this, the Church still exists, sometimes stronger than before. The words of St Paul, “we die and, look, we are still alive,” fully apply to the Church’s history until now. How can this be explained? Perhaps by sheer chance and historical circumstances, as a rationalist would say. For us believers the answer lies in the words of our Lord that “not even the gates of hell will overcome the Church.” Be that as it may, we can only be thankful to God for having preserved the Church in existence over all the centuries.

The fact that the basic traditions and structures of the Church have been preserved, in spite of the Church having been exposed to so many influences from vari-



ous cultural contexts in which it found itself, is a great miracle. The Church lives in the world, but it is not of the world. It has always been difficult to determine and establish the frontiers between Church and world. It will continue to be a fundamental problem of the Church to preserve its identity without withdrawing from the world into a ghetto.

It needs to be remembered that the Church has made an impact on the various cultures in which it found itself. This was not only the case in the Christian East or in the Middle Ages in the West where we can almost speak of a Christian culture. It is even true in modern times when the Christian Church in the West, less in the East, was officially and emphatically pushed aside as an irrelevant factor in the creation of a humanistic culture. Many of the humanistic and moral values of modern society are nothing but Christian principles of moral behavior. The Church has not been as irrelevant to human life as some people have wanted it to be.

In many countries in Europe, Christian Churches were in a majority and in other countries a minority, political power increased and institutions were developed. In the history of the Christian Churches the days of suffering and humiliation have generally by far outnumbered those of glory and secular power. Many martyrs experienced martyrdom and paid the price of secular power and human force with their lives. We can only be thankful that, as St Paul says, "God's power is perfected in weakness". Especially in the 20th century, the Christian Churches have good reason to

be thankful to our Lord for the fact that the importance of dialogue was recovered in the ecumenical movement and the significance that the churches could not continue to be separated and divided; the search for unity is a major factor for which one has to struggle and to search for together in spite of the hostilities of the past. A new era was born - the era for unity and for renewal of the Church.

There were also disappointments and failures in this European history, and there is a great deal to feel sorry about and to repent for.

There was a failure in how truly and deeply Europe could be Christianized. The mission of the Church was either insufficient, e.g. for the churches in the East, or was essentially unchristian, as it happened with much of the missionary zeal and activities of Christians in the West. It was, several times, mixed up with the Gospel and the national and cultural values of a particular time. It has thus failed to achieve a true inculturation of the Church. In many cases, Christian missions have been confused with the imposition of Christianity on certain peoples without regard to their cultural particularities.

There has been the tragic division of Christianity itself. Especially in the second millennium we witnessed a polemic and hatred among Christians, previously unheard of in history. There is little point in trying to prove who is to be blamed for that, as today a tendency is prevailing among the Churches to express forgiveness and love.

In addition, there has been a failure to

interpret the Gospel in existential terms. Fundamentalism, confessionalism, and conservatism have killed the Scriptures and the dogmas of the Church, turning them into formulae to be preserved rather than to be lived and experienced. Dogma and ethics have been separated. Similar dichotomies have occurred between dogma and ecclesiology and Church administration. In various places the Church was infiltrated by nationalism, and sometimes "ethnophyletism" became a fact and reality.

This is what main-stream churches in Europe have inherited from the past two millennia of Church history. Some of it gives us reasons to be thankful, whereas other parts give us grounds for repentance. An awareness of both of these will be extremely helpful to keep in mind as we struggle for renewal and search for the visible unity of the Church.

The desire to walk together in unity. In the Europe of today churches and Christians undertake concrete steps and look for positive results in order to overcome divisions without having at least an implicit notion of the kind of unity they are looking for. However the unity of the Church for most of the churches has been, from the beginning, one of the main issues for ecumenical thinking and action in Europe. Positive signs and optimistic initiatives have appeared in the relations of many churches and church communions. Protestant Churches are drawing together in a communion of fellowship, by signing agreements: Reformed, Lutherans and Methodists in the Leuenberg Church Fellowship (1973);

Nordic and Baltic Lutherans and Anglicans of Britain and Ireland have come into communion through the Porvoo Agreement (1992). On the other side, Anglicans and Moravians have entered a new relationship through the Fetter Lane Agreement. The Meissen Agreement, a closer fellowship on the way to visible unity, was signed by the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Church of England (1988). The Reuilly Agreement brings together in a similar relationship Reformed and Lutheran Churches in France with the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland. Besides these significant agreements there were also church agreements achieved in Italy between Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches. All these church agreements, although different in their theological and ecclesiological presuppositions, have led to full communion between the respective churches making their unity more visible. All the churches involved in these agreements entered in communion with each other, though each one of them continued to keep its own identity unchanged.

Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church continues to be involved in bilateral dialogues with several churches, and with the Roman Catholic Church in particular. All these efforts could be considered as positive results, but it must not be forgotten that difficulties, and at times imbroglios, have also been faced in these dialogues and fellowships. Some churches experience Eucharistic "philoxenia" (hospitality), while others still face fundamental differences of faith which bar the way to visible unity and to Eucharis-

tic fellowship. As the *Charta Oecumenica* notes, "...there are different views of the Church and its oneness, of the sacraments and ministries. We must not be satisfied with this situation. Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers, we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches"¹. In this perspective, the prayer of Jesus Christ to his heavenly Father for his disciples as well as for all who believe in him "that they may all be one" (John, 17:22), is to be understood not simply as a wish, which the Lord expressed occasionally, but as a mandate given to those who follow him and first of all, to the churches.

The relationship of CEC member churches to the Roman Catholic Church is of special importance and great significance. In some European countries there are good relationships with the Roman Catholic Church which is part of their national ecumenical body. In other countries relationships are not so good and difficulties continue and need to be addressed. The most positive example of the good working relationships between the CEC and the Roman Catholic Church is the work of the Joint Committee of CEC and CCEE.

Looking for Renewal in Europe. Over the past years churches and Christians participated in a process of common witness which finally led to the agreed text of the *Charta Oecumenica*. This ecumenical document is of great importance and

provides an agenda of commitment for the Roman Catholic Church as well as for the CEC member churches to continue to improve their relationships in the future. The *Charta Oecumenica* invites all Christians to proclaim the Gospel, the Good News, together, to pray and act together and continue in mutual dialogue². It is an invitation addressed to all the churches in Europe and a challenge which needs to be taken up by all.

This ecumenical European process is an ecumenical pilgrimage and will serve as an instrument offering new dynamics, facilitating dialogue, providing new methods of fellowship and opening new spaces in the ecclesiological understanding of the Church.

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in his message to the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly, in Graz, in 1997, indicated that the new stage of reconciliation and cooperation to be achieved among the Christians and Churches in Europe "is the experience of unity in Christ as the existential element that characterizes every human being. The experience of this unity is not just realizing that we have common interests and goals. Nor is it merely the acknowledgement of common belief in many areas. The deep experience of unity consists of all this, and in addition the profound conviction that our lives are communion, that we share a common future, that is, communion in our final destiny, in *Eschata*. It is the intimate understanding in Christ that no one will be saved without the other, that if someone is lost

¹ Cf. *Charta Oecumenica*, I, 1.

² Cf. *Charta Oecumenica*, II

then I am also lost, and if someone is saved, then I am also saved. This means rejecting the legal interpretation of individualistic justification and salvation, and accepting the notion that Christ wants... 'everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2:4)³.

The churches today, on the way towards their fellowship with each other, have to rediscover and redefine once more the ecclesiological values of their own confessional identity and the plurality and the richness of this fellowship. This should not be an obstacle to dialogue but rather constitute the grounds for being open to value other Christian traditions. In some places it seems that there still exists a lack of communication and information about ecumenical issues. Thus, issues of ecumenical education and formation, as well as sharing information within the European churches needs to be given higher priority.

Facing the new challenges to Church unity and looking to the churches for a renewal in Europe, makes new dialogue about the substance and the shape of the ecumenical movement desirable and necessary. CEC has delivered, in its work and activities, its own contribution to the development of relations between Orthodox Churches and other parts of the ecumenical family. The results show that there are not only difficulties but also areas of possible further cooperation.

The path towards the unity of the churches is long, and the Holy Spirit will need to continue to guide us and to provide the inspiration for transformation

and renewal. It is the only way for the Church to assert its uniqueness, its importance and its indispensability. On their way towards a comprehensive fellowship, the churches in Europe have to acknowledge the value of their own confessional identity, which should not be an obstacle to dialogue but rather the grounds for being open to valuing other Christian traditions. It is the only way to avoid returning to the hostilities and divisions of the past. The search for church unity and renewal makes us feel more strongly the immense responsibility that is placed on our weak shoulders in order to witness to the Truth.

With this feeling, churches and Christians should continue the process towards the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in 2007, and fully participate in it. It is an ecumenical duty. It is also a pastoral, ethical, theological and spiritual challenge which is addressed to all European Christian Churches today. The vision behind togetherness is a competing vision of the *oikoumene*, and of the unity and renewal of humankind. The Europe of today needs to be challenged by an alternative way leading to a new life of community in diversity.

³ Cf. *Reconciliation-Gift of God and Source of New Life, Documents*, 2nd Ecumenical European Assembly, Graz, Austria, 23-29 June 1997, edited by Rüdiger Noll and Stefan Vesper, Verlag Styria, 1998, 39.

European integration: an issue on the churches' agenda

Rüdiger Noll



Of all the political institutions in Europe, such as the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union (EU) is a major player, due to its law setting authority and partly governmental character. But "European integration" is not just about enlarging the European Union. It is also about deepening the bases within the Union as well as deepening relations between peoples and countries in Europe as a whole and beyond.

