

Where is Francis leading our Church in Europe?

Paul M. Zulehner, Lviv, 27.7.2019¹

The Pope does not have a very high opinion of the state of Europe. When he gave a speech to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament on November 25th, 2014, he did not hold back distressing pictures. Europe is like a grandmother who has become barren, aged and crushed, tired, depressed, hurt, full of fears. *"In many quarters we encounter a general impression of weariness and aging, of a Europe which is now a 'grandmother', no longer fertile and vibrant. As a result, the great ideas which once inspired Europe seem to have lost their attraction, only to be replaced by the bureaucratic technicalities of its institutions."* (EP) And so the Pope asks Europe: *"Where is your power? Where is that spiritual pursuit that has enlivened your history and through which it gained meaning? Where is your spirit of inquisitive enterprising? Where is your thirst for truth that you have passionately imparted to the world so far?"* Europe tends to feel *"less and less a protagonist in a world which frequently regards it with aloofness, mistrust and even, at times, suspicion."* (ER)

With this in mind, he wants *"to offer a message of hope and encouragement to all the citizens of Europe"* (ER). This revolves around the keywords peace, which is not secured by weapons, but by a dedicated pursuit of freedom, justice and truth. Historically, this striving has always been one of the strengths of the continent. The Pope recalls a *"spiritual pursuit that has enlivened your history"* (ER). I suggest the word "struggling" for that. This characterises also the word "achievements". Freedom, justice and truth, and together with them peace, are among the great achievements of European history, which it has made available to the whole world.

In 1993, just after the fall of the Wall, these large European issues were also the focus of the European Bishops' Conferences in Prague, chaired by the great Cardinal Miloslav Vlk of Prague. The Symposium of the Bishops of Europe had the title: "To live the Gospel in the realm of freedom and justice".²

In the following lecture, I will discuss these great topics of Europe and together with them consider what follows for the work of our Churches in Europe. My vision, in this lecture focused on our Catholic Church, will be: The Church today could be one of advocates of freedom and human dignity, justice that must always be wrung from freedom and the truth of man, his dignity and his inviolable personal as well as social human rights. And in all this, the Church proves to be an advocate of lasting peace.

Freedom: achieved and threatened

1. Europe's modern history is a constant struggle for freedom. A significant date is 1689. At that time, the Bill of Rights was passed in England. The king was forced to grant parliamentary and civil liberties. A century later, the United States followed with its Bill of Rights. Another significant date in the development of liberty is the French Revolution of 1789. In 1848, in several European countries, people rose up and demanded more freedom in their state.

1 To the lecture: Zulehner, Paul M.: Europa beseelen. Das Evangelium im Ringen um Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Wahrheit (Give Europe a Soul. The Gospel in the struggle for freedom, justice and truth, Ostfildern 2019 (in print: published in autumn 2019).

2 [¶] Fürer, Ivo: Die Entwicklung Europas fordert die Kirchen heraus: Die Tätigkeit des Rates der Europäischen Bischofskonferenzen (CCEE) von seiner Gründung 1971 bis 1996 (The development of Europe challenges the churches: the activities of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) from its founding in 1971 until 1996), Ostfildern 2018.

After the end of the Second World War, many successor states of the k&k monarchy became republics. The next great revolution of freedom, again in '89 – 1989 - was witnessed by most of us.

Development of human rights

2. Along with democratic freedoms, human rights have been expanded:

“Dignity” was a pivotal concept in the process of rebuilding which followed the Second World War. Our recent past has been marked by the concern to protect human dignity, in contrast to the manifold instances of violence and discrimination which, even in Europe, took place in the course of the centuries. Recognition of the importance of human rights came about as the result of a lengthy process, entailing much suffering and sacrifice, which helped shape an awareness of the unique worth of each individual human person...

