

St Gallen, Wednesday 23 September 2009

**Plenary Assembly of the Presidents of the
Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE)
*Paris, France, 1 to 4 October 2009***

**Main Theme: Church and State
20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall**

The next Plenary Assembly of the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) will be held from Thursday 1 to Sunday 4 October in Paris, at the *Maison de la Conférence des évêques de France*, following an invitation by Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris and President of the Bishops' conference of France. The main theme will be *Church and State, 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall*.

With a view to identify various models and juridical solutions to be adopted by individual European States in order to attribute a legal status to the Catholic Church and regulate relations with Her and Her main pastoral, social and educational structures, CCEE has promoted a Europe-wide research. This is aimed at addressing various issues, such as: what is the Catholic Church's juridical status in the European States? Which laws and concordats have been abolished so far? How are the Church's charitable institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) funded? What is the influence at local level of the various laws, treaties and agreements within the European institutions? And what are the communitarian aspects of religion?

During the upcoming annual encounter, the results of this **European survey** will be presented to the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe

The second part of the working sessions will instead focus on **CCEE's service to the Church in Europe** with a presentation of the activities of the various CCEE Commissions: CEEM (European Episcopal Commission for Media); the *Migration* Commission; the *Catechesis, schools, and universities* Commission; the European Vocations Service (EVS) and the *Environment* Commission.

Part of the work will be dedicated to the theme of collaboration between CCEE and other continental bodies such as **SECAM** (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) and **CELAM** (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano).

As regards CCEE's activities in the field of ecumenical dialogue, the programme for the **2nd Catholic-Orthodox Forum** (Rhodes, Greece, 23 to 27 November 2009) will be presented. The theme of the Forum is *Church-State relationship*. The Presidents will also be informed about the activities undertaken in the course of the year along with CEC (the Conference of European Churches).

In the course of the meeting the Presidents will also receive brief reports on current issues: Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the Czech Republic (26 to 28 September 2009); the Year for Priests (19 June 2009 to 19 June 2010); the Catholic Church's concern for the peoples in

the Holy Land; Church and Media relations over the last year; gender ideology in the panorama of European legislation and current bioethical issues.

The days of the meeting will be marked by times of prayer and the celebration of Mass. In particular, the European Bishops will celebrate Mass with the local community: **Saturday 3 October – 08:00** at the **Chapelle Notre Dame de la médaille miraculeuse**, 140 rue du Bac – Paris VII and on **Sunday 4 October at the Cathedral of Nôtre-Dame**, at **10:00**.

Also taking part in the meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe on behalf of the Holy See, will be Cardinal **Giovanni Battista Re**, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops; Mgr **Dominique Mamberti**, Secretary for Relations with Foreign States at the Secretariat of State; Mgr **André Dupuy**, Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union; and Mgr **Aldo Giordano**, Permanent Observer at the Council of Europe.

A Press Release will be published at the end of the meeting.

The Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) gathers the Presidents of the current 33 European Bishops' Conferences of this Continent, represented by their Presidents, and the Archbishops of Luxembourg and of the Principality of Monaco, as well as the Bishop of Chişinău (Moldavia). The President is Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Primate of Hungary; the Vice-Presidents are Cardinal Josip Bosanac, Archbishop of Zagreb, and Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard, Archbishop of Bordeaux. The General Secretary of CCEE is Fr Duarte da Cunha. The headquarters of the Secretariat is in St Gallen (Switzerland).

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