What is known today as the European Union has its origins in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community. It was the idea of the "founding fathers", such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, that the former enemies during World War II should be united economically to the extent that they could no longer afford to go to war against each other again. The European Union has its roots in the experience of the two World Wars and was therefore envisaged as a peace and reconciliation project, built on economic interaction and common prosperity. Already in 1946, Winston Churchill spoke in his famous speech in Zurich of "a kind of United States of Europe".

After several steps of enlargement, the establishment of the European Community in 1957 and the Single European Act, it was the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 which laid the foundation stone of the EU as we know it today. Maastricht did not only provide for the euro, but also for a number of non-economic competences of the Union and institutional reforms.

But is "European Integration" understood in relation to the European Union as enlarging and deepening the Union as an ever ongoing, self-evident process? What are the recent developments? What can we expect by 2007, the time of the Sibiu Assembly? And what is the role of the churches in all of this?

European integration in 2004 – Work in progress. 2004 was a decisive year for the development of the European Union and the European project.

1 May 2004 - Ten new Member States joined the European Union: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland Slovakia and Slovenia. This was the biggest enlargement of the European Union at any one time in its history. It was the first

time that States from the east of the former "Iron Curtain" became members. For many people 1 May 2004 was therefore as much of a significant event marking the end of the Cold War as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

On the occasion of the May 2004 enlargement, the Brussels-based ecumenical organisations and church representations issued invitations to a worship service. The van Maerlant Chapel of the Resurrection, a symbol of the ecumenical and spiritual presence of the churches at the heart of the European Institutions, was too small to host the big congregation. Several hundreds of people from the international and local communities came for the service. Candles were lit and brought forward to the altar: at first ten candles as a symbol for the ten new member states, then fifteen candles for the "old" member states, and finally the congregation brought forward numerous lights for neighbouring countries of the European Union as well as for countries and people in other regions of the world. The candles were accompanied by prayers: giving thanks to God for overcoming divisions and for the processes of reconciliation, asking God for His blessing upon a community enriched by many cultures and faith-based experiences. But the prayers also included intercessions for God's whole creation and for people still affected by a lack of freedom, a lack of solidarity and justice, by the neglect of their human dignity. The worship service made it evident that the enlargement of the European Union was much more than just a political act based on many years of

tough negotiations: it was also a spiritual act, highly emotional for many people expressing their hopes and fears in prayers and hymns.

Already a month before the actual date of the enlargement, from 17-21 April, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences in the European Community (COMECE) organised a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela to mark the enlargement, thus symbolising that churches and bishops' conferences are and remain together on the way. "On the Way of Hope" was the theme of the pilgrimage. In walking together, in prayer and worship as well as in common reflections, the participants experienced the enlarged fellowship as a fellowship of hope.

These spiritual events around the date of enlargement formed the climax of many years of work, in which the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), COMECE and other ecumenical organisations supported the churches in the new member states of the EU in their preparations. Both COMECE and CEC as well as many other ecumenical organizations, such as the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Eurodiaconia and Caritas Internationalis, accompanied the enlargement process with their conceptual thinking and visions. COMECE and CEC also made several interventions at the Institutions encouraging the enlargement process to be just and fair. In an open letter of the year 2002 CEC encouraged the churches in Europe to contribute to a debate in all European countries, "in which moral and



political requirements of historical importance are not overshadowed by short-term interests of money and power". The letter also drew attention to the fact that the enlargement process of the EU should not be seen as simply the "East" adjusting to the "West": "This enlargement is in fact a transformation of Europe as a whole, involving both the current member states and the new ones."

Europe is bigger and for the foreseeable future will remain bigger than the European Union and it has to live up to its global responsibility. Therefore it is important for COMECE as well as for the Church and Society Commission of CEC not only to bring the voice of the churches from within the European Union to the attention of the European Institutions. Structurally this commitment finds its expression in the Church and Society Commission being one Commission of the pan-European CEC and in its close cooperation with the World Council of Churches. Equally COMECE cooperates very closely with CCEE and the Vatican.

"European integration" as already indicated above means more than just enlarging the Union. The term also stands for deepening relations. COMECE and CCEE as well as CEC always argued that the European Union must be more than just an economic space. It must be a value-based community. Its policies must foster just, participatory and sustainable societies. To this effect, the churches, through the Church and Society Commission of CEC and COMECE, monitored very closely the process towards a

European Constitution, or more correctly towards the development of a "Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe".

On 29 October 2004 the 25 Heads of State and Government of an enlarged European Union finally signed the Draft Treaty. This was developed by the Convention on the Future of Europe and subsequent negotiations between governments. In its first articles the Draft Treaty stipulates that values such as freedom, solidarity, sustainability and human rights, including the rights of minorities, form the basis of the European Union. It also stipulates more clearly what the EU should do, what its competencies are to be, and how it should be organized to operate more effectively and transparently. It finally includes provisions for more democracy and participation. In article I-52 the Union commits itself to an "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with the churches and religious communities, a formulation also used in Art I-47 with regard to civil society. Many member churches would have liked to see more radical steps, a more clear commitment to social cohesion and a peaceful settlement of conflicts as well as a reference to God and/or the Christian heritage of Europe in the Preamble; the Church and Society Commission of CEC and COMECE welcomed the Draft Treaty as a decisive step towards deepening the European Union.