Today, the promotion of human rights is central to the commitment of the European Union to advance the dignity of the person, both within the Union and in its relations with other countries. This is an important and praiseworthy commitment, since there are still too many situations in which human beings are treated as objects whose conception, configuration and utility can be programmed, and who can then be discarded when no longer useful, due to weakness, illness or old age. (EP)

This path is still not complete, not even in Europe. Inherited discrimination has by no means been overcome in all countries: discrimination based on sex (think of women's rights, homosexuals, transgender or non-binary people), on race or religion is still a danger. The Club of Rome warned against a "defensive racism" in 1991, given the long-foreseeable migration pressure on Europe, which could bring right-wing dictators to power in free elections. In the atmosphere of xenophobia, discrimination against Jewish and Muslims women is increasing. The Roma continue to be threatened by discrimination in some regions of Europe.

Interruptions in the History of Freedom in Europe

3. The ongoing struggle for personal and social freedom suffered two tragic interruptions in Europe. Liberal orders were replaced by fascism and communism. The industrialised murder in National Socialism, which mainly affected Jews, marks the darkest period in Europe's history. After the horror of the Second World War, leaders joined forces to ensure not only peace but also freedom through the interconnectedness of European peoples.

On the way to an "illiberal democracy"

4. The democratic freedom achieved over the centuries is today threatened in many ways in Europe. There is a trend in some Eastern European countries to abolish liberal democracy by democratic means. An "illiberal democracy" is the stated goal. This term appeared in a keynote speech by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.³ He declared: "Hungarian leaders expect Hungarian citizens to find, forge, and work out a new organisation of the state which, after the era of the liberal state and liberal democracy, makes the Hungarian community - of course respecting the values of Christianity, of freedom and human rights - again competitive ... The Hungarian nation is not a mere accumulation of individuals, but a community that needs to be organized, strengthened and built up. In that sense, the new state that we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, not a liberal state."⁴

3 In his speech as newly elected Prime Minister Hungary, Viktor Orban said on 10.5.2018: "The era of liberal democracy is over."

4 This passage comes from a keynote speech held by Orban on 26.7.2014 in the Romanian town of Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő):
<https://pusztaranger.wordpress.com/2014/07/30/viktor-orban-wir-bauen-den-illiberalen-staat-auf/>

Orban's argumentation coincides strikingly with the views of the New Right's representative Alain de Benoist.⁵ He, too, wants to democratically overcome democracy. And for him, too, the free individual is not the basis of the state, but an ethnically pure and national community based on Christianity.

The European Commission has been keeping an eye on this development in Hungary and other Vysegrád countries for quite some time. It demands compliance with the treaties, threatens infringement proceedings for interfering with the independence of the judiciary and the media. The European People's Party has suspended the membership of Fidesz, Viktor Orban's party.

Flight from freedom in the midst of guaranteed freedom

5. This political development in many European countries is closely linked to the fact that, in the midst of guaranteed freedom, the number (even of young) people who want to get rid of the burdensome burden of freedom is increasing. This is measurable due to the current increase in authoritarianism in our cultures. For his empirical research, Theodor W. Adorno asked the question why in the interwar period so many people in Europe voluntarily followed the fascist leaders. His answer was: The majority of the population was authoritarian, therefore willing to submit. Your attitude was: He who is above, is right. Führer lead, and we will follow you! This submissive authoritarianism was widespread until the student revolution of 1968. Only then did the numbers of authoritarian people begin to decline rapidly. In the middle of the nineties, the value reached its lowest point ever. Since then, however, authoritarianism has increased again. This gives rise to populist, nationalist and racist tendencies. Once again, the achieved democratic freedom is endangered.

The causes of the recent increase in authoritarianism has been thoroughly studied. The familial system is overwhelmed and increasingly produces ego-weak people. Globalisation makes many people afraid and puts them in the state of a "new obscurity" (Jürgen Habermas). The student revolution weakened repressive institutions. This indeed increased the freedoms of the people. But without institutional relief not a few experience their freedoms as risky (Jürg Willi).

