

RENEWAL IN LOVE

As we prepare for the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest in September 2020, we consider it important to address our Catholic brothers and sisters and all people of good will. The motto of our Congress is from Psalm 87: "All my springs come from you." Christ is the source. His teaching, His life, His redeeming death on the cross, His resurrection and His grace, which works among us until the end of time can bring spiritual renewal to our cities, our people, Europe and the world.

We look at the four major problems of our time - population crisis, the situation of education, poverty, and the issues raised by mass migration - in the light of faith and seek possible answers to them. The purpose of this document is to clarify principles and to help us see the complexities of our times in the light of faith.

I. The life-giving source of society is the connection with God the Creator

God has written in the heart of every human being a desire for infinity, wholeness, truth, goodness, beauty and love, which can lead him or her to God. God comes to meet us, in the incarnate Son we receive the gifts that help us to live life to the full. Christ "heals our hearts, gives us the ability to love as He loves the Church, that is to say, by giving His life for us".¹ The Holy Trinity, the community of love of the Divine Persons, reveals Itself with features similar to those of a family. As in a family, there is someone who loves, there is someone who is loved, and there is a community of love.

The Gospel of Christ is capable of renewing and making society more humane in accordance with God's will. If people in western cultures refuse to believe, their societies will slowly lose their inner strength, their purpose, their motivation and their ability to convey inner peace. The Second Vatican Council calls upon the laity to "undertake to renew the worldly order ... in the light of the Gospel, in the spirit of the Church".² Faith drives action, urges that love based on truth be realized on a social scale: in culture, the economy, science, politics, media, sports and the environment. Faith can develop sensitivity and helpfulness towards the poor, the broken-hearted, the sick and the ostracized.

Thirty years after the change of regime

Thirty years ago, we thought that our Church and our nation were given the gift of freedom by the Lord of history, for which many had fought and suffered in the past. However, after the change of regime, masses of people felt that their work was no longer needed and that they themselves had become redundant. The homeless appeared in the streets, and misery became sorely exposed. The problem of the moral legitimacy of private property also reared its head.

¹ Closing document of the 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Episcopal Synod (4-25 October 2015) "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in today's world", 35.

² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* 7e.

Blatant disparities in income generating opportunities, coupled with unemployment, led to mass emigration of region's youth to the West. The unique languages, cultures, and values of the community experience of small nations also came under threat by the shrinking of the population. Nations are indeed part of the richness of creation, and their existence is also valued by the Church.

Young people were distanced from grandparents, who could strengthen solidarity and a sense of community between generations through close human relationships. Young individuals drifting away from families exacerbates the loneliness of the elderly. Helping families, strengthening communities that offer meaningful lives, and renewing trust in Divine Providence are values that we must urgently endeavour for.

The serious disproportions of the world economy, the ever more severe drought due to pollution and climate change, the scarcity of drinking water supplies and military conflicts all call for shared international responsibility in many areas.

Life springing from the Gospel must, if needs be, challenge unjust social structures. As men and women of unity and peace, we can defy today's forms of ruthless profit-making and humiliation. Violence pervades our culture, yet we must show tenderness towards our fellow human beings and, amid this unsparingly relentless race, we should turn to them with patience, according to the teaching of Christ.

The missionary character of the Church

By proclaiming the Gospel, the Church invites every person to know and testify about Jesus Christ. Every disciple of Christ, according to their gifts given by the Spirit, is involved in the spreading of the faith. Evangelization is aimed at the sanctification of the world. It is not driven by power or worldly considerations. The life received in the Sacrament of Baptism requires a decision: Do we want to preach the great works of God or rather to perpetuate the old habits of our own lives? We can draw to Christ those with whom we are in fellowship, practising the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Christ performed the work of Redemption amid poverty and persecution, and so the Church must continue on this path in order to communicate the fruits of Salvation to the people. The Church proclaims the Lord's cross and death, and this is confirmed by the power of the risen Christ. In Revelation, God wanted to manifest and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will for the salvation of men, so that every human being could live in the knowledge, certainty, happiness of eternal life, by far in excess of human desires.

The life springing from the Gospel seeks to form communities in the Church that embrace the reception of others as opposed to seclusion, that celebrate charismata and make use of the talents, instead of complaining, and where one may be healed.

Without acting love for the poor and those on the peripheries of society, no Christian community can be called Christian. We often do not want to see social injustices. We are afraid,

or even despaired, of experiencing unusual social and human realities because they confront us with our weaknesses and set us challenges that are obviously difficult or impossible to tackle if we rely only on our own strength.

II. Four specific areas: population, education, poverty and migration

Child as a blessing. Demographic crisis and the family

The actual crisis of our time seems to be a complex crisis of values with numerous social and economic components. The changes in the past decades have disrupted the existential and spiritual foundations that are necessary for the harmonious operation of the families and of the whole of society. Lack of love, widespread distrust, rivalry and ostracism are the characteristic features of our age. Intergenerational solidarity has weakened. The number of pro-life Hungarians has been dwindling. Marriage and childbirth tend to be deferred to ever later times.

