



HOPE AS MISSION IN OUR EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION: “EVERYTHING HAS ITS TIME”

To find myself before such a qualified assembly, representing as it does religious life in Europe is for me a very great grace and also a call to openness, to dialogue, to a new vision. I express a very big thank you to those who have put their trust in me. I hope that I will not be an obstacle to the action of the Holy Spirit who surely wants to transmit an important message to this assembly called together in his name.

We are meeting here in Poland, at Czestochowa. This afternoon we are going to visit the concentration camp at Auschwitz. It is in this context that we are proposing to reflect on “Religious life in Europe: histories of hope and hope for history”. It seems almost paradoxical to speak of hope here where hope was denied right to surprising limits, right to what could not even have been suspected.

Thank God, Auschwitz belongs to the past. Humanity would be unable to tolerate a permanent Auschwitz. But Auschwitz could return. This is why everything has its time as says Ecclesiastes: there is a time for hope and a time for feeling hopeless; there is a time with vast horizons and a time when the horizons have narrowed causing us to founder; there is a time for creation and progress and a time for routine and decline (cf. Eccl, 3:1-5).

If we ask ourselves, at the beginning of this century, what is the time for Europe “a time for hope or a time for hopelessness?”, we will probably enter into a certain anxiety. We can all recognise, with no great difficulty, that we have lived times where hope was much greater, but also times of much stronger hopelessness. Also, we will agree in affirming that we lack “the passion of hope” and that neither in Europe or in the Church, or in religious life do we breathe the vital air of “hope”. Perhaps we need an artificial lung in order to help us recuperate the rhythm of an authentic Christian respiration of hope.

The ambivalence of the situation which we are in the process of living frees us from artificial certainties, allowing us to approach to reality with an open spirit and obliges us to seek for better means in order to realise the mission of hope.

The question which draws our attention today is not first of all how to revivify hope in us religious but rather what can we do to contribute to the growth of hope in Europe, or even wider on our planet, and from there, in ourselves.

For that I will develop my reflection in three parts:

- Context: time of new awareness
- Spirituality: the Apocalyptic, soul of the Mission
- Service: the Gospel of Hope

FIRST PART: CONTEXT: TIME OF NEW AWARENESS

Mission never works on its own. It is always in a state of research in face of new challenges. While remaining the same it takes on new forms. While being unique it can change its name. Perhaps at this

time ‘hope’ is its name! In these times of change and perhaps of mutation¹, in these times where a new awareness² is coming to birth, in these times when we want to leave behind us the horrors of the XX century, this name is perhaps the most adequate. This is why the words from the first letter of Peter resonate so much in us today:

“Always have your answer ready (apología) for people who ask you the reason (logos) for the hope that you all have” (1 Peter 3:15).

In order that the mission can configure itself as hope we must ask ourselves the following questions:

- What avenues for approaching this theme we find in the Church?
- What is hope for we, European contemporaries?
- What can we hope for within the context of the memory of Auschwitz?
- What horizons of hope open themselves for our lay society?

I. AVENUES FOR APPROACHING THIS THEME

The avenues for approaching this theme are numerous. The Church has shown in various ways – during these last years – its interest for the theme of “Hope”. We can remind ourselves of some of these:

- Seven years ago (on the 28th of June 2003) Pope John-Paul II signed the apostolic exhortation “Ecclesia in Europa”, which had as its central theme “Jesus Christ, living in his Church and source of hope for Europe”³.
- A little later (the 15th of October 2003) Pope John-Paul II signed another apostolic exhortation “Pastores Gregis” on the bishop, servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for hope in the world. Here the affirmation is that it is the task of the bishop “to be prophet, witness and servant of hope” (PG, n. 3).
- In 2004 Religious Life in the world was celebrated by a congress in Rome which showed itself to be very sensitive towards the theme of hope⁴.
- In 2007 the Union of Superiors General dedicated its assembly (from the 6th to the 10th of May) to the theme: “Called to weave together a new spirituality from which hope and life emerges for humanity”.
- Pope Benedict XVI published on the 30th of November 2007 his second encyclical “Spe Salvi” on Christian hope⁵.
- The world political climate is also marked by a nostalgia of hope⁶

¹ Cf. GEORGES CHARPAK Y ROLAND OMNÈS, *Sed sabios, convertíos en profetas*, Anagrama,, Barcelona 2005.

² Cf. Euldad Carbonell, *El nacimiento de una nueva conciencia*, Ara Libres, Barcelona 2007; Louann Brizendine, *El cerebro femenino*, RBA Libros, Barcelona 2006. The definition that De Vires (1901) gives to *mutation* was all hereditary modification of hereditary material which cannot be explained by segregation or recombination. Mutation is the primary source of genetic variation in populations while recombination creates combinations from what has been generated by mutation, and is the secondary source of genetic variation.

³ It begins with a double affirmation: that Jesus Christ is our hope (chap. 1) and that the Gospel of hope has been entrusted to the Church (chap. 2). The task of the Church in Europe is then to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of Hope (chap.3,4,5). It ends by offering the keys of the Gospel of Hope for a new Europe (chap. 6). But more surprising was the fact that the Pope took as a guide for his exhortation “the icon of the Apocalypse” (EiE, 5).

⁴ One of the most important texts of the *Instrumento Laboris* said “We can see how there is beginning to emerge - even though in the midst of great fragilities - a new face of the Church because they are in the process of spreading out examples and experiences of fraternal communities who are in solidarity, prayerful and courageous, persevering in the good and vigilant in compassion, who dare to take initiatives and happy in hope” (IL, 71).

⁵ It begins with a wide reflection-meditation on Hope (Spe Salvi (=SS), n°4-31). Then it develops an interesting proposition on the places of learning and exercising hope (SS, nn. 32-48).

⁶ Is it not strange that Barack Obama entitled the speech that made him famous at a national level “the audacity of hope”. Hope then transformed itself into the central theme of his political discourse. “Hope; hope in face of difficulty. Hope in face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope! This is the greatest gift that God can give us, the cement of this nation. To believe in what cannot be seen. To believe in a better future awaiting us”: *Discourse of Barack Obama to the democrat national convention in 2004*. And he added: “I believe we can help the middle class to give opportunities to families of workers. I believe we can give work to the unemployed, houses to the homeless and in the towns of America pull back youth from violence and hopelessness. I believe that a just wind is pushing us and that at this crossroad of history we can choose well and attack the challenges

Faced with these calls, this Assembly has taken up the challenge of reflecting on “Histories of hope, hope for history” and has entrusted to me the theme of “Hope as mission in our European context”.

