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1.1 *Luci e ombre dell'AEE3: «Insieme dopo Sibiu»*

Luci e ombre hanno caratterizzato la III Assemblea ecumenica europea (AEE3) svoltasi a Sibiu dal 4 al 9 settembre, sul tema *La luce di Cristo illumina tutti. Speranza di rinnovamento e unità in Europa*. Come *Insieme verso Sibiu news* abbiamo accompagnato, nel nostro piccolo, la preparazione dell'evento, contribuendo a dare informazioni al «popolo ecumenico». Adesso, vogliamo continuare a riflettere coralmemente sull'appuntamento romeno, e così apriamo questa nuova serie, *Insieme dopo Sibiu news*, che andrà avanti fino a che, noi e voi, cari amici lettori e lettrici, lo vorremo.

Dicevamo: «luci e ombre». E' normale che un'assemblea che vede raccolte circa 2.500 persone (2.100 delegati/e, e alcune centinaia di steward, invitati, giornalisti, più persone dedite all'ecumenismo che su loro responsabilità ed a loro spese hanno scelto di assistere all'evento) abbia aspetti positivi e aspetti problematici. Ad ambedue qui vogliamo accennare, ma senza dilungarci troppo: per una cronaca più dettagliata dei fatti, rinviamo ai numeri delle agenzie *Adista*, *SIR*, *NEV*, da metà settembre, del settimanale *Riforma*, dei mensili *Confronti* e *Jesus* di ottobre, ricchi di analisi e interviste preparate dai loro corrispondenti a Sibiu; ma anche di tutte le altre riviste (e, tra quelle laiche, di *Panorama*) che hanno offerto, e offriranno in ottobre, i loro commenti.

A Sibiu si doveva valutare se e come era stata vissuta la *Charta oecumenica*, firmata il 22 aprile 2001, a Strasburgo, dalla KEK (la Conferenza delle Chiese

europee ortodosse, anglicane e protestanti) e dal CCEE (Consiglio delle Conferenze episcopali europee), gli stessi sponsor dell'AEE3, i cui presidenti sono ora, rispettivamente, il protestante francese Jean-Arnold de Clermont, e il cardinale Péter Erdő, arcivescovo di Esztergom-Budapest; e, segretari, Colin Williams e mons. Aldo Giordano. Co-moderatori dell'AEE3 sono stati mons. Vincenzo Paglia (vescovo di Terni; presidente della commissione della Conferenza episcopale italiana per l'ecumenismo e il dialogo; legato alla comunità di Sant'Egidio) ed il metropolita Gennadios di Sassima, del patriarcato di Costantinopoli.

L'AEE3 è stata colma di relazioni e interventi in plenaria, la quale si teneva in una grande tenda elevata al centro della città; e di approfondimenti nei nove forum (unità, spiritualità, testimonianza, Europa, religioni, migrazioni, creazione, giustizia, pace); ma, anche, caratterizzata da pochissima possibilità di reale confronto in plenaria. L'eccesso di discorsi da una parte e, dall'altra, la mancanza di dibattito reale (e della possibilità di votare, esclusa per principio) sono stati due elementi notati, e lamentati, da molte e molti delegati, portati a pensare che, organizzate come quella di Sibiu, le AEE non hanno futuro.

Tuttavia, il ritrovarsi insieme di cristiani, uomini e donne, di tutta Europa, è stato importante e benefico: ha riscaldato il cuore, ha permesso mutue conoscenze altrimenti impossibili, ha fatto magari cadere radicati pregiudizi nei confronti dell'una o dell'altra Chiesa. Soprattutto, grazie alla presenza di molti e molte giovani, che con il loro entusiasmo hanno contagiato l'Assemblea, più forte e struggente si è fatta in tutti la nostalgia della piena unità (non uniformità!) tra le Chiese, purtroppo ancor oggi incapaci – almeno a livello di vertici – di celebrare insieme la Cena del Signore (come puntualmente si è verificato a Sibiu, la mattina di domenica 9, quando ogni Chiesa ha celebrato per conto suo l'Eucaristia). Ma, anche se l'AEE3 mostrato evidenti carenze, essa ha fatto intravedere, una volta ancora, la bellezza e l'importanza di ritrovarsi insieme, cristiani di Chiese divise, ma intenzionati a testimoniare l'Evangelo, e decisi a chinarsi sui problemi del mondo per dare una mano, umilmente, per tentare di risolverli.

