

Daily Report 2 – Saturday 12.09.2015

The second day of the CCEE Plenary Assembly being held in the Holy Land until Wednesday 16 September opened with reports from the Bishops' Conferences.

In the morning, his Grace Mgr Želimir PULJIĆ, President of the Croatian Bishops' Conference, invited the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences in turn to present "the joys and sufferings" of the Church in their own country, highlighting the challenges to which they have to respond. The same session in the afternoon was moderated by His Grace Mgr. Anton Cosa, Bishop of Chisinau.

From this first exchange the theme of the family, with the attempt to change its definition in some Constitutions, and the welcome given to migrants and asylum seekers in countries marked by high emigration of their citizens were found to be the challenges that are of particular concern.

The situation in Ukraine and the importance of inter-religious councils in countries where Christians are in the minority and that promote collaboration between the different religions for the defense and promotion of the common good, have been repeatedly evoked. Within the Church, the year was marked by many activities put in place for the celebration of the Consecrated Life and for preparations for the forthcoming Jubilee of Mercy and the next World Youth Day in Krakow in 2016.

This exchange of information and the subsequent discussion will continue for another three sessions at various points during the meeting.

The second morning session was then devoted to a reflection on the Person of Jesus introduced by **Fr Jamal Khader**, theologian and Rector of the Patriarchal Seminary at Beit Jala, who highlighted Jesus' relationship with the poor, Jesus and the Old Testament, and the significance the person of Jesus died and risen assumes for the Holy Land, too, and concluding with remarks about the actual presence of the Risen Christ in history and in the Church today. This reflection led to a sharing between bishops permitting to look with "the eyes of Jesus" the joys and challenges of the Church in Europe.

Subsequently, as the first stage of their pilgrimage, the bishops went to Capernaum, centre of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee, and to the memorial to Saint Peter, the octagonal-shaped building which recalls the form of an ancient Byzantine church and where, according to tradition, already in the 1st century A.D. a community of Judaeo-Christians gathered for worship. The bishops celebrated Mass there, with His Grace **Mgr Angelo Massafra**, President of the Albanian Bishops' Conference and CCEE Vice-President, presiding.

There was also a Briefing from Mgr **Paolo Rudelli**, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, who illustrated some important questions at the Council of Europe which have a close bearing on the Church.

Subsequently, the European bishops went to Nazareth where they met in the Catholic school of Nazareth some teachers, students and their families to hear their concerns.. The meeting, chaired by His Grace **Mgr Maroun Lahham**, Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan and President of the Episcopal Commission for the

Family, began with a greeting from the CCEE President, **Cardinal Péter Erdő**, who comforted the school community and recalled how "the family is the school of understanding, sharing, respectful love, of mutual service, of kindness, sensitivity and generosity. Even today the family is essential, indispensable".

"As we prepare for the upcoming Synod of Bishops - added Erdő - we heard testimonies from around the world. Individualism is one of the typical trends today. But human beings are born to live in the community. Hence the family is the image of the Holy Trinity. We are not born to be isolate and alone, but we have the vocation to love God and the neighbor. We need to strengthen families, build communities composed of Christian families who help one each other in the problems of everyday life, but who can also pray together, explore together the faith and help each other even in times of crisis of the couple and the family and that strengthen the solidarity between generations". The CCEE President then concluded by thanking the families for their "witness and fidelity here in the Holy Land that is still the heart of Christianity. We feel very close to you and pray that God gifts the strength and grace to the Christian life" and inviting the families of Nazareth so that "every day at least one family of Nazareth come here to the shrine to pray together for the Pope and the bishops gathered in Rome in October! "

Then, making their way to the Basilica of the Annunciation, they carried in procession the **Icon of Holy Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Europe**, an icon created specifically for the occasion by the monastic sisters of the *Monastic Family of the Assumption of the Virgin and of Saint Bruno*.

Entering the Basilica in procession, they went to the grotto of the Annunciation where they began the Prayer Vigil, presided over by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, for *happy families, families in difficulties and divided families* and for the forthcoming Synod of Bishops on the family scheduled to take place in the Vatican in October.

Information on the Icon of Holy Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Europe

Icon of Holy Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Europe

The icon has been created by Sister Dominik a monastic sisters of the monastic Family of Bethlehem, of the Assumption of the Virgin and of Saint Bruno, at the monastery of Bet Jamal, Bethlehem, to mark the Plenary Assembly of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences, the Holy Land 2015.

Mary is offering the Son, that Son whom we meet in the Marian shrines of our European nations. Four Marian shrines are represented: two refer to the earthly life of Mary (Nazareth and Ephesus in Turkey) and two Marian shrines from the peripheries. The icon is framed with the names of the major Marian shrines in Europe.

The Monastic Family

The monastic Family of Bethlehem, of the Assumption of the Virgin and of Saint Bruno was founded on 1 November 1950 at Saint Peter's Square in Rome when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin which states that Mary was elevated, body and soul, from earth into heaven. A group of French pilgrims received the call to give everything in order that new communities be born in the Church. The vocation of these communities would be to share the life of the Mother of God, present in

the Trinity, in a life of adoration of the Father in Spirit and Truth. And so, in 1951, in a little village in France, a community was born of consecrated women who lived "the Project of the Virgin" in silence.

Source: <http://www.bethleem.org/>

Texts of the day

- Address of father Jamal Khader, Theologian and Rector of the Patriarchal Seminary of Beit Jala (IT)
- Homily of His Grace Mgr Angelo Massafra, President of the Bishops' Conference of Albania and CCEE Vice-President (IT)
- Greetings of His Em. Cardinal Péter Erdő, CCEE President (IT)