It is interesting to underline this dynamic way of understanding hope suggested by the title of my talk “Hope as mission”. Hope shines forth and is contagious. It is mission and transmission. It is perhaps the best name of the mission in times such as ours, in societies such as ours.

I am proposing to develop these themes in existential terms, in dialogue with our culture, in the context of this Europe which is pursuing its process of reorganisation. Therefore I am dividing my talk into three parts:

- the European context as a space where hope is an object of debates,
- apocalyptic spirituality and Christian hope, as the foundation of mission,
- the characteristics of mission in terms of hope.

II. PROFILES OF HOPE IN OUR TIMES (THE THINKERS)

There are various ways of thinking of hope in Europe: 1) hope as an illusion, 2) hope in progress in spite of the victims 3) hope starting from the despair of victims and 4) the proposal of a rational utopia or the “principle of hope”.

1. To free oneself from the snares of hope!

André Comte-Sponville employed the expression “the desperation of Wellbeing”⁷ to show that hope and wellbeing are incompatible.

People hope because they want to be happy. The desire for wellbeing releases all the mechanisms for hope. However, when our desires are fulfilled it happens that after a short time of pleasure we enter again into a situation of dissatisfaction and weariness. Nothing can satisfy our desires in an adequate way. André Comte-Sponville finds confirmation for his argument with authors such as Schopenhauer who defines weariness as “the absence of wellbeing in the place where its presence had been hoped for” or who says “life swings like a pendulum from suffering to weariness”⁸; or again with George Bernard Shaw according to whom “there are two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one ardently desires and the other is obtaining it”.

To hope, this is to desire without pleasure, to desire without knowing what will happen (“this is a lack of knowledge” -Spinoza-), to desire without power because what I hope for does not depend on me (“this is the powerlessness of the soul” -Spinoza-). For the philosophical theories of fatalism or of determinism, or of destiny, there is no place for hope: “What will be will be”. Therefore philosophy does not find itself in a comfortable position when it touches on the theme of hope.

Comte-Sponville uses the expression “the snares of hope” to describe this situation. Hope promises what it is unable to give and because of this it is always deceived. To free themselves from these snares, human beings seek for three kinds of solutions: superficiality, rigidity, knowledge.

- *The superficial solution* is very practical: it consists in *passing rapidly from one desire to another*, from one short pleasure to the seeking for another, to pass from hope to hope.
- *The drastic solution* is a minority one: deception in face of the reality of this world leads to a looking with disdain on all that is here and hoping only in that which does not deceive: eternal

awaiting us”: cf. MANUEL CASTELLS, *Comunicación y poder*, Alianza editorial, Madrid, 2009, pp. 473-528.

⁶ Cf. Eulda Carbonell, *El nacimiento de una nueva conciencia*, Ara Libres, Barcelona 2007; Louann Brizendine, *El cerebro femenino*, RBA Libros, Barcelona 2006. The definition that De Vires (1901) gives to *mutation* was all hereditary modification of hereditary material which cannot be explained by segregation or recombination. Mutation is the primary source of genetic variation in populations while recombination creates combinations from what has been generated by mutation, and is the secondary source of genetic variation.

⁷ Cf. ANDRÉ COMTE-SPONVILLE, *La Felicidad desesperadamente*, Paidó, Barcelona 2001 (in French: *Le Bonheur, désespérément*, Pleins Feux, Nantes 2000).

⁸ Cf. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, *El Hastio, en El mundo como voluntad y representación*, [Weariness, in the world as will and representation] Libro 4º&57, Akal, Madrid 2005; ID., *Eudemonología o el arte de ser feliz en 50 reglas para la vida*, Herder, Barcelona 2007.

life; an example of this attitude is in Pascal who says: "there is no good in this life only the hope of another".

- The "enlightened" solution is that which belongs to postmodern thought and finds a good representative with Comte-Sponville. Here is the solution he proposes: to by-pass this circuit of hope and disappointment. If all hope disappoints, the most reasonable is to free oneself even from this hope: "the only one who is happy is the one who renounces all hope" – declares Sponville. Wellbeing surprises us through the little pleasures of life ("wellbeing in action"). To hope is to desire without knowing, without ability and without enjoyment, the pleasures allowing us to desire the same things from which we take pleasure, to desire that which we know and to desire that which we have. Hope is a desire which refers itself to what is not yet a reality; on the contrary love refers itself to the real. For this only the lack of desire is never deceived. That is the wisdom of hopelessness.

If the argument of Comte-Sponville is shared by many people - always increasing! -, it is because there is a deficient vision of reality, because we have not yet gone beyond determinism or fatalism. What are the new ways towards hope today, without any kind of trap?⁹

2. The madness of Auschwitz: progress in spite of the victims

If hope is illusory, according to Comte-Sponville, hopelessness and despair are real. There are many histories of hopelessness in the global history of humanity. We transport ten thousand years of wars and killings. The great religions – starting from the moral principles of their sacred books – have not impeded the unleashing of violence which has put an end to hope. During the XX century Europe has been a place of violence, wars with the absolutism of death. They have not been able to resolve conflicts through dialogue, welcoming difference, but only through the most atrocious violence: millions of victims were the result of two world wars; so that there was no hope.

Auschwitz is, perhaps, the apocalyptic symbol without compare, of the barbarity which consisted in the extermination of Jews by the Nazis. Violence went beyond the worst prognosis. We spoke of "concentration camps" and "extermination camps" made their appearance; there was a passing from crimes against the person to "crimes against humanity". Never had the wickedness of the human being gone so far.

But it is not a question now of recalling the past, but of detecting what context of despair persists in a latent or insidious way in some manifestations of horror which break out from time to time.