Finally, in December 2004, the European Council decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. The Churches also followed this process very closely. In public statements and docu-



ments as well as in their talks with EU Presidencies, COMECE and CEC expressed very clearly that the fact that Turkey is a pre-dominantly Muslim country cannot be an obstacle per se for its membership. Measured by the EU's own standards, however, the so-called Copenhagen criteria, the churches expressed serious doubts as to whether Turkey fulfills all human rights' standards, especially the implementation of freedom of religion.

The year 2005 – Hiccups in the European integration process. The year 2005 also began in a promising way. Several countries began to ratify the Constitutional Treaty, including Spain after their consultative referendum.

On 25 April, the European Union concluded the accession negotiations with Romania and Bulgaria – two predominantly Orthodox countries – by signing the Accession Treaties. Both countries are expected to be members of the European Union at the beginning of 2007. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly will therefore take place in a new member country of the Union. But will it really? For that to happen, both countries as well as the Union itself will have to live up to their commitments.

As far as the European Union itself is concerned, the enthusiasm and progress in 2004 was followed by some disillusionment.

At the end of June and the beginning of July the people of France and The Netherlands turned the Constitutional Treaty down in public referenda. The reasons were manifold. Besides attempts to

“punish” their own national governments, the experience of the European Institutions being too far away from its citizens and the feeling of many that the social provisions might be subordinate to economic interests may be the most prominent among them. The envisaged start of accession negotiations with Turkey might also have played its role. Though Cyprus, Latvia, Malta and Luxembourg (after a consultative referendum) still ratified the Constitutional Treaty after the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands, there were no prospects for the Treaty coming into force in the near future. Several countries postponed the ratification process. The European project seemed to be in crisis. Members of the European Parliament suggested slowing the process of enlarging and deepening the European Union.

The European Council met later in June 2005. It failed to adopt a framework budget 2007-2012 and called for a period of reflection. Finally, the President of the European Commission, Manuel Barroso, said at a press conference in September that the EU would not have a Constitution for “at least the next two or three years”.

One of the initiatives the European Commission wants to see implemented is the “Lisbon Strategy”, i.e. to make Europe the most competitive and knowledge-based entity in the world. After the rather disappointing half-time evaluation of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the European Commission declared, in its July Communication, its primary goals to be to foster economic growth and employment. Already the churches had

demanded economic growth to remain in balance with social cohesion and sustainability as the original formulation that the Lisbon Strategy had envisaged.

In order to stimulate a debate on the future of Europe and the Constitutional Treaty, the European Commission published in October 2005 a "Plan D" – "D" for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. According to "Plan D", the European Commission wants to support national debates: "Now is the time to listen and to act. ... Plan D must seek to clarify, deepen and legitimize a new consensus on Europe and address criticisms and find solutions where expectations have not been met." The emphasis of Plan D is on national debates supported by the European Commission. Will that be sufficient? Why is it only now that the "time to listen" has come? Wouldn't we expect initiatives from the European Commission to safeguard improvements in the Constitutional Treaty and to strengthen elements which the people of Europe find underdeveloped?

What is the role of the churches in the ongoing debate about the future of Europe? There is all the more a challenge to the churches as President Barroso assured representatives of the religious communities in a meeting in July 2005: "No matter whether there will be a Constitution for the European Union, the open, transparent and regular dialogue with the religious communities will continue." What then is the response of churches to the crisis of the European project?

"The French and Dutch 'No' require discernment on the part of both politi-

cians and citizens. The 'No' vote is multifarious. Therefore an outright rejection of the European project is not to be concluded. It expresses genuine apprehension concerning social, economic and security issues in the member states and questions the adequacy of EU policies in these regards. It sounds a warning on limitless enlargement of the EU. Citizens' fears require courageous and coherent responses on the part of our political leaders both at national and European level", Noel Treanor stated on behalf of COMECE. And similarly, the Central Committee of CEC underlined: "A Europe closer to its citizens is what politicians have wished for during the whole Convention process, but clearly the citizens feel that this has not yet been fully achieved."

Towards 2007 – The European integration process at a crossroad.

No matter whether the President of the European Commission made a realistic assessment when he said that the EU will not have a Constitution for at least two or three years or not, the year 2007 will be a decisive year again for the European project. The challenges posed by an EU Constitution remain: will there be a more just, participatory and sustainable Europe? Do the values outlined in the Constitutional Treaty prevail over just economic and selfish interests? Will the EU arrive at structures which will make it operate more effectively and transparently? Will Romania and Bulgaria or Croatia be members of the EU at the beginning rather than at the end of 2007? What will be the consequences for the country in

which the Third Ecumenical European Assembly (EEA3) will take place?