I limiti dell'assemblea dovuti al suo regolamento: non è questione di persone, tutte impegnate al massimo; ma di strutture e impostazioni assai inadeguate – sono apparsi evidentissimi in un "incidente" che ha caratterizzato il finale della AEE3, e le cui problematiche conseguenze continuano a pesare a ben due settimane dalla chiusura di Sibiu. Criticata per le sue varie lacune, la prima bozza del messaggio finale preparato da un comitato di redazione (composto da otto persone; per la Chiesa cattolica, tra gli altri, da Mons. Marco Gnani, della comunità di s. Egidio), ha subito modifiche; quindi la mattina di sabato otto settembre è stata presentata, in plenaria, la seconda bozza, invitando chi avesse osservazioni da fare ad intervenire. Il tempo a disposizione dei delegati per avanzare le loro proposte era di circa un'ora (l'unico tempo, in plenaria, di reale partecipazione!) in tale contesto è intervenuto, tra gli altri, un esponente francese della prelatura dell'Opus Dei, domandando che la difesa della vita, di cui vi era cenno nel testo si estendesse "dalla concezione alla morte naturale". Nel pomeriggio dello stesso giorno è stata presentata in plenaria la terza bozza (la «definitiva»), il cui testo, in varie lingue, è stato distribuito a tutti. Il metropolita

Gennadios precisava che il testo ufficiale sarebbe stato però distribuito l'indomani, durante la cerimonia conclusiva nella Piata Mare, il centro di Sibiu. Al tavolo della dirigenza Gnavi, da parte sua, spiegava che, a far fede, non era il testo appena distribuito, ma quello che, un minuto dopo, sarebbe stato subito letto. Nel testo francese stampato vi era l'inciso «dalla concezione alla morte naturale»; mancava invece nel testo inglese distribuito; ma chi ha letto questo in plenaria ha aggiunto anche l'inciso.

Infine un grande applauso ha coronato la lettura del messaggio: nessuno ha potuto però verificare chi non avesse approvato; e, soprattutto, molti non si erano accorti dell'aggiunta dell'inciso. Ma, il tam tam delle voci a poco a poco ha fatto scoprire a tutti il «particolare», che ha provocato molto malessere in gran parte degli evangelici presenti, e anche in alcuni cattolici.

I vertici dell'AEE3 (hanno affermato varie fonti) si riunivano in nottata, e nella mattinata di domenica, senza però riuscire a trovare un'intesa. E così il testo finale e ufficiale del messaggio *non* veniva distribuito; i delegati lasciavano Sibiu senza il documento. Da allora, e fino ad oggi, 21 settembre, quando chiudiamo questo numero, sul sito dell'Assemblea (www.eea3.org) continua ad apparire questa avvertenza: «Per ragioni tecniche, il messaggio finale dell'Assemblea sarà pronto tra pochi giorni». Giorni – abbiamo appreso – durante i quali la dirigenza della KEK, del CCEE ed i co-moderatori dell'AEE3 hanno tentato una via di uscita. Inutilmente, fino ad oggi, essendo

la parte cattolica determinata a mantenere il famoso inciso. In tale contrasto, e mentre dalle periferie delle Chiese cresceva l'imbarazzo per una vicenda «inesplicabile», il 20 settembre la KEK prendeva la decisione, certo sofferta, di procedere unilateralmente: metteva in rete, nel suo sito (www.cec-kek.org), e solo in lingua inglese, il messaggio finale, qualificandolo però come *testo provvisorio*. In questo, l'inciso contestato è stato levato. Al 21 settembre il sito dell'AEE3 continua invece a ripetere che il testo ufficiale sarà pubblicato «tra pochi giorni»; e così dice il sito del CCEE (www.ccee.ch).