Numerous thinkers of our times have stressed the fact that the symbol of "Auschwitz" could repeat itself. It will be thus – they tell us – if the *form of conceptual thought*¹⁰ which justified these crimes, does not change. The question is very serious. These thinkers tell us that the root of this violence is to be found in the form of thought which we have inherited in the West: our concepts reducing plurality to unity, the multiple to one; interesting ourselves only in the essential, to what is primary and we leave aside that which is an accessory and secondary. The conceptual thought led Thales de Milet to exclaim to himself: "all is water!"; and Democritus: "all is fire"; and to Nazism: "all is race!". Universalist philosophies knew a violent time when their pretended essential truth transformed itself into the murder of other truths¹¹. Levinas said that, according to him, idealism is "an ideology of war"¹².

The fact that European thought gives very little importance to the singular means that there is no interest in the concrete human being and the preoccupation is with the transcendental and abstract

⁹ Cf. FRANCESCO ALBERONI, *La Speranza*, Rizzoli, Milano 2001; Ricardo Blázquez, *La esperanza en Dios no defrauda*, BAC, Madrid, 2004, pp. XI-XXIII. 3-25.

¹⁰ Thus calls into relief the German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, four years before the Nazis won the elections and thirteen years before Hitler decreed "the final solution": cf. F. ROSENZWEIG, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol I: *Briefe und Tagebücher*, E. Rosenzweig – Schianmann, La Haya, 1979; ID., *La estrella de la redención*, Sígueme, Salamanca, 1997.

¹¹ Cf. AMIN MAALOUF, *Identidades asesinas*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1998 (in French: *Les identités meurtrières*, Grasset, Paris, 1998).

¹² Cf. REYES MATE, *La herencia del olvido. Ensayos en torno a la razón compasiva*, Errata Naturae, Madrid 2008, pp. 111-131; cf. EMMANUEL LÉVINAS, *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, 1990.

subject: humanity, “man”. Idealism and Marxism giving such importance to the triumphal march of history, to the growth of progress, admiring easily what this could have cost humanly speaking taking into account - as the least bad – with its bodies, its ruins and the deterioration of nature¹³; Hegel expresses it with this phrase: “some small flowers trampled on the edge of the path”.

3. Compassionate reason: to think of marginalisation in a new way

The universalist pretension of reason collapses when we discover the importance of what was considered as secondary or as an accessory, when a voice is given to the vanquished, to the victims of the history of Europe (as much in Christian Europe – victims in Latin America – as the Europe of Enlightenment – victims of Nazism). Jewish philosophers ask us to change this conceptual mentality in order to think of marginalisation in a new way, the marginalisation often imposed with contempt.¹⁴ We cannot remain indifferent before a crime in the name of the general well-being. This indifference will not prevent us from repeating the crime in the future. Oppression and progress can be converted into the two faces of the same medal. How can this lethal logic be interrupted? By evaluating the partial success of progress starting from the destiny of those who are systematically oppressed!¹⁵ The power of fascism does dwell as such in its planetary political domination but in the interiorisation of its logic, that is to say in the accepted consensus in our culture that the price to pay is inevitable.

What happened at Auschwitz must never be just a memory of barbarity which is never repeated again. Theodor Adorno demands that this be converted into a categorical imperative which calls for redirecting our thought and our action¹⁶. This is why the aspiration of a humanity without confrontations, without wars and killings is always stronger. We are convinced that violence must not be a necessary factor for evolving.

The Church, and in a special way religious life, have supported this change of mentality which allows for looking at reality from the side of those who are the least, the excluded, the victims. Therefore the basic question presenting itself to us is “is there hope for these least, for the victims?”

Even though this seems paradoxical, the experience of despair is the key for discovering hope, because when all is obscurity it is enough to have a small light in order to give birth to hope. We live because we hope. There is hope there where there is the possibility of overcoming evil. To think of hope in starting from despair is wise and real. Only those who have known days of despair can appreciate hope. And it is only to these who risk themselves and prepare to face up to all kinds of difficulty that what they hope for can become reality.

Hope is born as an *intuition*. It deploys an inner movement in us which leads us to a relationship of

¹³ Cf. Walter Benjamin in his argument 9: “there is a picture of Klee entitled *Angelus Novus*. It represents an angel who seems to distance itself from the object of its gaze. Its eyes are wide-open, its mouth open, its wings spread. Such is the aspect which the angel of history must take up. It has its face turned to the past. Where there appears before us a series of events, it sees but one and unique catastrophe, which does not cease to pile ruin upon ruin and throw them at its feet. It wants to hang back, awaken the dead and gather together the vanquished. But from paradise there blows a storm which catches its wings, so strongly that the angel can no longer close them. This storm pushes it ceaselessly towards the future, to which it turns its back, while up to heaven, ruins accumulate. This storm is what we call progress, WALTER BENJAMIN, “*Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos*”, Editorial Contrahistorias, México (in English: *Thesis on the philosophy of history*).

¹⁴ Hermann Cohen, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Emmanuel Levinas.

¹⁵ Cf. WALTER BENJAMIN, thesis 7: “Whoever, up to this day, will have born the victory, will be part of the great triumphal procession passing above those strewn over the ground. The spoils exposed like the just in this procession, in the name of the cultural heritage of humanity. This heritage will find in the person of the materialistic historian a somewhat distant expert. He, while dreaming of the source of this heritage, cannot prevent himself from a shiver. Since all this is due not only to the work of geniuses and great researchers, but also to the obscure servitude of their fellow creatures. All this does not witness to culture without at the same time witnessing to barbarity. This barbarity is also detected by the way in which, throughout the ages, this heritage falls from the hands of a conqueror into those of another. The materialistic historian will then be more inclined to detach himself. He tries to smooth down in another way the too shiny covering of history.”: WALTER BENJAMIN, *Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos*, Editorial Contrahistorias, México [*Thesis on the philosophy of history*].

¹⁶ TH. ADORNO, *Gesammelte Schriften* 6 (1970-1986), Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 358.

trust with the world. This intuition makes us desire, supports our desires, presents us with a luminous and desirable future. Hope pacifies our heart, calms our anxieties and makes the present possible to support in spite of the way it presents itself.

4. "The principle of hope"

Ernst Bloch starts his book "The principle of Hope" with these questions: who am I? Where do I come from? Where are we going? What do we hope for? Who hopes in us?"¹⁷. These are the fundamental questions of the human being, of our identity, our origin, our finality, our hope.

Bloch looks at the human being overwhelmed by *fear* and anxiety. Only hope overcomes fear. Fear is passive, hope is active. Fear narrows down vital space. Hope gives breadth. The human being needs to learn the art of hope. The future contains that which is fear and that which is hope. The one aspiring to something lives directed towards the future. It is not thus in societies in decline, or in those of middle class persuasion for whom all change is impossible. This bourgeois principle kills all hope.