Any re-planning may only be based on Christian family culture. A family that is willing to accept children – in the words of Saint John Paul II – is the “shrine of life” and a “site of the culture of life.” The solution of the demographic crisis lies in this family model and in a more radical protection of life.

The taking of a conceived human life and the tools of abortive contraception are morally impressible. We firmly call on law-makers and the leaders of our country to respect this principle. Mothers delivering babies in a crisis situation or young individuals becoming mothers in their girlhood must be received into an appropriate environment. To provide care for them, we must make even material or other sacrifice. In preparing for marriage, faith helps to make the final decision. Making the right choice for marriage and living it is not something that individuals need to do on their own, but it ought to be appreciated that God offers Himself as an ally. Whatever is decided upon with God will be seen to fruition with the help of God. Faith helps the married couple not to be swept away by the whirl of their own desires and passions or by the currents of conventional thinking. Whoever experiences God’s mercy will be able to forgive him- or herself, too. When marriage and family are embedded into the large community of the Church and into the life of the local parish, they become recipients of great benefits. Community always means support, supplies a model, gives opportunity for rejoicing and helps in carrying the cross as well. Christian culture, which enriches marriage, is a source of support for family life. The culture of feasts, community life, mourning and aesthetics has been established over time, giving rise to rituals and truths settled and crystallized throughout generations that represent inestimable treasures. To build these up using our own strength only is almost impossible.

As early as the first year of life, it is the constant presence of the mother that ensures the overall and undisturbed development of the infant’s nervous system and emotional life. A special cooperation of Church and society is needed in order for the child to receive the care necessary for him or her. It must be ensured that mothers will have the opportunity to stay at home and the conditions of personal care for children are secured, along with the full realization of the large family career model. It would be necessary to integrate the costs of raising of children into pensions, as an incentive to accept children and in appreciation of the selfless service of parents.

These days, generations after generations have been deprived of the possibility to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain family- and community life, leaving them unable

to prepare for the challenges of life psychologically. Therefore, we consider it essential to educate and support both school-age groups and adults in this area. Young people must be prepared to choose their partners and to have their own families by expanding the programme of education for family life. Families need to be provided with courses that develop communication, conflict resolution and coping strategies, and adaptation skills. It is necessary to strengthen local schools, as well as church- and other communities. We must give succour to the poor unable to afford to secure appropriate upbringing or provide care and education for their children from their own resources.

In numerous countries of Europe and America, the institution of marriage and family, faith in God and Christianity are under attack in the name of the extremist liberal ideologies. On the level of show-business and social media, it is also essential that the appreciation of the institution and value system of family prevail and enjoy priority over cohabitation. We must deploy all cultural and social instruments to support and protect the family against the forces that destroy Christian culture.

Catholic education and Catholic schooling

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Church, however, happily offers faith, knowledge, community experience and her educational institutions familiar with the service of society to parents and their children. In the process of Catholic education, institutions strive for organic cooperation between the parish and other church communities. Catholic schools conduct their activities with a holistic image of a human being and of his or her ultimate goal, i.e. salvation, in mind. Informed by the truth revealed in Christ, their educational mission is oriented towards enabling and developing the cognitive, emotional, volitional, interpersonal and psychological abilities of a human being.

Many young people lack a family background where they could learn to esteem and love the other person and the community could acquire the ability to communicate verbally and in other ways, the ability to listen and share or could internalize the most basic human values. All these are indispensable to ensuring a responsible public dialogue and the proper operation of the institutions of our society. Catholic educational institutions look upon the education and development of all social segments and groups as part of their responsibilities. They put a premium on promoting the education of the disadvantaged and supporting their parents.

Hearing the cry of the poor

It is necessary for every individual and family to do everything they can to provide for their living. It is necessary for families to make an effort to take care of their elderly, sick or needy family members. At the same time, it is also an onerous and urgent duty of the whole of Hungarian society as well as of the Church to stand by the poorest, the elderly and the weak, to show them a way out and to provide them with help.

Our Christian faith is only authentic if it gives rise to acts of love. If we do not heed the cry of the poor, our Christianity will be dead, we will lose our humanity, and our society will become loveless and inhumane. Many old people live abandoned, without help, and, for many children

and young individuals, social improvement or shaking off the shackles of destitution is extremely hard.

A large number of people live the last 10-15 years of their lives suffering from illnesses. Many of them are left alone in these adversities. It would be important to support homecare for the elderly and provide the caretakers with more help. A substantial pay rise in the social sector is inevitable, along with a consolidation of its financial and moral recognition.

A considerable proportion of some twenty thousand homeless individuals have rather weak if any family background, and many of them would need psychiatric care or even inpatient treatment. It would be important to find personalized solutions for the homeless and, especially, to increase the capacity of inpatient mental health care centres.