Qui, intanto, alleghiamo il *testo provvisorio* della KEK, in inglese. Invece, tra i molti interventi in plenaria (relazioni, discorsi, meditazioni), per ora pubblichiamo, a titolo di documentazione, quelli di: patriarca ecumenico di Costantinopoli, Bartolomeo I; cardinale Walter Kasper, presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani; card. Dionigi Tettamanzi, arcivescovo di Milano; metropolita Kirill di Smolensk, «ministro degli esteri» della Chiesa ortodossa russa; vescova luterana tedesca Rosemarie Wenner; Jean-Arnold de Clermont presidente della KEK. Le traduzioni in italiano sono quelle comparse nel sito dell'AEE3.

Nel prossimo numero pubblicheremo il testo definitivo e ufficiale del messaggio (se ci sarà!), e poi altri interventi, tra i quali quello del vescovo Wolfgang Huber, presidente del Consiglio della Chiesa evangelica di Germania, il cui testo è comparso nel sito solo in tedesco.

1.2 Testo provvisorio del messaggio finale pubblicato dalla KEK

The light of Christ shines upon all!

We, Christian pilgrims from all over Europe and beyond, witness to the transforming power of this light, which is stronger than darkness, and we proclaim it as all-embracing hope for our Churches, for all of Europe and for the entire world.

In the name of our Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we have assembled in the city of Sibiu, Romania (4th-9th September 2007). This third European Ecumenical Assembly was marked especially by the richness of Orthodox spirituality and tradition. We recall and renew the serious commitments we already made in Basel and Graz and we regret that, up to now, we have failed to fulfil some of them. However, our confidence in the transforming energy of the light of Christ is stronger than the darkness of resignation, fatalism, fear and indifference.

Our third European Ecumenical Assembly began in 2006 in Rome and continued in 2007 in Wittenberg. This ecumenical pilgrimage involved many regional meetings and those of Orthodox Churches in Rhodes and young people in St. Maurice*. We welcome with joy the young people's commitment and the contribution they made to the Assembly. Assisted and motivated by the Charta Oecumenica, our Assembly pursued the work started in earlier assemblies and has been an occasion for an exchange of gifts and of mutual enrichment.

We are not alone on this pilgrimage. Christ is with us and within the cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1), the contemporary martyrs accompany us: the witness of their life and death inspires us individually and corporately. In communion with them, we commit ourselves to let the light of the transfigured Christ shine through our own witness deeply rooted in prayer and love. This is our humble response to the sacrifice of their lives.

The light of Christ in the Church

The light of Christ leads us to live for others and in communion with one another. Our witness to hope and unity for Europe and for the world will be credible only if we continue our journey towards visible unity. Unity is not uniformity. There is enormous value in experiencing afresh that *koinonia* and exchanging those spiritual gifts that energised the ecumenical movement from its beginning.

In Sibiu we again felt the painful wound of division between our Churches. This even concerns our understanding of the Church and its unity. The distinct historical and cultural developments in Eastern and Western Christianity have contributed to these differences, and understanding them requires our urgent attention and ongoing dialogue. We are convinced that the wider Christian family has to deal with doctrinal questions, and it must also seek a broad consensus about moral values derived from the Gospel and a credible Christian lifestyle that joyfully witnesses to the light of Christ in our challenging modern secular world, in private as well as in public life. Our Christian spirituality is a precious treasure: once opened, it reveals

the variety of its riches and opens our hearts to the beauty of the face of Jesus and to the strength of prayer. Only if we are closer to our Lord Jesus Christ, can we become closer to one another and experience true koinonia. We cannot but share these riches with all men and women who are seeking light in this continent. Spiritual men and women begin with their own conversion and this leads to the transformation of the world. Our witness to the light of Christ is a faithful commitment to listen, live and share our stories of life and hope, which have shaped us as followers of Christ.

Recommendation One: We recommend renewing our mission as individual believers and as Churches to proclaim Christ as the Light and the Saviour of the world;

Recommendation Two: We recommend continuing the discussion on mutual recognition of baptism, taking into account the important achievements on this topic in several countries and being aware that the question is deeply linked to an understanding of eucharist, ministry and ecclesiology in general;

Recommendation Three: We recommend finding ways of experiencing the activities which can unite us: prayer for each other and for unity, ecumenical pilgrimages, theological formation and study in common, social and diaconal initiatives, cultural projects, supporting society life based on Christian values;

Recommendation Four: We recommend the full participation of the whole people of God and, at this Assembly in particular, note the appeal of young people, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and disabled people.