Bloch wants to pass by the *static thought* which bases itself on influence and which is incapable of grasping the future. It desires to pass by the *historic thought* which understands progress as repetition of the same, "a citadel of fatality (Leibniz); to know, is to remember. It is a thought without appetite, without desire. Bloch leads the philosophy to the space of hope, that he calls the unexplored continent. Here arises the *docta spe*. The *utopic thought* directs all movements of freedom. We must direct our thought "in terram utopicam", towards the mutation of the world. The passion for change has come and again mobilises hope.

Hope emerges in our *dreams*. There is no human being who does not dream. There are *night dreams* and *day dreams*. Night dreams send us back to the past. Day dreams open us up to the path of hope. It becomes necessary to intensify the day dreams¹⁸. The day dreams invade us from all sides. Life is criss-crossed by all these dreams, by dreams of a better life than the preceding one. Dissatisfaction is a part of hope. The desire of what is not yet, of that which is not yet in awareness, of that which has not yet come and which has no name, it is the transcendent. There are many utopias in the day dreams of humanity: not only political utopias, but also medical, social, technical, architectural and geographical utopias, regions of desire traced by painting and literature, hopes for health, the fundamentals of a society without misery. It concerns dreaming of a life beyond work or the illusion of laziness or sabbatical rest.

The visions of hope want to overcome the barrier of death and destiny. We have literary figures which go beyond all barriers: Don Juan, Ulysses, Faust, Don Quixote; music; visions of hope against death; the dreams of religion struggling against death and destiny.

The presence of the Kingdom of God in the midst of us is the source inspiring all our dreams with open eyes. If there is the Kingdom there is the Creator Spirit, there is inspiration and art, there is creative capacity. If there is the Kingdom there is another perspective than that of the immediate present on the first page as a reality where Evil is always the winner.

If it is good to rejoice at a desire fulfilled, the dream of expectation, which anticipates that which will come, also possesses a magnificent beauty, possesses the taste of wellbeing. The vision of a happy, just, free or redeemed world gives energy to the present, gives significance to the struggle and the way.

We will then see that contrasts exist in the way of conceiving hope in Europe. We cannot proclaim the Gospel of Hope without dialogue with these ways of thinking of hope.

III. A NEW HORIZON, A NEW AWARENESS (SCIENTISTS, POLITICIANS)

New horizons for thinking of hope in this new century open up in spite of a gloomy diagnosis¹⁹. One of

¹⁷ Cf. ERNST BLOCH, *El principio Esperanza*, 3 vol., Biblioteca Filosófica, Aguilar, Madrid, 1977:vol 1, p. XI.

¹⁸ He speaks of *night dreams* -thus translated by Freud also!- born from the past. On the contrary, *day dreams*, with open eyes, look to the future. There are open-eyed dreams that are pure evasion and which avoid the confrontation with reality. But there are others where the imagination is the instrument of the thought and the projects.

¹⁹ Cf. AMIN MAALOUF, *El desajuste del mundo. Cuando nuestras civilizaciones se agotan*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2009 (in French: *Le Dérèglement du monde, quand nos civilisation s'épuisent*, Grasset, Paris, 2009).

the most obvious phenomena of our times – starting from the XXI century – is the attention paid to the human species and to our planet. There is a remarkable interest for scientific facts which speak to us of genes, genomes, expressions and progress of life; but also for facts which speak to us – in new terms – of thought, of artificial intelligence, of the genetic genius of the human being, of the planet, of species. In the midst of us it is in the process of imposing a growing awareness of the “human species”, a planetary awareness. Our dialogue of life does not only spread out to men and women of other cultures, of other religions, of other generations, but also to other species.

1. The challenge of the double movement: towards the global and the local

It is not easy to define what we are in the process of living. Dynamisms which are fiercely in opposition mobilise us both exteriorly and interiorly. I call them the “movement towards correlation” and “movement towards difference”.

- In humanity there is a *movement towards correlation*, proximity, solidarity: this movement aims at going beyond the confrontations of the past – with its weight of violence, imperialism, destructive capabilities. Today humanity wants to be more welcoming, more inter-cultural and inter-religious. It gives preference to dialogue, negotiation, reciprocal agreement, setting up alliances. It is to this movement that the phenomenon of globalisation, of planetary awareness and the new awareness of species responds. However, this movement does not succeed in thwarting all the negative charge of so many confrontations, blockages and spaces of a culture of death which in spite of everything, appear among us.
- At the same time there is in humanity a *movement towards difference*: groups and individuals defend their identity, rejecting the fact of seeing themselves absorbed into these globalising movements which do not take them into account or eliminate them. Thanks to this movement there is going on in humanity an admirable biodiversity, more than 2,000 different cultures, multiple languages, religions and different life styles. To this movement corresponds the phenomena of the local or national protection of space, of the environment, of religion, of the cultural minority, of language. But bears also the danger of producing much stronger ruptures in humanity and impeding the construction of this “common house” which we all desire for our planet.

To succeed the dream of a plural humanity which is in peace, reconciled and just, is the utopia that we carry in our blood but which is constantly held up and threatened by human selfishness and ancestral practices of confrontations and violence from which we do not succeed in freeing ourselves.

2. The fourth expansion of awareness

Human awareness has travelled a long evolutionary itinerary that we can call the four expansions of awareness:

- The *first expansion* took place when individuals got together with other individuals to form a tribe and from here came the tribal identity.
- The *second expansion* was when individuals got together with abstract groups of individuals in a *nation-state*; resulting in a national identity.
- The *third expansion* was when very different groups of peoples and nations got together. From here emerged the trans-national, international identity.
- The *fourth expansion* will come when our awareness will become planetary.

We are then in the process of moving towards the fourth expansion of awareness: a new vision into which are integrated human beings, animals and the environment, that is to say, the global ecology of our planet. This fourth expansion of awareness becomes possible thanks to new virtues such as hospitality towards the other and to others, compassion towards all kinds of manifestations of life, humanity against all forms of slavery, the awareness of equality in face of all kinds of despotism, shared prosperity and reciprocal respect for the dignity of the person and life.