Besides these issues more or less directly linked to the enlargement process and the Constitutional Treaty, there are other issues which deserve our attention on the way to Sibiu and at the EEA3 itself, issues such as:

- Will the EU policies and measurements for economic growth and employment (Lisbon Strategy) indeed lead to a better quality of life, to more jobs and to social cohesion?
- For a long time to come Europe will remain bigger than the EU and it carries a substantial responsibility in the global context. Which relations will the EU be able to develop with neighbouring countries as part of the new neighbourhood policy? Will these be relations of equal partners? How can and does the EU promote and implement the millennium development goals?
- “Sustainable Development” is an underlying principle of all EU policies. Will the development towards economic growth be compatible with sustainability? Which kind of earth will our children and grandchildren inherit?
- Justice, equal opportunities and the implementation of human rights in a society as well as within the European Union can be measured by the way minorities are welcomed and integrated. In 2007, Sibiu will not only be the host of the EEA3, it will also be one of the “Cultural Capitals of Europe”. For both occasions, the issue of migration, the treatment of

migrants, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers have been chosen as primary concerns to be addressed.

- In 2003, the European Union adopted a new security concept. Though mentioning the underlying root causes of present day conflicts, the security concept as such does not seek to address these root causes. Instead it calls for the possibility of a “robust response” to violent conflicts. What do we as churches understand by security? How can we reflect anew on security without accepting present threats to security as excuses for infringing upon human rights?

When there is a crisis a new vision is needed. At the First European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in 1989, while still under the impression of the continent divided by the “Iron Curtain”, the final document of the Assembly presented the vision of a “Common European Home” and established some “house rules”:

- The principle of equality for all who live there, whether strong or weak.
- The recognition of such values as freedom, justice, tolerance, solidarity, participation.
- A positive attitude towards adherents of different religions, cultures and world views.
- Open doors, open windows, in other words: many personal contacts; exchange of ideas.
- Dialogue instead of resolving conflicts through violence.

Does this vision of the common European house and its house rules still apply,



twenty years later in a substantially changed context? What would the practical implications of such house rules be today in terms of European policies? Or is there a need for the churches to come up with a new vision as they meet for the EEA3 in Sibiu?

Probably the strongest witness that the churches can give in today's Europe is how to deal with diversity. What does the often used ecumenical term "reconciled

diversity" mean? The *Charta Oecumenica*, adopted by CEC and CCEE in 2001, provides guidelines for growing co-operation among the churches in Europe. It addresses the issue of ecumenical cooperation among diverse and different churches in Europe. The *Charta*, therefore, is an important tool for the churches and may be a model for Europe. Rightly so, it will structure our deliberations at the EEA3.



European Christians looking out on the world

Vincenzo Paglia

Christianity has within its very heart the breath of universality. This major dimension of Christianity has marked Europe at every turn in its spiritual, cultural, social, political and economic history. One reason for European expansionism in the past centuries is itself to be found in these Christian roots. So it is difficult to understand the risk of Europe almost turning in on itself, narrowing its horizons.

While past history saw Europe extend its influence and power throughout the world, with all the mistakes this involved, the present is witnessing the risk of a self-referencing Europe which is losing the universal dimension inherent in its very chromosomes. There are experts who believe that only Europe can offer the planet the guidelines for a truly humanist development. Some speak of the "European dream" for the creation of a new historical scheme of reference which frees the individual from the old yoke of western ideology and, at the same time, binds humanity to a new, shared history made up of universal human rights and the intrinsic rights of nature.

Unfortunately, however, we are witnessing, to cite but one example, the pro-

gressive uncoupling of Europe from the continent of Africa, to which it has been closely linked for centuries. One could say that imperialism has been replaced by indifference. And this is happening precisely at a time when Africa is going through a most difficult period of transition, which appears to be much more complex than was anticipated. On the contrary, right now Europe ought to be aware of its responsibility for a new closeness with Africa. After all, Africa and Europe have so much in common in terms of history, culture and geography. This should drive both join together to build a shared future.

Some concrete objectives are already within Europe's grasp: for instance, the preservation of the environment; support towards democratisation; exchange policies; cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries; and the fight against great medical emergencies. It is politically wise to bring about a solid European coalition in favour of peace in the Mediterranean and in Africa because, while war is a shame for everyone, peace is a good for everyone. And Europeans, having experienced the horror of two world wars, know full well what that



means. This is a heritage that they must offer to the world. They can show that the process of European integration was itself born out of the desire to end conflicts. European unity means, first and foremost, internal peace. One can understand what this might mean to Africa and beyond. It is therefore neither wise nor prudent to abandon the countries of the Southern part of the world, starting with Africa.

Globalisation has made everyone neighbours and therefore dependent on each other. In a world that is for the moment globalised only in market terms, Christians must feel responsible for working for universal fellowship. At their heart, all Christian churches aspire to fellowship between peoples and, at the same time, solidarity with the poorest, who have always been in believers' hearts. Europe's churches and Christian denominations, through their words and witness, must contradict any withdrawal or tendency to move away from the poor South.