The light of Christ for Europe

We consider that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) and deserves the same degree of respect and love, despite differences of belief, culture, age, gender, or ethnic origin. Being aware that our common roots lie much deeper than our divisions, while looking for renewal and unity and the role of the Churches in today's European society, we focussed on our encounter with people of other religions. Aware in particular of our unique relationship with the Jewish peoples as people of the Covenant, we reject all forms of contemporary anti-Semitism and, with them, will foster Europe as a continent free of every form of violence. There have been periods in our European history of harsh conflicts but there have also been periods of peaceful co-existence among people of all religions. In our day there is no alternative to dialogue: not compromise, but a dialogue of life where we can speak the truth in love. We all need to learn more about all religions, and the recommendations of Charta Oecumenica should be developed further. We appeal to our fellow Christians and all who believe in God to respect other people's right to religious freedom, and express our solidarity with Christian communities who live in the Middle East, Iraq, and elsewhere in the world as religious minorities and feel that their very existence is under threat.

As we meet Christ in our needy sisters and brothers (Mt 25:44-45), together enlightened by the Light of Christ, we Christians, according to biblical injunctions to the unity of humanity (Gen 1.26-27), commit ourselves to repent for the sin of exclusion; deepen our understanding of 'otherness'; defend the dignity and rights of

every human being, and ensure protection to those in need of it; share the light of Christ which others bring to Europe; call upon European states to stop unjustifiable administrative detention of migrants, make every effort to ensure regular immigration, the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, uphold the value of family unity and combat trafficking in human beings and exploitation of trafficked persons. We call on Churches to increase their pastoral care of vulnerable immigrants.

Recommendation Five: We recommend that our Churches should recognise that Christian immigrants are not just the recipients of religious care but that they can play a full and active role in the life of the Church and of society; offer better pastoral care for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; and promote the rights of ethnic minorities in Europe, particularly the Roma people.

Many of us are thankful that we have experienced profound changes in Europe in recent decades. Europe is more than the European Union. As Christians we share the responsibility for shaping Europe as a continent of peace, solidarity, participation and sustainability. We appreciate the commitment of the European Institutions, including the EU, Council of Europe, and the OSCE, to an open, transparent and regular dialogue with the Churches of Europe. Europe's highest political representatives honoured us with their presence and thus expressed strong interest in our work. We have to face the challenge to bring spiritual strengths into this dialogue. Europe was initially a political project to secure peace and it now needs to become a Europe of the peoples, more than an economic space.

Recommendation Six: We recommend developing the Charta Oecumenica as a stimulating guideline for our ecumenical journey in Europe.

The light of Christ for the whole world

The Word of God disquiets us and our European culture: those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again! Christians must be free from fear and insatiable avarice that make us live for ourselves, powerless, narrow-minded and closed. The Word of God invites us to avoid squandering the precious heritage of those who for the last sixty years have worked for peace and unity in Europe. Peace is an extraordinary and precious gift. Entire countries aspire to peace. Entire peoples are waiting to be delivered from violence and terror. We urgently commit ourselves to renewed efforts towards these ends. We reject war as a tool for resolving conflict, promote non-violent means for conflict resolution, and are concerned about military re-armament. Violence and terrorism in the name of religion are a denial of religion.

The Light of Christ shines on the term 'justice', linking it to divine mercy. Thus enlightened it escapes any ambiguous pretence. Throughout the world and even in Europe the current process of radical market globalisation is deepening the division of human society between winners and losers, harms the value of countless

people, has catastrophic ecological implications and precisely in view of climate change is not compatible with sustaining the future of our planet.

Recommendation Seven: We urge all European Christians to give strong support to the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations as an urgent practical step towards the alleviation of poverty.

Recommendation Eight: We recommend that a consultative process, addressing European responsibility for ecological justice, facing the threat of climate change; European responsibility for the just shaping of globalisation; the rights of Roma people and other European ethnic minorities, be initiated by CCEE and CEC, with the Churches in Europe and with Churches of other continents.