This fourth expansion of awareness reveals to us that there is no reason for a human being to be the enemy of another human being: we are “national” beings with frontiers, wars and weapons. We have

given ourselves an artificial identity which is not real²⁰. Our identity is planetary, global. We are world citizens.

The fourth expansion of awareness leads us to the planetary dimension, the system which balances and integrates all. We are led also to exclude from the planet weapons and their manufacture, to put an end to a world bank at the service of individual profits and set up another which has the concern of responding to the basic needs of the human beings of the planet. The present model of “does not increase wealth, it channels it towards the rich and transforms millionaires into billionaires” (Joel Hirschhor); its consequences are inequality, poverty, war, destruction (rape, plunder, exploitation of planetary resources) and despair.

The fourth expansion of awareness advocates the integration of all and not a homogenisation. The planetary model tries to articulate the difference and build a humanity which is in solidarity and balanced in a dynamic way²¹. Against the single, uniform thought it proposes the alternative of a single integrating thought. This planetary view calls us to learn to integrate diversity in a critical way. It is only in this way that we will be able to put an end to violence of the species.

A horizon of hope opens up here for humanity. But first of all we must respond in an adequate way. It concerns an immediate mission, an imperative one that cannot be ignored.

3. Another world, is it possible? Anti-apocalyptic visions

The slogans proliferate which in one way or another say that things must change. The movement “another world is possible” is very strong in our times. The only question is: of what possibility are we speaking of? I draw attention to the fact that a great scepticism exists in relation to the apocalyptic vision and the one imposing itself more is that of the anti-apocalyptic.

Anti-apocalyptic is the *theory of Fukuyama on the “end of history”*: this end does not imply any redemption, does not consist in realisation of the past. The end of history consists uniquely in the proclamation that there is nothing new to hope for. It is the enthronement of the liberal State as the definitive figure of politics²².

Anti-apocalyptic is also the *theory of progress*: here there is always time, asymptotic time which realises nothing that it promises, if only to displace it.

Anti-apocalyptic is also *Gnosticism*: “the gnostic describes the journey of the soul for redemption but by a means through which time stops”. Gnosis occupies itself only with the soul and is not interested in the world. Gnosis makes the apocalyptic existential and as a consequence demonises it. When salvation is heard as inner salvation, then the result is that what is important is to save the human being and not the world. In all these theories the vision of the world is that of an unchanging reality: we renounce its negation as its full realisation.

On the other hand, particular to the apocalyptic is to affirm that “another world is possible”. The apocalyptic takes into account the end of the world as the fulfilment of all that we hope for, aim and anticipate. This expectation enriches interpersonal relationships starting from love of neighbour and affects the world.

The apocalyptic looks on the present world with a certain indifference and contempt. It denounces its vanity and recognises that it is incapable of realising, by itself and from its own logic, what its creatures aspire to. In face of the apocalyptic outlook death seems as an injustice, a deprivation. This indifference and this nihilistic outlook on the present world come to birth when one takes the end into account and tries to anticipate it. That is to say, if we judge the present from the point of view of redemption. This

²⁰ Those who have organised the world have done so for their own growth, to feed their greed, their ambition and their profit. These powerful people have become insensitive to the cries of the earth and of the human beings dwelling on it. The emperors, drunk with power, play their harps while the world falls into ruin: cf. EUDALD CARBONELL, *El nacimiento de una nueva conciencia*, Ara Llibres, Badalona, 2007, pp. 70-72.

²¹ Cf. E. CARBONELL, *o.c.*, pp. 70.71.

²² F. Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el ultimo hombre*, Planeta, Barcelona, 1992 Id., *The end of History and the last man*, The free Press, New York 1992. Cf. Josep M. Esquirol, *La frivolidad política del fin de la historia*, Colección Esprit, Caparrós Editores, Madrid 1998.

point of view allows us to see the present, its dissatisfactions and its frustrations, as “groanings while waiting its full realisation” and not as a fateful misfortune.

The profane order tends towards resignation. The messianic order revolutionises not as a passive expectation of something big which will happen but as a present demand of something which will be given us.

In this first part we have been able to approach to the intellectual European context, which invites us to avoid being naïve when we envisage the mission of hope. We see the complexity that the term “hope” has in itself for our contemporaries. They ask themselves if hope is not a “trap” or a source of dissatisfaction. Others ask whether hope is really “for all”, if there is hope for the victims. There are those who envisage the theme of hope from the capacity of the human being to dream, to go beyond their own thoughts, for transcendence, even in the most adverse circumstances. The result is also that the awareness of the human being is in the process of deep modification, to the point that some speak of a new awareness, a new stage of human awareness which opens to us horizons of hope, of justice, of peace, attention to creation. This is why we say with strong conviction that “another world is possible”.

SECOND PART: SPIRITUALITY: THE APOCALYPTIC, SOUL OF THE MISSION

The big contribution of Christianity to humanity resides effectively in the transmission of the Gospel of Hope. Our faith in the God of history transforms itself in hope: “the faith I love best is hope” (Charles Péguy). There where apparently there is no reason to hope, if not to despair, there where it seems that all is condemned and it is just a question of watching the time pass, there, Christian hope lights up.

I. THE HOPE OF CHRISTIANS

1. Christian hope and the understanding of history

The great protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann took up the challenge posed by the work of Ernst Bloch “The Hope Principle” and wrote his magnificent work “Theology of Hope”²³. It starts from the conviction that “in its integrality, and not just as an appendix, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, outlook and direction towards the future, it is by itself openness and transformation of the present. Eschatology is the centre of Christian faith, the sure note on all that harmonises in it”²⁴.

Christian hope builds itself on the Christian understanding of history which is different from other understandings²⁵. For us history has a redemption. It carries within it the seed of fullness which allows us to dream with the ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God.

Our hope is born from faith. We know that God, our Father, established a new indelible and definitive Covenant with the world. The world and its future are in the hands of God. He will never break the Covenant which links him and obliges him with regard to humanity. Jesus came to ratify this definitive Covenant at the cost of his blood shed and his body given over. The Covenant is the foundation of our hope.

There are two texts in the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans which express in a magnificent way the content of our hope, Rom 5:1-5 and Rom 8:18-28:

“Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God’s glory. But that is not all that we can boast about; we can boast about our sufferings.

²³ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *Teología de la esperanza*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1968. [in English : Theology of Hope]

²⁴ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *Teología de la esperanza*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1968, p. 20.

²⁵ The *classical or cyclical conception* of the history of Ancient Greece: a ceaseless repetition of cycles with no culminating point. The *hindu conception* of the *human reincarnation*: the existence of the human spirit stretches before and after present life. The *spiral conception* of history: “repetitions happen but always with a difference”; we don’t know the direction of the spiral. The *modern evolutionary conception* is the belief in infinite progress. The *revolutionary or catastrophic conception*: history will end in a violent and destructive way. Finally, the *existentialist conception*: history as a succession of events without significance.

These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us". (Rom 5:1-5)

"I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory as yet unrevealed which is waiting for us. The whole creation is eagerly awaiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed like us from its slavery to decadence to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning to now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free. For we must be content to hope that we shall be saved – our salvation is not in sight, we should not have to be hoping for it if it were – but as I say, we must hope to be saved since we are not saved yet – it is something we must wait for with patience. The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God. We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:18-28)

The two texts have several elements in common:

- The fidelity of God to the Covenant: "we are in peace with God", "he has given us access to the world of Grace", "the love of God has been poured into our hearts", "the glory of the children of God", "God does all to contribute to their good".
- The "hope of the manifestation of the glory of God". It is a hope which we, human beings, share with the whole of creation. The glory of God will show itself as redemption, liberation, salvation. In this hope is revealed the aspiration of the Holy Spirit and his intercession in our favour.

2. From the cross to light

The path of hope passes by the cross. Before this the Church exclaims: "Ave Crux, spes unica"! But the cross, death, are a step towards the resurrection. Jesus was not the unique risen one but the first one. For the Christian faith resurrection is a collective event. Faith in the resurrection is founded on the covenant of God with human beings which has no expiry date and does not end with death.

Faith in the collective resurrection shows that the covenant of the love of God with us does not end and, as Jesus said – our God is a God of the living and not of the dead (Matt 22,32). Christian hope has its centre of radiation in faith in the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was the beginning and the promise of what is to come.

The Church is, starting from the perspective of hope, an anxious community, which comes up against society with its assurances, its imperatives and its absolutes, but which also collaborates with it and discovers its admirable creative capacities, the presence of a dreamed future.

This hope animates the whole Church, as the historic version of its faith. This hope is that which inspires consecrated life. In a special way it feeds the renunciation of biological fruitfulness, to have children. Religious celibacy is not contempt with regard to the chain of human life, but hope, an exaggerated symbol of hope in life. We renounce the biological fruitfulness of having children because our hope is centred on new life. Christian and religious celibacy is not contempt with regard to the terrestrial world but hope, sometimes excessively prophetic, in eternal life. To take care of hope is the same as taking care of our faith in the resurrection.

II. THE APOCALYPTIC PERSPECTIVE

On certain occasions Christian hope converts itself into "apocalyptic hope". The Apocalypse is the ultimate and definitive revelation of God, it is the last word which gives full significance to Christian existence, when it is the most threatened. In the Apocalypse we are given the keys for interpreting history in the light of the victory – already realised – of the immolated and risen Lamb (EiE, 5).

Pope John-Paul II invited us to proclaim to Europe the Gospel of hope, following as a guide the book

of the Apocalypse “the prophetic revelation” which unveils to the believing community the hidden and deep significance of events (cfr. Rev 1: 1).

1. The horizon of the book of the Apocalypse (the Revelation)

The Apocalypse starts and ends with a beatitude²⁶: it asks us that we listen and keep the words of the book in order to obtain a blessing in difficult times.

This is what the apocalyptic seer sees:

- The mysterious meaning of history (*seven seals*);
- The official proclamation (*seven trumpets*) of the rout of the Dragon, the appearance of the Ark of the Covenant, the victory of God over evil and the coming of the Kingdom of God (*three symbols*: the woman, the dragon and the two beasts);
- The great event of justice in favour of victims (*seven cups*) which defends the innocent of history, compensation of great injustices;
- The upheaval in face of what the Spirit says to the Christian community in discovering the keys of its evil and the promises for healing and salvation (*seven letters*).

The book of the Apocalypse is the *narrative of the great battle* that God alone commits against his enemies: his powerful arm commands, acts and conquers his adversaries. Allies of God are the earth and its natural phenomena, those who follow the Lamb – armed with praise and a new canticle. The protagonism of the battle falls totally to the immolated Lamb, who rides the white horse, or the Lion of Judah, and to the Spirit at work everywhere. We can say with the traditional expressions in this way: to the Church it has been given to take part in the “*missio Dei*”. She tries to be pure and transparent, the powerful arm of God, letting itself be carried along by the impulsion of the Spirit, making sacramental the action of Jesus in the world.

The enemies of the mission of which God is the player (“*missio Dei*”) are the Dragon²⁷ and the two Beasts, with the prostituted City - symbol of sin and the oppression of Babylon -. The *first beast* is political, economic power which directs the destinies of people, according to the postulates of Evil; at the time of the New Testament this could be identified with the imperial and murderous power of Rome. Today it is not so clear: it is the power of war, of injustice, of terror, of corruption, of pornography. The *second beast* is the propaganda which uses the first Beast in order to impose itself. There is a whole system of worship for the first beast which imposes itself everywhere. Propaganda wants to take the power of evil right to the depth of human hearts; it has an extraordinary power of contamination. The result of the power of the Beasts is a perverse civilisation, a Prostituted City, which travels towards its total perdition according to the Apocalypse.

It concerns three symbols that must be interpreted at every time. They are the symbols of the empire of evil. Satan symbolises a mysterious force which leads astray to evil, seducing and perverting people. Paul called this mysterious force “*hamartía*” or sin in the singular (Rom 5). No one can explain from where it comes, or how it acts. But it is present where evil comes about.

Apocalyptic spirituality confronts the believer with the powers of Evil. It is a call to a certain “*fuga mundi*”, or flight from the prostituted city and from all the domains of power of the Dragon. The apocalyptic throws its *nihilist gaze* on the *statu quo* of the world and also of the Church; it revolts and there is struggle.

