



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE EUROPEAN FORUM ALPBACH

[17-30 August 2024]

Dear participants in the European *Forum Alpbach*!

I am pleased to be able to say a few words to you today. When I think of Europe, I think first and foremost of the continent of human rights. What's more, the majority of important universal human rights were developed here.

Currently, we are experiencing a time of crisis in Europe, which just like every crisis brings with it dangers and opportunities; a time in which various populist movements enjoy great popularity. Reasons for this lie principally in economic and political factors. We therefore see that in Europe, as a result of this "wave" of populism, some ideals have vanished and some principles, regarding the behaviour towards weaker members of society, have been pushed aside.

These ideals and principles, among which those of human dignity and fraternity deserve a special mention, have always been connected to the Gospel matrix. Today the cultural context has changed, and the Church has to live within a secularized society; this should neither surprise nor frighten us, because we are well aware that God is present there. Rather, with renewed motivation, we strive, as Christians, to contribute to the wealth of Catholic social doctrine, with its claim to universality. Even the European Union, ever since its founding, has universalistic features, and one can only hope it does not lose them. In this regard, the aspect of fraternity is particularly important. It follows that European societies are called to find ways and means to reduce the polarization within them, and to remain open towards the world around them.

Dear participants in the European Alpbach Forum, I thank you for your commitment in the midst of the social challenges of our time, and I hope you can be "contagious" witnesses of European ideals. I bless you from the heart, and I ask that you, please, pray for me. Thank you!

Rome, 21 August 2024

FRANCIS

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