

Participation from UCESM: Sr. Marjolein

The group “Passion for Europe” (a group of Catholic Christians from seven nationalities, who are passionate about the European project and look to the future with hope) together with the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC) organized a three-day session to share the Christian vision of Europe’s current situation and main challenges, and open a dialogue on possible changes of mindset so as to rediscover the European common good.



“To Europe we can put the question: Where is your vigour? Where is that idealism which inspired and ennobled your history? Where is your spirit of curiosity and enterprise? Where is your thirst for truth, a thirst which hitherto you have passionately shared with the world?”, Pope Francis, 25 November 2014, Council of Europe.

Over sixty people gathered at a three-day workshop entitled "Rediscovering the European Common Good" to analyse, discuss and influence the past, present and future of Europe.

Panels and sessions included the topics of migration, ecology and culture. The workshop included work in groups and a live piano concert. The weekend was organized by the “Passion for Europe” Group (Ecumenical Chapel Brussels) and JESC.

### FRIDAY, 21 September 2018

The opening session showed us an inspiring video about the founding fathers of Europe, followed by the introduction into the first theme ‘Migration flows’: how does Europe face the global challenge? Which policy for Common Good? The so-called “migrants crisis” is at the heart of political evolutions in a number of EU countries. European policy is widely considered a failure for a majority of citizens, and this issue is a source of division within Europe. Some EU national migration policies are in contradiction with the humanistic spirit at the foundation of Europe’s values; Pope Francis calls on Europe to find “the right balance between its two-fold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to ensure assistance and acceptance to migrants” and calls for a dialogue to find new and sustainable solutions with greater boldness and creativity.

One of the speakers was Fr. José Ignacio García, Director JRS Europe.

During discussion we asked ourselves: Should Christians give home to migrants? – Yes, as much as possible. And during discussions nobody spoke about the “silent majority” who does not shout, but helps. And that is very good!

In the evening we saw a video of Pope Francis' speech on Europe at the occasion of the Charlemagne Prize (May 2016), in which he called for the birth of a new European humanism by drawing inspiration from the founding fathers of Europe; video was followed by discussion.



SATURDAY, 22 September 2018

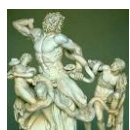
The second theme of these days was '**Integral ecology**': environmental and social challenges, how to keep man at the centre? Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* is a dramatic and a joyful document. Its central message is that dangerous climate change and the unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources continue to threaten the future of our planet. Dramatic because it faces the global crisis of today's world which is both ecological and social. Joyful because it offers ways and hope to tackle this crisis.

In the afternoon we were occupied with the theme '**Cultural challenge within EU: United in diversity**'. Gyula Ocskay, the General Secretary of the European Institute of cross-border studies, opened the third session by asking the workshop participants to describe Europe by artistic works, e.g. music (Bach, Mozart), and emphasized the importance of understanding the so-called "cultural divides."

Philippe Herzog, the founder and honorary president of Confrontations Europe and a former Member of the European Parliament, said that "the common good cannot be built without values. This applies to all areas of art and culture. Europe is "a family of peoples" having, like every family, many things in common, but also differences; however, each member of the family is necessary to the group. Its cohesion cannot be based only on a common market or citizenship, but also on shared culture, narratives and vision. However, up to now education and civil society remain stranded within national borders".



One of the speakers: Mgr. Jean Kockerols, Auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese Malines-Brussels, began by sharing his experience in diversity: "I am amazed by the incredible diversity in Brussels, having Sunday Eucharist in twenty-three different languages. Diversity in Brussels is a blessing". Moreover, in emphasizing the role of Christians, Mgr. Kockerols said that "our Christian faith gives great importance to history and to memorial. That is what we do in celebrating the Eucharist. We need to remember our historical and spiritual sources. Europe can be considered as a union if Europeans know where they are coming from". Finally, the Bishop emphasized that "the core mission of Christians is listening. By listening, we can improve Europe as a sign of catholicity and be involved in building bridges. And, we are nourished by hope".



As a principal panel discussant, HE Mgr. Alain Paul Lebeauvin, the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union, expressed the intention of the Holy See to support the year of European cultural heritage by issuing a special 2 Euro coin representing a Laocoön. "We have to build a community, by seeing that unity makes our culture. We have to be experts in building bridges".



To conclude, the session found that Europe's cultural diversity is one of its greatest resources. In contrast to new identity discourses, it can be demonstrated through this diversity that the foreign, the other, is not a threat to our identity but an enrichment. Pope Francis emphasizes that European identity is and always has been a dynamic and multicultural identity. The promotion of cultural exchange, especially between East and West, could contribute to bridging the political gulfs that have recently opened up, moving towards a pluri-national democracy, based on a European civil society and trans-frontier dialogue that is also open to the rest of the world. As Pope Francis said, "Today more than ever, the founding fathers' vision inspires us to build bridges and tear down walls".

In the evening in the crypt, we enjoyed a piano concert: some musical tastes of the European cultural heritage, by the very famous pianist Maxence Pilchen.



### SUNDAY, 23 September 2018

As conclusion of the days of study there was a feedback/wrap up session. The groups reported and analysed on main conclusions.

With the blessing at the end of the Eucharist in the chapel, we said "Goodbye and till we meet again"!

Haelen, 6 October 2018

Sr. Marjolein