Today more than ever, we acknowledge that Africa, a continent already intertwined with our own history and future, experiences levels of poverty about which we cannot remain indifferent and inactive. The wounds of Africa touched the heart of our Assembly.

Recommendation Nine: We recommend backing initiatives for debt cancellation and the promotion of fairtrade.

Through sincere and objective dialogue, we contribute to and promote the creation of a renewed Europe, where unchangeable Christian principles and moral values, derived directly from the Gospel, serve as a witness and promote active engagement in European society. Our task is to promote these principles and values, not only in private but also in public life. We will cooperate with people of other religions who share our concern for creating a Europe of values that also prospers politically and economically.

Concerned about God's creation, we pray for a greater sensitivity and respect for its wonderful diversity. We work against its shameless exploitation, from which the "whole creation awaits its redemption," (Rom 8:22) and commit ourselves to working for reconciliation between humanity and nature.

Recommendation Ten: We recommend that the period from the 1st September to the 4th of October be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change.

Paying tribute to all who contributed to this journey, particularly the young oikumene, who urged this assembly to be courageous in living the Gospel, we unite in prayer:

O Christ, the True Light, which illumines and sanctifies every human being coming into this world, shine on us the light of your presence, that in it we may behold the unapproachable light, and guide our paths for the work of your commandments. Save us and lead us into your eternal kingdom. For you are our

Creator, Provider and Giver of all that is good. Our hope is in you and to you we give glory, now and forever. Amen.

(* The St. Maurice statement is attached.)

1.3 *Testo della meditazione del patriarca ecumenico di Costantinopoli Bartolomeo I su 2Cor 4, 6-7 (5 settembre)*

(potete trovare il testo su un file separato sul sito del SAE di Bologna)

1.4 *Discorso del rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont Presidente della KEK (5 settembre)*

(potete trovare il testo su un file separato sul sito del SAE di Bologna)

1.5 *Discorso del cardinal Walter Kasper (5 settembre)*

(potete trovare il testo su un file separato sul sito del SAE di Bologna)

1.6 *Meditazione del cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi Arcivescovo di Milano su Lc 9, 28-36 (6 settembre)*

(potete trovare il testo su un file separato sul sito del SAE di Bologna)

1.7 *Discorso del metropolita Kirill di Smolensk e Kalingrad (Patriarcato di Mosca) del 5 settembre (nel sito eea3.org è disponibile solo la traduzione in inglese, mentre in sala è stato distribuito anche in italiano)*

The theme of today's plenary session, "The Light of Christ and the Church," is very dear to us, the Orthodox. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is perceived by Christians first of all as a manifestation of Light. This manifestation culminated on Mount Tabor where the Lord was transfigured before His disciples: "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light" (Mt. 17:2). The Orthodox theology has developed the theme of Tabor's Light in a teaching on uncreated divine energies or actions which manifest God. According to the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas and his associates, the Divine Light, which the apostle saw in Tabor, is God Himself communicating Himself to His creation and primarily to those whose eyes of the heart are pure and open to perceive the Light. We can see this Light with both our physical eyes and the inner vision of our hearts. It is a visible manifestation of divine grace, divine energy, "the true light that gives light to every man coming into the world" (Jn. 1:9). The human being as "the image of and likeness after God" (Gen. 1:26-27) is capable of perceiving and manifesting divine Light in his life.

To partake of the Light of Christ also means to learn to observe the Lord's commandments and to accept the teaching of Christ. Christ is Light and He is also the

Logos. Therefore, the true Light is also the Word addressed to human reason. He is also an intellectual challenge. “The Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ”, St. John says in his first epistle (1 Jn. 5:20). The Word of God is the foundation of the Holy Tradition, a most important category in the Orthodox theology and Orthodox life. The Holy Tradition is not just a sum of texts and practices developed through centuries, but the Light which illuminates the minds and hearts of men and women. It is not only a way of thinking but also a way of life. The Holy Tradition is not an archaism, but the very life of the Church, and the Light of Christ is its source.