This arises out of the communion that exists between the Churches of the North and those of the South. Furthermore, it must show that the distancing of the rich nations from the South is not only unwise, it is even politically short-sighted. If the imbalance between the North and the South increases, then the very stability of the planet is put at risk.

The European Christian Churches, with their different traditions, need to be aware of the urgency of the task of infusing the peoples of Europe with evangelical solidarity. The great patriarch Athenagoras used to love saying: "Sister

churches, brother peoples". In this way he indicated the close relationship there is between the churches' communion and fellowship among the people. Ecumenism is not just an internal matter for the churches; it is a task and a vocation that is particularly urgent at the start of this new millennium. The European Churches are called to make people understand the "common destiny" they have. Many times John Paul II dwelt on this theme: "The present situation of planetary interdependence helps to better perceive the shared destiny of the whole human family, fostering in all thinking people respect for solidarity" (*Insegnamenti*, XXII).

European Christians must not be afraid of reminding everyone that the great inequality between the rich and the poor is untenable. This will happen if Europe's Christians become more aware that the South of the world represents poor Lazarus, who lies at the rich man's door and feeds himself on what falls from his table. Out of this arises the commitment to promote solidarity flowing towards the South, a fact which also helps politicians to reflect on the need for a culture of shared destiny as a framework for political and economic choices. It is a challenge on which secular and religious European thinkers must reflect together, freeing themselves from ideas that are too bound up with the economic situation or are alarmist, ideas that can bear fruit from an electoral point of view, but which do not build the future.

There is a particular contribution which European Christianity and humanist culture can make to the world.

Christianity, not having arisen as a State religion, can help the various cultures and civilisations, for example Islamic ones, to understand a secularity that does not imply separation from the religious dimension.

We know all too well the trouble that the theory of the “conflict of civilisations” can cause. But there is no doubt that today the Christian churches, with the European ones at the forefront, can effectively help people to understand bringing about a situation where there is a distinction between religious and civil societies. After all, in a globalised world this kind of co-existence has become a reality. The problem is how to free it from conflict in order to make it peaceful. Europe can effectively point to the example of years of peace and co-existence. Its history offers a heritage of ideas, culture and wisdom which it must present to the world with greater generosity and courage.

Many people really do look to Europe as an example of a balanced society, in which market forces do not prevail over social welfare, in which the integration of immigrants is beginning to make headway not as a simple juxtaposition but as a dialogue of insertion within a single national and continental destiny.

The various European Christian traditions – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – must find new ways of working together to shape the way Europeans live out the great humanist values they can offer the whole planet. Pope Benedict XVI hopes there will be a new alliance between European Christians and western humanism. This could help other

faiths and cultures to work for peaceful co-existence between the peoples of the world. This is not an abstract issue.

One of the more decisive aspects which drives Europe, and Christians, too, to commit themselves to peace in the world, is the culture of dialogue. This culture has now become part of the heritage that flows from Europe’s long, tortured history, full of violence and episodes of exclusion. The culture of dialogue and mutual respect is now written into institutions and cultures, in the profound ways different religious groups live together, in contact with ethnic minorities, in the complex functioning of political democracy, which creates a culture of mutual openness. And it is also inscribed in the heart of the Christian Churches, who now have a whole programme of ecumenical dialogue and meeting other non-Christian religions.

In this sense, the *Charta Oecumenica* reveals a re-discovered common commitment. We can say that dialogue is one of the great fruits of contemporary Christianity, particularly in Europe, one that can be a gift to the world. The ecumenical meetings that are now a normal dimension of life for the churches and Christian denominations are like a leaven of universal communion, which must be lived out more deeply and revealed. Inter-religious meetings, especially those that have followed on from the Assisi meeting of 1986, reveal clearly how appropriate it is that the major world religions are meeting to promote the peace and unity of the human family.

In a world destabilised by conflicts, by economic inequality, by the tragedy of



terrorism, dialogue and encounter have become a delicate and obligatory frontier. There are no alternatives. For this to happen there needs to be a great sense of responsibility between the Christian churches and among people of "good will", which is to be lived out in friendship and love. The experience of friendship between European Christians has great potential in a polarised world where speeches are like flags, where assertions clash, where people know each other before they meet through images or prejudice.

Friendship is the way Christians, "experts in humanity" as Paul VI said in his address to the United Nations, live out their responsibility. In the framework of

the experience of friendship between Christians, between people of faith, between these and humanists, there is a new humanism that is built out of solidarity and a commitment to peace.

The *Charta Oecumenica*, which drew together these aspirations, is something that can help Europe's Christian Churches live the commitment to communicate the Gospel with renewed friendship and to make the world more human. Friendship becomes – to use the words of John Paul II – a human way of "proclaiming and introducing into life the mystery of mercy". It is a task European Christians must live out ever more, as the leaven of brotherhood and sisterhood in the world.