Christian churches as advocates of freedom

6. My vision regarding the struggle for freedom and its further endangerment due to growing authoritarianism, *nationalism* and populism is: The churches in Europe are reliable and committed advocates of the achieved freedom, both on the personal and the political level.

- On the personal level, the Churches support all processes that contribute to ego strength and the reduction of authoritarianism. To do this, they strengthen family systems. They also encourage the citizens of Europe to risk their own freedom. They appreciate and unfurl the freedom of the conscience of every human being. Pope Francis in *Amoris laetitia*: It is the task of the churches, to accompany the conscience, not to replace it. For that the individual is offered relief. This can happen through political and interreligious education. Gentle reinstitutionalisations (for example, love through marriage) can also relieve individuals within their freedom and prevent them from fleeing from their intended freedom.
- At the political level, the churches make a clear commitment to liberal democracy. It does not succumb to the temptation to support - out of self-interest (such as financial support) - political systems and parties that have started to develop an "illiberal democracy". They protect, based on their own social teachings, the dignity and inviolability of everybody and their individual and social human rights. The principle of subsidiarity is an expression of the

5 Schelkshorn, Hans: Wider die Instrumentalisierung des Christentums. Zur Unvereinbarkeit von neorechter Ideologie und christlicher Moral, in: Christentum und Populismus. Klare Fronten? Hg. v. Walter Lesch (Against the instrumentalisation of Christianity. On the Incompatibility of New Right Ideology and Christian Morals, in: Christianity and Populism. Clear fronts? Ed. V. Walter Lesch), Freiburg 2017, 26-37.

appreciation of people and civil society associations. *"At the same time, the specific features of each one represent an authentic richness to the degree that they are placed at the service of all. The proper configuration of the European Union must always be respected, based as it is on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, so that mutual assistance can prevail and progress can be made on the basis of mutual trust. Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the European Parliament, within this dynamic of unity and particularity, yours is the responsibility of keeping democracy alive, democracy for the peoples of Europe."* (EP)

These tasks can only be credibly fulfilled by the Christian churches if they are themselves "churches of freedom" in their inner processes. The Catholic Church, in particular, has a tremendous amount of work to do in this regard: the serious appreciation of the freedom and conscience of the individual members of the Church, the recognition of all human rights, the practice of subsidiarity and synodality, the resolute eradication of existing discrimination (in regard to the LGBT scene, especially women).

Justice

To wrest justice from freedom

7. In the nineteenth century, the Dominican Jean-Baptiste Lacordaire (1802-1861) preached in Paris in regard to the liberties of the capitalists in England: "You must always wrest from freedom."

This leads us to the second great struggle in Europe's modern history: the struggle for more justice.

The Old Social Question brought the welfare state

8. This struggle was triggered by the Old Social Question. The new means of production, namely the steam engine, not only changed the economy. Industrialisation was accompanied by a dramatic transformation of society. The feudal estate society became a class society, so not only according to Karl Marx in 1848, but of course also to Pope Leo XIII in his first social encyclical *Rerum novarum* in 1891. In a violent revolutionary conflict, a satisfactory solution to the Old Social Question was gradually achieved. The welfare state as a European achievement was developed. For the working people, justice was wrested from the freedom of Capital.

But this struggle is by no means over. The fall of communism in the East led to an unrestrained triumphal march of neoliberal capitalism on a global scale. Pope Francis wrote about this type of economy in his inauguration encyclical *"Evangelii gaudium"* in 2013: "This economy kills!" It no longer serves the people, but the increase of profits. Stock prices rise when people are fired. Although many win in the context of this economy: but many lose. The number of modernisation losers is rising, and the proportion of people living below the poverty line in Europe's rich countries is shameful. Youth unemployment is outrageous, especially in southern Europe.

A New Social Question is approaching

9. However, the situation is aggravated by the fact that the industrial age is coming to an end. An economy 4.0 is, according to the experts, is coming. Thanks to a change in the means of production, a New Social Question has recently announced itself. Informatisation, digitalisation and robotisation will lead to above all poorly educated people losing their jobs. Machines are increasingly replacing working people. The warning of the essayist and writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger is once again gaining momentum: "Even in rich societies, each of us can become superfluous tomorrow. What should we do with him?" (Hans Magnus Enzensberger). Many (economically) superfluous people (the old, unemployed youth, the sick, the dying and children ...) we withdraw

our care from and "throw them to waste" them. Pope Francis speaks in this context of a *"globalization of indifference"* and warns against disposing of people like garbage. He criticises that *"so that the concept of human rights, which has an intrinsically universal import, is replaced by an individualistic conception of rights. This leads to an effective lack of concern for others and favours that globalization of indifference born of selfishness, the result of a conception of man incapable of embracing the truth and living an authentic social dimension."* (ER)

Stock of solidarity in modern cultures

10. To master the New Social Question as well, a population with social sensitivity and empathy is needed. What is necessary is the willingness to work for a solidarity policy especially for the digitalisation losers. Modern societies need to strengthen social policy, which is chosen and supported by solidary people. How solidary are the populations of Europe? Does a solidary policy have a chance? Are not those political parties that have pushed the solution of the Old Social Question in decline throughout Europe? Or will there be a renaissance of "left" parties?

A crucial moment in mastering of the New Social Question is the stock of solidarity that can be built up in the European populations. For decades I have been exploring solidarity in Austria. The results are similarly informative for all European countries.⁶

11. This is a brief summary of the findings. First the good news: The desire for solidarity exists. But then the bad news: This desired solidarity gets smothered on the way to action in a jungle of many-faced fears:

- Firstly there are first fears of loss throughout one's live history;
- in addition there are fears of social descent;
- cultural fears about national identity increase fear even among the wealthy;
- the fear of coming up short in the hunt for unlimited happiness in limited 90 years is widespread.⁷

But fear de-solidifies. It makes people evil⁸. Our self-defence strategies against fear are violence, greed and lies (Monika Renz⁹). Fear prevents people in free elections from choosing a policy for more justice. But at the same time it prevents people from becoming what they were created for: Solidary loving people in the image of an unexpectant loving God. Given this background, we can understand the quotation from the inaugural speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States, in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

This opens up two weighty questions for the exploration of personal and political life today: How does one understand the spread of fear? And how is one able to exist in the midst of fear.

6 Zulehner, Paul M./Denz, Hermann: Solidarität. Option für die Modernisierungsverlierer (Solidarity. Option for losers of modernisation), Innsbruck 1992. – Zulehner, Paul M.: Entängstigt euch. Die Flüchtlinge und das christliche Abendland (Be without angst. The refugees and the Christian Occident), Ostfildern 2016.

7 Zulehner, Paul M./Denz, Hermann: Solidarität. Option für die Modernisierungsverlierer (Solidarity. Option for losers of modernisation), Innsbruck 1992. – Zulehner, Paul M.: Entängstigt euch. Die Flüchtlinge und das christliche Abendland (Be without angst. The refugees and the Christian Occident), Ostfildern 2016.

8 Drewermann, Eugen: Strukturen des Bösen (Structures of evil), Paderborn 1978.

9 Renz, Monika: Angst verstehen. Tiefer als alle Angst liegt Urvertrauen, Freiburg 2018.

Understanding “angst”