Although the Orthodox tradition makes a distinction between two aspects of the Light – the Light as grace, through which God Himself communicates Himself to the world, and the Light as the word of truth, these are not two different Lights but one Light that acts in multiple ways. The knowledge of truth is impossible without participation in the divine life brought by Christ and described in the Gospel of St. John: “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men” (Jn. 1:4). The enlightenment of the human mind is impossible without the illumination of the entire human being with the Light of Christ. This is the true meaning of enlightenment. This enlightenment which combines the knowledge of truth with participation in eternal life is attained in the Church. It is in the Church that the Light as grace and the Light as truth are united to exist inseparably, as a single whole. The Church is a depository of the Light, but this Light shines also far beyond her fold, enlightening “every man coming into the world” (Jn. 1:9). It is this property of the Light as the grace of the Holy Spirit, that St. John implied when he said that “the Spirit blows wherever it pleases” (Jn. 3:8). We do not confine the radiance of the Light of Christ to the Church fold, even though we firmly believe that the source of this Light is in the Church which is the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24).

This understanding of the Light makes us respectful of other religious experiences and traditions, even though we do not forget about the Gospel’s words: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). In this spirit we conduct interreligious dialogues, which we consider to be important not only for a better understanding of other religious traditions but also for a fuller understanding of our own tradition.

The teaching of Christ is light because it makes visible and clear what seems dark and dim without it. It helps people to form the true knowledge of God, the human being and the world. Certainly, human beings acquire essential knowledge through their own studies of their nature and the world. Yet, this knowledge cannot reveal to them any perspective which transcends the human being. Whatever transcends the human nature cannot be cognized if not revealed to human beings. The human being cannot see even his own self but in the light that comes from above or aside. Many scholars nowadays support the idea that scientific and religious knowledge are complimentary. This idea eliminates tensions between science and religion. It means that the human being needs both religion and science in order to

build his individual and social life. Christianity is interested today as never before in supporting scientific knowledge and its implementations.

In the first place, however, the Christian Churches are concerned to preserve their special message revealed to human beings by the Lord Jesus Christ, and to incorporate it in the life of modern man. We know from history that it has never been an easy task. Human weaknesses led to divisions, confrontations, and wars. In the first millennium of the Christian era, the faithful sought to express as clearly as it was possible for human language, the truths about God which were revealed to them in the message of Christ. We have a concise exposition of these truths in the Nicene Creed. It is true though that the Christian community is still divided as to the understanding of the basic dogmata of the faith. It can be stated with certainty however that until recently all the Christians had unanimous views at least on man and the moral norms of his life. Today this unity has been broken as well. Some Christian communities have unilaterally reviewed or are reviewing the norms of life defined by the Word of God.

Why is it happening precisely today, in the beginning of the 21st century? Why have some Christian circles come to favour so much the idea of evolving moral norms? On the one hand, there are prerequisites for it in the theology which interprets the principle of salvation by faith alone. This underestimates the moral condition of a person. But the greatest impact on this position has been made, in my view, by the non-religious spirit of this world. There is a suspicious coincidence between the new attitude to morality current in Christian circles and the spreading of the post-modern paradigm in the secular society. Post-modernism in a broad sense implies a compatibility of incompatible views and positions. Perhaps this attitude is justified in some spheres of society but it cannot be justified for Christians in the realm of morality. Believers cannot recognize at the same time the value of life and the right to death, the value of family and validity of same-sex relations, the protection of child's rights and the deliberate destruction of human embryos for medical purposes.

This attitude does not simply exist in the worldview of some people, in their private life, but it gradually becomes obligatory for all citizens through adoption of respective legal norms in some European countries and international organizations. Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe, who have experience of life in totalitarian state, can detect today some dangerous tendencies in the development of political power. Christians know very well the principle expressed by St. Augustine: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, diversity; in all things, charity". There is a gap today in what Christians and secularized people understand respectively as essential and nonessential. The Christians insist that only one morality is possible. If the authorities force Christians to participate in observing or promoting the moral norms which run contrary to their faith, these authorities will become for them unacceptable and even hostile.

What is the reason then that makes Christianity so unyielding to ethical relativism? This is a belief that in Christ the divine truth of the human being and the human nature has been revealed and that the rejection of this view means death of the human being and the world. The Church does not promote some partisan opinion of

God and the human being, but she preaches the truth communicated through the divine revelation. If a scientist who has discovered a new terrestrial law has the right to defend the truth he has discovered, the more so the Church has the right to defend the eternal truth.