The seven letters to the Churches show in what measure we, Christians, must struggle in order to eliminate the presence of Evil in us: to repent, purification, no compromise with evil, to find first love again, etc. As well as this apocalyptic spirituality is combative towards the exterior. The believer is invited not to follow the sign of the Beast and this implies social marginalisation; to never enter into solidarity with the wicked and not to adore the idols that are eternally put before us. The believer must bear

²⁶ “Happy the man who reads this prophecy and retains it, because the Time is close” (Rev 1:3). “Then he said to me: “These words are sure and true; the Lord God who gives the spirit to the prophets has sent his angel to reveal to his servants what is soon to take place. Very soon now I shall be with you again! Happy are those who treasure the prophetic message of this book” (Rev 22:6-7).

²⁷ The Dragon is the former serpent of Genesis, Satan.

witness even at the cost of shedding blood. Apocalyptic spirituality is then a spirituality of martyrdom.

In this perspective consecrated or religious life acquires all its reason for existing. It is a way of living “apocalyptically”: it is a particular way of exploiting the Covenant with the Trinitarian God in opposition face on to idolatrous covenants. The evangelical counsels teach religious to live in Covenant with the unique God and to reject all kinds of covenants with the gods of money, sex or power.

To live apocalyptically is, for consecrated life, a form of martyrdom without the shedding of blood, a permanent witnessing of Jesus. Consecrated life finds consolation in the strength and transcendence which are its characteristics.

2. A history of apocalyptic hope in Auschwitz: Etty Hillesum

The book of the Apocalypse is the key for understanding what happened in this symbol of despair and hope which was Auschwitz.

The apocalyptic dragon and his beasts did not want to leave a trace. Forgetting was part of his plan of extermination. They wanted to wipe out all traces of the horror but they did not succeed; there remain testimonies and in some cases, witnesses: Elie Wiesel was one of the survivors of the terror. He has committed his whole life in order that memories are not lost. The central question of all his work was: *“If it happens that the witnesses cannot transmit their message and if their words remain in the void?”*. Wiesel will draw attention to the horrors of history so that never again will humanity contemplate such aberrations which give rise to intolerance, racism and fanaticism. He has been recognised as a “messenger of humanity”²⁸.

This memory comes to life when we speak of a history of hope against all hope. I refer to the testimony written by one of the victims of the Dragon and his beasts: the young Dutch lay woman Etty Hillesum, born in 1914 and killed in the extermination camps of Auschwitz the 30th of November 1943²⁹. She has left us her written testimony³⁰.

She said, a short time before being led to the extermination camp:

“It is necessary that someone survives in order to witness that God is alive even in times such as ours. Why should I not be that witness?”

She succeeded in seeing in the Nazi project not only a fatal destiny but a *kairós*, an opportunity for grace. Seeing that faith in God grew in the midst of this horror, she asked herself:

“Is it not almost ungodly to believe in God with such an intensity in a time such as ours” (2nd of July 1942).

In the midst of the genocide Etty discovered God and kept up a very intimate dialogue with Him, and at the same time intensified her love for a “special” man. She recognised the wickedness³¹ and at the same time she organised resistance by being the “thinking heart of the barracks”. She trained her heart in order to concentrate on an inner survival³². She discovered that such deep human experiences were able to “give light to new organs, unknown to reason, with which one faced the most hopeless

²⁸ Cf. RACHEL KOESTLER GRACK, *Élie Wiesel: Witness for humanity*, Gareth Stevens Publishing, Pleasantville, 2009.

²⁹ In 1943, together with her father, her mother and Misha, one of her two brothers, and 938 other people they were put on a train taking them directly to Poland. She died in Auschwitz on the 30th November 1943. Her other brother, Jaap, who had survived died while returning to Holland. From her we have her diary - written between March 1941 and October 1942 - and a series of letters published at the beginning of the 80's.

³⁰ Cf. ETTY HILLESUM, *Une vie bouleversée*, Seuil, Paris, 1985 (in Spanish: *Diario. Una vida conmocionada*, Anthropos, Barcelona, 2007); ID., *El corazón pensante de los barracones. Cartas*, Anthropos, Barcelona, 2001.

³¹ “Little by little the surface of the earth will be nothing but a huge camp and no one or almost no one will remain outside”. “The whole of Europe is in the process of turning into an enormous concentration camp. All Europe will have in common the same kind of bitter experience. It would be too dreary to sum up the facts, to make allusion only to dispersed families, to goods and freedoms ransacked. And as the wire fencing and daily round don't offer much in the way of interesting stories for people outside, I ask myself how many people would stay outside the camps if history continues in the way it is going”: ETTY HILLESUM, *El corazón pensante de los barracones. Cartas*, Anthropos, Barcelona 2001, pp. 47-48

³² E. HILLESUM, *Diario. Una vida conmocionada*, Anthropos, Barcelona, 2007, p. 139.

situations.”³³

Etty was aware that fascism claimed to settle its accounts with God himself by abandoning the human being. The challenge is then: “God must be saved in order to save man!”:

“If God stops helping me (and everything seems to show that God had abandoned them), it will be for me to help God...it is not you who can help us but we can help you and in doing this we help ourselves”³⁴.

We speak much of the weakness of God in the camp. Even Paul Celan in his famous poem “Tenebrae” (verse 3^a) dares to ask God to address us in prayer, in praying to us so that we be saved:

“Ora, Señor (Pray Lord) (Bete Herr)

Óranos, Pray for us (Bete zu uns)

estamos cerca” (we are close) (wir sind nah)

To the prayer that God addresses to us we can respond by offering him salvation. We can help him by saving the divine that is in us, by saving his presence in us!

“I want to help you my God, to not extinguish yourself in me, but I can guarantee nothing in advance. It is for us to help you and to defend right to the end your dwelling in us. I will have many with you soon, thus stopping you from running away from me”

Etty Hillesum speaks of the weakness of God which is why “it is necessary to help”. But in what consists this help? It means abandoning childish images of a God who assumes the right to do everything, depriving the human being of responsibility. She places the accent on the realisation of this “divine” thing which is in each human being. The realisation of justice is impossible without man claiming it but it is not his business. It is God’s business.