12. We all feel angst. Although all human beings, when they start to develop in the womb, are equipped with a paradisiacal primordial trust. This encourages living, makes us curious, allows us to become people who can believe, hope and love. However, when our consciousness awakens, according to the depth psychologist Monika Renz, this primordial trust can be superimposed and overwhelmed by primordial fear. Still in paradise, the awakening human being begins to perceive the world. A deep-seated feeling that everything is too much and the unborn baby feel lost can develop. At the same time the primordial angst has another face, which can be experienced especially at birth: There is not enough for me to survive on my own. The human being can feel threatened. These two dimensions can always take on new faces in the course of life. When the countless people seeking shelter crossed our borders, many of us had the feeling that this was all too much for us. At the same time, there is a fear today that these people are immigrating into our social system and that there will not be enough for us. With local unemployed, this feeling of scarcity can awaken. Fear always leads to defence, whereby we try to defeat our own fear. In any case, we are all expelled from a realm of primordial trust and carry in us primordial fear, which can be called theologically the "hereditary guilt", where it would be better to say "hereditary calamity", because fear precedes any freedom and fetters it.

But it is not enough to concern ourselves only with the primordial angst we have brought from mother's womb into our lives. Nowadays, fear is also being fomented. The French political scientist Dominique Moïsi¹⁰ writes that nowadays world politics does not follow rational arguments, but emotions. 'Chindia' is dominated by the emotion of hope. The Arab world has the feeling of humiliation by the arrogant West. After all, North America and Europe are regions of fear, therefore fear societies. That appears, according to Zygmunt Baumann¹¹, in the language. The words refugee or Islam have long been given negative connotations. Tabloids, together with populists, fuel fear further. There is a "politics of fear" in more and more countries, according to the Viennese linguist Ruth Wodak.¹² This serves to gain votes, but does not add to the common good or to peace in the world.

13. One facet of this policy of fear is the international spread of nationalism. The term "first" is the expression and sharpening of national egoism in response to the loss of identity and dignity.¹³

Churches: Oases of diffusing trust in cultures of fear

14. The churches today have the opportunity and the mission to become beacons and advocates of national, international and global justice, in the face of a Europe-wide weakening of political forces advocating social justice.

The powerful source for solidarity of the church is its transcendent knowledge of the unity of all being (there is only One World House, the One Human Family). From this results universal solidarity. This knows no upper limit. This does not absolve the political leaders from the task of taking acceptable steps towards increasing solidarity and justice for all in the One World. The population can be encouraged towards greater solidarity than vote-concerned politicians think.

10 Moïsi, Dominique: [The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation and Hope are Reshaping the World](#), 2016.

11 Baumann, Zygmunt: Die Angst vor den Anderen. Ein Essay über Migration und Panikmache (The Fear of Others. An essay about Migration and Alarmism), 2016.

12 Wodak, Ruth: Politik mit der Angst (The Politics of Fear), Wien 2016.

13 Fukuyama, Francis: Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment (Identität: Wie der Verlust der Würde unsere Demokratie gefährdet), 2018. – „Awareness of one's own identity is also indispensable for relations with other neighbouring countries, particularly with those bordering the Mediterranean, many of which suffer from internal conflicts, the pressure of religious fundamentalism and the reality of global terrorism.“ (EP)

15. Therefore, a core task of Christian churches in today's Europe is to increase solidarity among the populations. This fundamental challenge can be concretised in several current fields of responsibility. Pope Francis has identified some tasks in his speeches to the responsible actors in Europe. They are ecology, migration, employment, especially for young people and the isolation of the elderly: *"Similarly, the contemporary world offers a number of other challenges requiring careful study and a common commitment, beginning with the welcoming of migrants, who immediately require the essentials of subsistence, but more importantly a recognition of their dignity as persons. Then too, there is the grave problem of labour, chiefly because of the high rate of young adults unemployed in many countries – a veritable mortgage on the future – but also for the issue of the dignity of work... Finally, among the issues calling for our reflection and our cooperation is the defence of the environment, of this beloved planet earth. It is the greatest resource which God has given us and is at our disposal not to be disfigured, exploited, and degraded, but so that, in the enjoyment of its boundless beauty, we can live in this world with dignity."* (ER)

16. In the face of all these political challenges, the Christian churches cannot remain silent, even if some politicians - as in communist times - would like them to do so. Of course, a church is not a political party. But it is inevitably politically partisan. It must raise its voice in favour of the poor and those who are kept poor. Because even today these poor people are crying to heaven. We would not be God's people if we did not hear the cry of the poor that reaches God's ear: even today.