87% of Hungary's Roma community had been employed before the regime change of 1990. Roma and non-Roma individuals had been intertwined in many ways, and most Roma households had had a secure income. In 1993, only 28% of Roma able to work had a job, so that more than 2/3 of them had lost their jobs in three years. In recent years, their employment figures have been on the rise again : In 2013, 26% of active-age Roma were employed, while in 2017, 45%.

The schooling level of Hungary's Roma community has considerably improved over the past decades. Hungary's education statistics for the Roma are the best in the whole of Europe. Hungarian society has taken great steps in this area in the past 40-50 years, and these efforts have borne fruit. However, 60% of young Roma quit education before completing their studies. Yet poverty is not only a Roma problem: In our country, there are ten thousand non-Roma families who are also on the poverty line. For children raised in such conditions, shaking off the shackles of poverty and privation is extremely difficult.

It is important to strike a balance between incentives to work and the assistance offered to the most vulnerable layers of society in providing decent living conditions. It is imperative that, in the most disadvantaged areas, attention be paid not only to the improvement of education but also to support for families, building communities and strengthening relations with the relevant institutions.

The challenges of population movements

The main reason for migrations on this unprecedented scale is the enormous economic inequalities and injustice in the world. Capital, similarly to profit, is concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. As Pope Francis stressed: “*This economy kills!*”³ It ruins nations and families, and makes tens and hundreds of millions of people destitute. Ex-colonizing countries nowadays also frequently misuse their economic dominance and exploit their former colonies.

Wars, mistaken economic policies, suppressing and inadequate political systems and, in many instances, armed groups terrorizing entire regions are also among the main reasons of migration. In many cases, the great powers or interest groups that have gained significant leverage have destabilized countries that were safe and well-functioning for decades. This is also one of the chief sources of these days' large scale migration.

There are about 200 million Christians in the world whose fundamental human rights are violated because of their faith. Over a hundred thousand Christians are killed every year because of their faith and community affiliation.

The Earth has experienced a powerful population explosion in the last 50 years. In the past decades, travel has been made easier and, thanks to the media, people living in poorer countries can now see the immense difference more clearly between their own standards of living and those in wealthier countries. Climate change has dramatically reduced the population-sustaining capabilities of some regions in the world. Approximately 17% of the Earth's inhabitants do not have access to clean drinking water.

All nations must do everything in their power to ensure the chance of a decent livelihood and the opportunity to live a free and secure life for their citizens. Every human being has the right to personal security and to live with dignity. In case these are threatened, one may choose to migrate. God has created the Earth for everyone. If somewhere the possibility of living a decent life is at risk, we all have the responsibility to help.

The host state should consider how many people whose safety and living are not directly threatened it is able to receive. It has the right to stop asylum seekers at its borders and assess their claims. Maintaining and securing borders are key to the survival of the culture, security and existence of nations.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the immigrant must respect the host country's material and spiritual values in a spirit of gratitude, abide by its laws and contribute towards public expenses.⁴ An immigrant who is not willing to respect the religion, culture or values of the host country cannot expect to be well received.

A more just and more humane world economy system should be created. The main objective of economic activity should be the furtherance of common good, i.e. the welfare of people, instead of profit maximization. The development of a fairer economic system requires moral renewal in humans. It is the quality of the human value system that will determine what the economic system based on it will be like. We must re-learn the virtues of modesty, simplicity in the use of material assets and moderation.

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 53.

⁴ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2241.

The concentration of the wealth of the world in the hands of few needs to be limited. The right to a decent living has precedence over the right to private property. Individuals with property are only managers of the goods they possess. They are answerable for the use of these assets to the whole of humankind and future generations as well. The present direction of the concentration of wealth ought to be reversed through appropriate regulation.

It is essential to provide economic, professional and commercial help to the poorer countries of the world so that they may ensure a decent living for their citizens locally. The principal interest of those expelled from their homes is to return to their homeland and to live and prosper safely in their own culture and native country.

III. A call for renewal in faith, hope and love

The widely experienced crisis of faith also comes from the fact that we place our experience, knowledge and emotions above God's words and revelation. We desperately cling to our dreams, illusions and ideologies. We are stuck in the realization of our plans, and when something (even the smallest thing) does not happen as we have hoped, we feel upset, depressed or become aggressive and leave the community. Our love also faces crisis when we force ourselves to believe that God must realize our ideas about ourselves, our Church, our family and our society.

Our renewal in love depends on whether we can connect the broken Christ present in the Eucharist with the broken Christ present in the poor, the starving, the sick, the stranger and the sinner. Both are mysteries of faith. We will be able to persevere in love for the poor if we see the Jesus present in them and present in the Eucharist in unity. Thus will our broken, wounded and poor brothers and sisters, as the Body of Christ, become sources of evangelization for us. In the forthcoming year, at the International Eucharistic Congress, let us ask the Holy Spirit that our faith may be renewed by Christ, our hope may be enlivened by Christ, and we may love with Christ!

Budapest, 13th November 2019, on the Solemnity of all Hungarian saints and blessed

Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference