

Ladies and Gentlemen, participating Friends,

It is with great joy that Gudrun and I welcome you to the 28th European Symposium of Parishes.

Tomorrow morning we will start with the theme of the Symposium: the Diakonia, the Christian in the service of the very poorest. The theme is very current, horribly current as thousands of refugees are on the border of Europe and knock on the door of our hearts. Pope Francis speaks in his new encyclical "Laudato Si" of how the destruction of creation and nature, causes poverty and emigration.

We are fortunate to be able to work on this issue in the sacred site of Lisieux. From now let's pray to Santa Teresa to assist us in the discovery of the mission of our parishes and guide us towards the paths announcing the Good News to the poorest in our society.

This evening we want to express our most sincere and deep gratitude towards the French team that has done everything necessary to enable this large gathering. And all together, we want to emphasize the numerous presence of young people, many of them coming from Central and Eastern Europe, which are the new blood in our European symposium.

We only want to wish you a pleasant evening. And tonight, we suggest you to gather in national groups. Tomorrow at 9 am, we will meet again together in the conference room.