



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOURTH MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT
FOR THE SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR EUROPE
OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

Friday, 14 May 2004

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. I address a particularly joyful greeting to you all during this Easter season, when you are gathered in Rome for the Fourth Meeting of the Special Assembly for Europe of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

I am grateful to you for the work you carry out for the good of the Episcopal College, offering the Successor of Peter the support of your prudent counsel and pastoral charity.

Today, with you, I have the joy of greeting Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, who I recently asked as General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops to carry out this special service to the Petrine ministry and to the collegiality of the Pastors of the Church.

2. It is the first time that you have met since the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, subsequent to the second Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops. Your purpose is to reflect on its reception and to strive to disseminate, make known and apply this important Document that came into being in the synodal atmosphere of the pilgrim Church in our Europe.

Your meeting takes place at a special time, marked by the recent enlargement of the European Union. The Catholic Church hopes that this process will continue until it extends to the geographical boundaries of the Continent, embracing all its peoples. Indeed, apart from their

strong historical bonds, they share the same cultural and religious values.

3. She hopes it will be a Europe of peoples united in respect for the legitimate plurality that enriches the individual nations, small and large, in an open process of the exchange of gifts; a Europe that respects the transcendent dignity of the human person, the value of reason, of freedom, of democracy, of a State of rights and of the distinction between politics and religion (cf. *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 109). This Europe, founded on law, desirous of respecting the human and Christian values and oriented to solidarity for all its members, especially the neediest, will become a prosperous and peaceful Continent whose example will be an incentive to other peoples and other nations.

The Catholic Church, strengthened by the message of peace and hope that the Risen Lord offers her, will never tire of repropounding this ideal to the European peoples at this important time in their history, doing her utmost within her own province to put this noble project into practice so that it may become the source of a better future for all those who live in Europe and for all humanity.

4. I commend to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope, the fulfilment of these generous resolutions so that Europe, in rediscovering itself, may be able to build a better future for all its citizens with respect for divine and human law, and become more and more a Continent of prosperity and peace.

As a pledge of collegial communion and gratitude for your precious service, also as members of the Special Council for Europe of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, I very willingly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.