The EEA3 Assembly Process

Viorel Ionita and Thierry Bonaventura

The Third Ecumenical European Assembly (EEA3) is continuing in the tradition of Ecumenical European Assemblies as experienced at Basel and Graz. We hope it will bring with it a new dimension which lies first of all in the fact that it is an assembly process rather than a one-off event. The idea of a process comes from the fact that the Christian confessions of Europe are both broad and diverse. Consequently the four stages of the EEA3 aim symbolically to create a sort of pilgrimage to deepen knowledge and appreciation of our different confessional-spiritual traditions to help us rediscover the Christian roots of our continent.

**First stage, Rome (Italy),
24-27 January 2006.**

The Light of Christ shines Upon All. Rediscovering new light along the road to reconciliation among the Christians of Europe, in Christ crucified and resurrected.

The EEA3 process will start with an Encounter of about 150 delegates from the churches, bishops' conferences, ecumenical bodies, communities and ecumenical movements. With this first stage

the delegates will begin their symbolic pilgrimage of discovery of our respective Christian traditions. In Rome, for example, the delegates will be able to deepen their awareness of the Roman Catholic tradition.

Following a time of reflection on the ecumenical situation in Europe today and after an exchange of various experiences of ecumenical collaboration on a pastoral level, the delegates will be called to offer their own contribution to the development of the assembly process. In particular, delegates will begin their reflection, with reference to the programmatic themes contained in the *Charta Oecumenica*, on the regional and national meetings which will make up the second stage of the process.

**Second stage,
national/regional encounters
around Pentecost 2006 or during
the Week of Prayer for Christian
Unity 2007.**

The local and national churches will take the lead with this stage. Taking into consideration the results of the first stage, various meetings will be proposed to secure the theme of the EEA3 in the



differing local, regional and national realities. These meetings will above all be an experience of faith and spirituality for the European Christian community. The results of these meetings will then be shared in the fourth stage.

Third stage, Wittenberg (Germany), 15-18 February, 2007.
The Light of Christ Shines Upon All. Rediscovering the gift of light that the Gospel of Christ represents for Europe today.

Halfway through the process, the 150 delegates of the bishops' conferences and of the European Churches will meet to review and re-launch the theme of the EEA3 in anticipation of the final stage. Their symbolic pilgrimage will lead them to deepen their awareness of the reality and spirituality of the churches of the Reformation. On this occasion the participants will reflect on the local and national meetings which will take place throughout Europe at the same time as the final assembly in Sibiu.

Fourth stage, Sibiu (Romania), 4-8 September 2007.

The Light of Christ Shines Upon All. Hope for Renewal and Unity in Europe.

Up to 3000 representatives of churches, bishops' conferences and ecumenical organizations will conclude their symbolic pilgrimage at Sibiu in the heart of Romanian Transylvania. It will be an occasion for them to deepen their awareness of Orthodox spirituality. The EEA3 will overcome the vision of an assembly with official delegates and visitors as everyone will be a delegate. At the centre of the discussion will be the issues that have come forward from the previous stages and have been deemed urgent for Europe and the churches.

A final message will be given to the churches at the end of the Assembly. CEC and CCEE hope that the Assembly in Sibiu will bring new perspectives, hope and life to the ecumenical movement in Europe.

An important new aspect of this assembly process lies in the possibility for anyone (and not only delegates) to follow on-line the whole assembly process. The EEA3 will, in fact, be the first European Ecumenical Assembly to be broadcast live on the EEA3 official website (www.eea3.org).

The Assembly logo

A competition to design the logo for the next Third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) was launched last Summer. Some 25 designers from 14 countries took part. In December 2005 CCEE and CEC announced the winner of the competition: Gabriele Riva, an Italian graphic designer from Belluno, Italy.




“The logo represents a cross that extends and enlarges its base over the world”, the designer explains. “It is the light of Christ that illuminates Europe. This extension of the cross also becomes a road, the way for reconciliation between Christians. The colours used are blue for the earth and yellow for light. Together with red, they represent the national colours of Romania, the venue for the final stage of the Assembly.”

Gabriele Riva, a Roman Catholic, was born in Agordo (Belluno) in 1975. He studied visual design at the ISIA Institute for Art in Urbino and at the University of Ulster in Belfast. Since 2001 he has been working for Fabrica, the research centre for communications of the Benetton Group. With Fabrica, he has recently designed a set of posters for the campaign on the prevention of violence for the World Health Organisation.

A great network of prayer for the Assembly Process

In their May 2005 letter to the European Churches and Bishops' Conferences concerning the EEA3, the General Secretaries of CCEE and CEC invited everyone to "launch a great network of prayer for the Assembly and the ecumenical journey in Europe, involving the whole people of God". We propose the following three prayers and a few songs on the Assembly theme, all taken from different Christian traditions. More worship resources will be available on the Assembly website at www.eea3.org

Enlighten my mind



O Lord,
enlighten my mind
with the light of the understanding of your holy Gospel,
my soul with the love of your cross,
my heart with the purity of your word,
my body with your passionless passion.
Preserve my thought in your humility,
and rouse me at the fit time to glorify you.
For you are glorified above all,
with your eternal Father
and the most Holy Spirit for evermore. Amen.