At least for us as Christians it should be clear that Christ has revealed to the world the true divinity and the true humanity. In Christ the fullness of the human nature has been revealed. Even Pilate, a heathen, recognized it, exclaiming, "Ecce homo!" (Jn. 19:5). The human nature revealed in Christ does not have to develop or evolve: it can be only accepted by human beings as their ideal. Thus, all that we can say of the human being has been revealed in Christ. The discussion on what the human being is ended 2000 thousand years ago. Therefore the idea of evolving moral norms, popular among some Christians, is actually an enthusiasm for the spirit of this world, which develops this idea today in the form of a post-modern paradigm. As a matter of fact, there are changeable customs in the Church life, since cultural, geographical, and historical conditions change, but the core notions of the human nature are unchangeable.

A struggle for a single public morality and for Christian values in today's Europe is impossible without joint actions, first of all among Christians of major confessions, regardless of their doctrinal differences. The old term "ecumenism" however is little suitable for fulfilling this task. In our view, to build a system of Christian solidarity in Europe today on the basis of the one and indivisible Gospel's morality and common witness to Christian values stemming from this solidarity, may be the last resort for Christians in their common efforts to give back a soul to Europe. For precisely this reason Christian communities should support one another, maintain friendly relations, realise exchanges, act together in face of the external world, and carry out joint public projects. The Russian Church with her experience of life under totalitarianism is well aware of the significance of the Christian solidarity in Europe. This solidarity is manifested today too. We received warm fraternal congratulations from many Christian Churches on the occasion of the reunification of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Outside Russia. We are also in solidarity with other Christians in face of numerous challenges of secularism, lack of spirituality, poverty and radicalism. Sharing the same Christian heritage, we can find a common understanding of these challenges easier than we can do it with people of other faiths or other worldviews. It is my conviction that solidarity in face of these common challenges will give a new dynamic to the inter-Christian relations in Europe, reviving the now lost interest of many communities in theological dialogue and search for God-commanded unity.

In defending the common ethical norms, Christians should seek allies in other religions who share moral positions similar to the Christian attitudes. To this end it is necessary to develop interreligious relations in Europe and the world. For all their differences, traditional world religions do share the common awareness that eternal values have priority over temporal ones. This helps to stand together against the threats to the moral order of human life. The Summit of Religious Leaders, which took place in July 2006 in Moscow and became a major interreligious event in

Europe, has shown that representatives of major world religions have similar views of morality. They all have expressed concern over moral relativism that has often gained the upper hand today.

Christians can also find some support with regard to morality among secular people who uphold a non-religious worldview but advocate moral norms similar to Christian ones. This is not surprising because already St. Paul wrote in his epistle to Romans that if heathens listen to the voice of conscience, they do by nature the law of God (cf. Rom. 2:14-15). In other words, Christians should act together with all people of good will to find and preserve harmony in society with regard to the moral norms. To achieve this goal, Christian communities should work with the public opinion and maintain dialogue with national and international structures. While demanding that public life be governed by a single morality, Christians should leave it lying on the conscience of an individual to live his private life in accordance with his own values. In this they can follow another consideration of St. Paul: “Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4). Let other views alternative to common morality remain confined to private life. They should not be subjected to persecution, nor should they be supported or propagated as norms in public sphere.

Many in Europe today, including non-believers, are aware of Christianity as a powerful source of support for the European civilization. This awareness has begun to come to Europe after it encountered the challenges of other civilizations in the global world. To survive in today's world, Europe has to remain a Christian continent. It does not mean that there is no room in it for people of other faiths and world outlooks. It only means the recognition of the eminent role played by the Christian faith in the past, present and future of our continent. This recognition will depend in many ways on the ability of Christians themselves to preserve their Christian identity in a rapidly changing multicultural world and their ability to stay faithful to Christ.

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). The world can see, accept and glorify the Heavenly Father only if the light coming from those who believe in Him is the light of His Son.

1.8 *Meditazione della vescova luterana Rosemarie Wenner su Ef 5, 8-14*
(7 settembre)

(potete trovare il testo su un file separato sul sito del SAE di Bologna)