Truth

17. In addition to freedom and justice, Europe has always struggled for truth. In the face of these challenges the continent has made substantial progress because it has been able to draw on Christianity alongside Greek, Roman, Germanic and Slavic cultural treasures.

18. Christianity establishes the freedom of the person in the dignity of every human being as an image of God. This back-binding of every human being God ("religio" from religare) withdraws people of all totalitarian grasp: in politics, but also in economics, in science and in administration. In a sermon at Pentecost in 1979, Pope John Paul II, who was so important for Europe's liberation from the yoke of communism, is said to have shouted on Victory Square in Warsaw: "Whoever kneels before God, never kneels before the party!" One can well understand that Christians were always the final enemy of totalitarian systems.

19. The Christian truth about the nature of human beings also implies that the human person is not a monad:

"Today there is a tendency to claim ever broader individual rights – I am tempted to say individualistic; underlying this is a conception of the human person as detached from all social and anthropological contexts, as if the person were a 'monad' (μονάς), increasingly unconcerned with other surrounding 'monads'. The equally essential and complementary concept of duty no longer seems to be linked to such a concept of rights. As a result, the rights of the individual are upheld, without regard for the fact that each human being is part of a social context wherein his or her rights and duties are bound up with those of others and with the common good of society itself." But the human being is always relation, resonance: *"Above all, it means regarding human beings not as absolutes, but as beings in relation. In my view, one of the most common diseases in Europe today is the loneliness typical of those who have no connection with others."* (EP) Without connectedness, a human being cannot become human and not be human. When a person is not seen, they do not gain the feeling of respect, dignity and uniqueness. This vital connectedness is the foundation for the responsibility for each other in life.

20. Against this background, I now formulate another facet of my vision for the Churches in Europe today. In so far as fear is desolidarising, it endangers not only justice in the world, but also humanisation. One of the main services of the Churches in the world today (GS 1 revisited) should be that in the midst of cultures of fear they be oases of diffusive trust. "When things get really hard, I feel a divine tailwind," says a woman of faith working with refugees. The attitude of Christians is "Yes we can" - more than we are confident of - because we feel a divine tailwind.

21. Christianity in Europe currently does not seem to be well on to face these major challenges in respect to freedom, justice and truth. It is currently experiencing a deep transformation in Europe that is occupying all Christian Churches: The Constantine era in its post-Reformation form is definitely over. Religion is no longer fate but choice (Peter L. Berger). Christianity is also wounded in many ways:

- through the connection between God and violence in the Thirty Years' War;
- by the sluggish implementation of non-discrimination against women according to Gal 3:28;
- the inability to mature sexually infantile males who are formed by a society with a weak familial and sexual culture and, after careful screening, to prevent them from ministering to children and young people.

So it remains one of the difficult tasks for the Churches to maintain or regain their credibility in the midst of reshaping their Church. Of course, this does not happen solely through necessary reform of church structures. On the contrary, credibility is given to a church that does not revolve around itself and in doing so becomes sick, but is gained by a Church that devotes itself selflessly to the people, their fears and their hopes.

Peace

22. The struggle for freedom, justice and truth in Europe ultimately serves peace. For this purpose, the peoples of Europe should be economically, militarily and politically interwoven. Above all, the unification of Europe's was intended as a peace project. The war-mongering nationalism was overcome. Europe has experienced 70 years of peace although there have been local conflicts.