(Excerpt from a prayer to Jesus Christ, by St. Antioch, 5th century)

Exultet! Rejoice!

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!
Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!
Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Saviour shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God's people! (...)
This is the night when the pillar of fire
destroyed the darkness of sin.

This is the night when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin
and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.
This is the night when Jesus Christ
broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave.
What good would life have been to us,
had Christ not come as our Redeemer?
Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave
you gave away your Son.
O Happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!
Most blessed of all nights, chosen by God
to see Christ rising from the dead!
Of this night scripture says:
"The night will be as clear as day:
it will become my light, my joy."

(from the "Exultet", Easter Vigil hymn, 13th century)

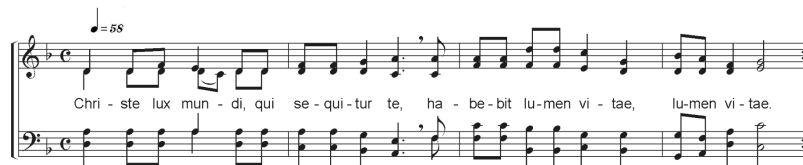
With thee there is light

O God,
help me to pray
and to concentrate my thoughts on thee;
I cannot do this alone.
In me there is darkness,
but with thee there is light;
I am lonely, but thou leavest me not;
I am feeble in heart, but with thee there is help;
I am restless, but with thee there is peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with thee there is patience;
I do not understand thy ways,
but thou knowest the way for me.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christmas 1943, from the Letters and Papers from Prison)

Hymns

Christe lux mundi



Music: Taizé. © Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France

Jésus le Christ



♪ **Cris-to Je-sús**, oh fue-go que_a-bra-sa, que las ti-nie-blas en mi no ten-gan voz. Cris-to Je-sús, di-si-pa mis som-bras. Y que_en mi só-lo ha-ble tu_a-mor. / **Lord Je-sus Christ**, your light shines with-in us. Let not my doubts nor my dark-ness speak to me. Lord Je-sus Christ, your light shines with-in us. Let my heart al-ways wel-come your love. / **Chri-stus, dein Licht** ver-klärt uns-re Schat-ten, las-se nicht zu, daß das Dun-kel zu uns spricht. Chri-stus, dein Licht, er-strahlt auf der Er-de und du sagst uns: Auch ihr seid das Licht. / **Se-nhor Je-sus**, tu és luz do mun-do: dis-si-pa as tre-vas que me que-rem fa-lar. Se-nhor Je-sus, és luz na mi-nh'al-ma: sai-ba eu a-co-lher o teu a-mor. / **Je-sus, Guds Son**, du lys i miit in-dre, lad ik-ke mør-ke't fá mag-ten i miit sind. Je-sus, Guds Son, du lys i miit in-dre, luk mig op for din ker-lig-heds And. / **Je-zu**, Tyś jest świat-łóś-cia mej du-szy. Niech ciem-ność ma nie prze-ma-wia do mnie już. Je-zu, Tyś jest świat-łóś-cia mej du-szy. Daj mi moc przy-jąć dziś mi-łóść Twoą. / **Jé-zau, e-si švie-sa** mī-sū šie-lu, Jé-zau, tam-sy-bē-se ne-pa-lik ma-nēs. Jé-zau, e-si švie-sa mī-sū šie-lu. Tu ma-ne sa-vo mei-le ap-gaubk. / **O Je-zu Krisht** ndri-či-mi i bre-ndshēm hi-jet e err-ta t'mē fla-sin mos i ler. O Je-zu Krisht ndri-či-mi i bre-ndshēm da-shu-rin tēn-de bēj ta pra-noj. / **Kri-ste, tvoj lik nek'** svije-tli u me-ni, ne daj da tmi-ne mi mo-je go-vo-re. Kri-ste, tvoj lik nek' svije-tli u me-ni, svo-jom lju-bav-lju za-šti-ti me. / **I-cyc Хрис-тос**, Ти світ-ло між на-ми О від-вер-ни нас від тем-ря-ви й стра-ху I-cyc Хрис-тос, Ти світ-ло між на-ми Дай при-й-ня-ти нам Тво-ю лю-бов. / **Cri-sto Ge-sú**, o Lu-ce_in-te-rio-re, non la-scia-re che_il bu-io par-li_in me. Cri-sto Ge-sú, o lu-ce_in-te-rio-re, fa ch'io_a-col-ga il tu-o a-mor.

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Lumière de Dieu



Music and words: Communauté de Grandchamp.
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O Gladsome Light



Music: from the Orthodox tradition.