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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

First of all, I would like to tell you, that I am a Christian. But, I really would like You to know, it is important for You to know, that I am not going to speak in favour of Christianity or any other churches. I simply have a vision, based on the history and the roots of Europe. After all these, here is my speech:

Europe has always been the home of different peoples and cultures. It is important to see, especially now, when the EU has ten new members, among them Poland and my own country, Hungary. And it is not only the EU. When I talk about Europe, I understand the whole continent, not only the member states of the European Union.

In our common history no single bond has united us more than our adoption of the Christian gospel. Just think of our own countries and nations. And today, when a lot has changed, it is still true. Probably we are not Christian all of us, but from this point of view, we all do have one wife/husband, we all do believe, that life is an important value, we all do believe that freedom (also religious freedom) is something we all do need. All of us, here in Europe, we do have our own famous churches,

cathedrals, monuments and so on. And this is the point I am talking about.

One of my colleague said: Europe (in this case EU) is an economic and political unit. What does it mean? It means, that Europe, the European Union, was based on economic and political ideas. It means, that the European Union was created for economic goals. If so, than it is worth nothing. If the EU, and the whole continent has only an economic dimension, then the EU and Europe has already finished. If the EU is not more than just an economic project, then I would say, it would not last for long.

Europe, especially the European Union also must be a spiritual unit. And Christianity, all the churches, different denominations may have/should have an important role in it. Not alone, of course.

First of all, we can not forget that Christ and the gospel are the main mission of the churches. But, they also may have a mission, a mission just mentioned above. And why? Because, if we want a Europe, which is not only a political unit, but also a spiritual one, than we do need the churches.

At this point I have to talk about ecumenism. Today, when the spiritual unit of Europe is more important than ever, and also, when we really do need strong points

in our own life, churches work with each other. The dialogue is important.

I could talk about the meetings the Conferences of European Churches has had during the last decades (1978, 1981, 1984, 1988, 1991 and so on); but instead of that, as a young person, I would like to talk about what Europe and ecumenism mean for me, at the time of changes.

I returned just returned from Durham-St. John's College (United Kingdom), where the so-called EYCE (Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe) had its summer school-university. More than 30 young people met there from more than 13 countries. It was a really lively week. The main task of the summer school was the examination of the creation and of environmental protection. Studying a lot on these issues – from a Christian point of view – we had a real chance to know each others culture, we had the real possibility to make, to build up a spiritual community, a spiritual Europe. And why is it important? Because EU is not only the European Parliament, Brussels and the euro. It is all of us, our nations, our cultures, our own identities. And Christianity, Christ is a part of our nations, of our cultures and of our identities.

Finally, I would like to read a quotation. There was a conference in Budapest (Hungary) in 1993. The title

of the conference was “State and Church in Europe”. Dr. Lajos Kada, at that time Archbishop, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Germany, said the following (and this message will reflect the ideas I have just said above):

“European integration would be superficial and fragile without the genuine Christian values, which have determined the true aspect of this continent. The Christian Churches seek to build these values into the process of integration. They are ready for a positive cooperation with the bodies established to create the unity of Europe. Within the scope of church life, however, they make efforts to promote unity between the Christian Churches, without ignoring the dialogue with non-Christians religious communities, at the same time they help nations and states in finding the way to each other. These values and this contribution are indeed of high importance, which is also highly appreciated by all those committed to European integration officially, or individually.”

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