

PLENARY ASSEMBLY *"New Steps for a synodal Church in Europe"*

Final Communiqué

The CCEE Plenary Assembly took place in Malta from 27 to 30 November at the invitation of the Archbishop of Malta, Charles J. SCICLUNA. The Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences, united in the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, debated the developments of the Synod, with a particular focus on the ministry of the bishop in a synodal Church and the role of supranational structures.

In his introduction, Archbishop Gintaras GRUŠAS, CCEE President, outlined some of the continent's synodal challenges; he emphasised the bishops' commitment to an increasingly synodal Church, as called for by Pope Francis; he highlighted the European Churches' commitment to combating abuse, reiterating the duty to counter it with concrete and effective preventative actions.

Among the challenges facing the Church were the defence of life and human dignity, the prominence of young people, new waves of migration, the hidden persecution of Christians in Europe and the new frontiers of artificial intelligence. The greatest challenge remains that of evangelisation, to proclaim in a Europe increasingly tempted by secularism, fundamentalism and populist nationalism, the joy of the Gospel that springs from the encounter with Christ.

The European bishops also looked with concern at the current situations of war: the one in Ukraine, now in its second year, the scenes in Nagorno Karabakh and the conflict in the Holy Land, reiterating their "no" to war and renewing their call for a definitive ceasefire, for the release of hostages and for humanitarian corridors to be kept open in Gaza.

During Assembly, Cardinal Mario GRECH, Secretary General of the Synod, addressed the topic of episcopal ministry in a synodal Church, while Cardinal Jean-Claude HOLLERICH SJ, General Relator of the Synod, spoke about the role of supranational structures in the synodal journey. Cardinal Grzegorz RYŚ, Archbishop of Łódź, presented the report of the Working Group for the Updating of the Charta Oecumenica, the document of cooperation between the Christian Churches in Europe, signed by CCEE and CEC in 2001.

At the end of their work, the bishops unanimously resolved to move the CCEE headquarters from St. Gallen (Switzerland) to Rome in 2024 and, at the same time, expressed their gratitude to the Swiss Church, and in particular to the diocese of St. Gallen, for the welcome and generosity with which they have accompanied the work of the CCEE Secretariat over all these years.

The CCEE members also extended, for another year, the mandate of Rev. Martin MICHALIČEK as General Secretary of the CCEE, a post to which he was called in 2018.

The next Plenary Assembly will be held in Belgrade between 24 and 27 June 2024, at the invitation of Archbishop Ladislav Nemet, the CCEE Vice-President.

Valletta, 30 November 2023