The search for peace proved its worth because Europe no longer relied on the old Roman axiom "Si vis pacem, para bellum" ("If You want peace, prepare for war!"). The Pope, too, in his speech to the Council of Europe, spoke out against this unfit path to peace: *"It is not enough to contain wars, to suspend conflicts... An imposed peace, a utilitarian and provisional peace, is not enough. Progress must be made towards a peace which is loved, free and fraternal, founded, that is, on a reconciliation of hearts". (ER)* "Pope Francis scourges, wherever he has the opportunity, the arms trade, because the latter's development massively harms the poor and deprives the peoples of the earth of their necessary resources: *"Yet peace is put to the test by other forms of conflict, such as religious and international terrorism, which displays deep disdain for human life and indiscriminately reaps innocent victims. This phenomenon is unfortunately bankrolled by a frequently unchecked traffic in weapons. The Church is convinced that 'the arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured.'"*¹⁴ (ER) Those who seek lasting peace today must adhere to the axiom: "Si vis pacem, para iustitiam!" ("If You want peace, prepare justice!"). Then it can be fulfilled, whereof the Old Testament poet sings in Psalm 85:11: "Justice and peace kiss each other!

14 [¶] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2329, and SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 81.

23. Peace in Europe requires the mutual respect of peoples and the appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. The Pope does not constantly restate that this diversity of European peoples and cultures is not a threat but an asset. He extends this view also to those people who flee from other cultures to Europe and seek protection from natural disasters, wars and hopeless poverty. If this appreciation of the strangers and the others is lacking, then peace-threatening nationalism is again growing in Europe, which for the most part accompanies the humiliation of the pre-modern Arab world by the modern Christian West with the constant warning against political Islam and the Islamization of Europe.

Soul of Europe

24. If the Christian churches, with the truth of the gospel entrusted to them, embark in the way outlined above in the development of Europe towards a free, just and peaceful Europe, then it can, as it were, enliven Europe. Without this soul, the European unification threatens to become a soulless institution, which more and more Europeans distrust. When that happens, nationalist populists have an easy game in their attempt to smash the united Europe or reduce it to an economic project without a human eye, which, like European elections, showed as much as the English Brexit chaos.

25. "It would be a mistake to be a victim of a dangerous illusion, if you believed that creating Europe was enough to create European institutions, it would be like a body without a soul."¹⁵ This quote was written by the French politician Jacques Delors, who was a successful President of the Commission of the European Union for ten years. Pope Francis vows in the same direction and encouraged the Members of the European Parliament *"to work to make Europe rediscover the best of itself"*. (EP)

This image of the soul comes from the early Christian letter to Diognet. There it is the Christians who should form the soul in the body of the world. It is "the Christians in the world, what the soul is in the body".¹⁶

26. In his speech to the European Parliament on 24 November 2016, Pope Francis picks up this picture: *"The future of Europe depends on the recovery of the vital connection between these two elements. A Europe which is no longer open to the transcendent dimension of life is a Europe which risks slowly losing its own soul and that 'humanistic spirit' which it still loves and defends.*

Taking as a starting point this opening to the transcendent, I would like to reaffirm the centrality of the human person, which otherwise is at the mercy of the whims and the powers of the moment. I consider to be fundamental not only the legacy that Christianity has offered in the past to the social and cultural formation of the continent, but above all the contribution which it desires to offer today, and in the future, to Europe's growth. This contribution does not represent a threat to the secularity of states or to the independence of the institutions of the European Union, but rather an enrichment. This is clear from the ideals which shaped Europe from the beginning, such as peace, subsidiarity and reciprocal solidarity, and a humanism centered on respect for the dignity of the human person." (EP)

15 "Like many defining thoughts in our world of ideas, the call to 'give Europe a soul' is hard to trace back to its roots. It is always associated with the French politician Jacques Delors - for ten years a successful president of the Commission of the European Union. He should have brought this request into conversation in the early 1990s. " (https://austria-forum.org/af/Wissenssammlungen/Symbole/Europasymbole/Seele_Europas ; 29.11.2018) - Denz, Hermann: Die europäische Seele. Leben und Glauben in Europa (The European soul. Life and faith in Europe), Wien 2000.

16 Cf. Letter to Diognetus, 6.