Here is a heart which is apocalyptic in a special way. Here is how hope comes forth from an unforeseeable grace in the midst of horror!³⁵. Elie Wiesel condensed his apocalyptic experience fifty years after the horror, in the following terms:

“Auschwitz must remain and will remain uniquely as an interrogation: it cannot be conceived with God and neither without God. There was a time when I started to ask myself if I was not unjust with you. After all, Auschwitz did not descend from heaven as something ready-made. It was conceived by men and carried out by men. Its objective was not only to destroy us but to destroy You too. Should we not also think of your pain? To see your son suffer at the hands of other sons? Does this not also cause you suffering?”.

This apocalyptic radical history of hope of Etty Hillesum reflects the presence of God in a world which rejects God. In this time which is ours, where so many people are losing the link with God, especially among the new generations, a “mystical” religious life becomes necessary, able to touch the mystery and to transmit it; an audacious religious life in order to enter into the dark zones and there have the experience of the light of faith. The spiritual crises that religious life goes through must not be considered as the “great threat” to its persistence, but the great “kairós” in order to recuperate the instinct of “hope”.

3. Repercussion of apocalyptic sensitivity in religious life of today

The apocalyptic is not a collapsed human being, depressed, hopeless. He has before his eyes all the horrors of history, but inserted into a wide horizon, an almost total one, where one discovers what is the end of the wicked ones and that good has its final reward; the apocalyptic also desires to anticipate the end and make of memory a force for transformation. Apocalyptic spirituality is a promise which consoles,

³³...I think, perhaps in a childish way, that if this earth transforms itself into a more habitable space it will only be through love, the love of which Paul the Jew speaks in chapter 13 of the first letter to the Corinthians”: E. HILLESUM, *Una vida conmocionada*, Anthropos, Barcelona, 2001, p. 61.

³⁴ E. HILLESUM, *Una vida conmocionada*, Anthropos, Barcelona, 2001, p.169.

³⁵ “He had no name neither hope or future, he was only known by its number, A70713”. This first night, the column formed by the deported passed by a ditch from which came “gigantic flames”. Something was burning there. A lorry approached the ditch and unloaded its contents: “It was little children”...Yes, I saw them with my own eyes, I saw them... (Is it surprising that since then sleep fled from my eyes?)” ELIE WIESEL, *La noche*, El Aleph Editores, 2002.

a horizon which goes beyond anxieties, a victorious path towards utopia. No one can impede the accomplishment of the Promises of God. Nothing and no one can oppose the saving coming of God. Apocalyptic spirituality is therefore a spirituality of Praise, of Adoration. It is composed of blessings and beatitudes.

The trust of apocalyptic sight enlightens the whole of life. It knows that the new Jerusalem is coming down; that God will dry the tears from eyes; that Christ is coming to establish his Kingdom and that he has – He and his angels – immense power for catching and paralysing the power of evil. In apocalyptic spirituality there is no place for distrust in the future and in God. This is why the apocalyptic does not trust too much in human strengths. Its convictions lead it to exclaim: “May your Kingdom come to us! May Your will be done! Come Lord Jesus! Come Holy Spirit! He knows very well that help comes to us from the Lord.

That which is appearing in our times is not foreign to the facts symbolised in the book of the Apocalypse. In the Church and in religious life internal messianic movements are coming to birth, the importance of which is not to be underestimated:

- Movements of *spiritual radicalism* – normally accused of fundamentalists and reactionaries – which shows itself as in intensification of the life of prayer, penance, opposition to the consumer, hedonistic and libertarian society;
- Movements of *radical liberationism*, which has led many religious to adopt an alternative life style, characterised by a commitment, right up to death, with the poorest, their cause and struggles for liberation;
- Movements of *protest or contestation “creative” and “through dialogue”* which discover the seeds of the new Jerusalem in this world, which values dialogue, meeting, the strength of love and truth, which includes spirituality as a meeting which heals and energises; which unites itself to movements of people towards the Kingdom of God. This will be the movement which corresponds to the fourth expansion of awareness.

What certain groups do should energise the whole Church. The Church is and must be the great messianic and apocalyptic movement in history. A Church without messianic strength is not the Church of Jesus Christ.

It becomes necessary to recover apocalyptic spirituality in order to realise the mission of hope which is reappearing to us today in Europe. From the beginning of the XXI century religious should carry out a “lectio divina” of the whole book of the Apocalypse; in community and not just individually; it should be interpreted and put into its context in order to discover reasons for hope in these times.

Also I would like to say that when apocalyptic fire will be lit up in religious life, this latter:

- will find its place in the “Mission of the Spirit”,
- will let itself be led by the imagination of charity,
- will situate itself in the new frontiers of the four cardinal points of the earth;
- will acquire the “angelic” style of the great messengers of God, to whom it was entrusted to put history in its place as a history of salvation and not as a diabolical history;
- will be a witness of real Hope and will give a testimony “without fear of death”.

Apocalyptic spirituality is then – in these times – the soul of the mission.

III. THE HOPE OF RELIGIOUS: KEYS FOR LEARNING

I would like to say that the vow we need most at the beginning of this century, is the vow of hope. This does not mean that another should be added to the classical trio of the three vows, but that we must transform the three vows into an expression of Hope. “Perfecta Spes” could be the motto for a document on consecrated life for this new century. Hope is the central virtue for all those who want to live in the new world of the Kingdom of God. This hope roots itself in the trust in all the possibilities life offers to us, under the attention and the providence of our God.

Hope is trust in the possibility that all can be transformed to good. During the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Suenens was challenged by a journalist: “What – in your opinion - is the major obstacle to

evangelisation met with by the Church today?”. He replied: "The lack of faith, among Christians, in what they truly are by the grace of God". Hope is a gift. It is our responsibility to welcome and cultivate this gift. Here are the keys in order to configure our life from the starting point of hope.

1. Creative courage and decision, as response to the gift

Hope is not to be confused with optimism. We are optimists by genetic heredity or by education. But we can be educated to a style of life which is open to hope. We can learn the art of setting aside all that depresses us or makes us distrustful. It is in our own hands to educate ourselves by always looking ahead, of not letting ourselves be afraid in face of difficulties, of not hanging back before a difficulty. Stories of hope stimulate this. Pope Benedict XVI proposes several of these stories to us in his encyclical “Spe Salvi”: the Canossian religious Josephine Bakhita, the Vietnamese cardinal Nguyen van Thuan or the Vietnamese martyr Leo-Bao-Thin (1857), who wrote “a letter from hell”.

We must admire people who, thanks to their desire to live, go beyond the most difficult bodily trials, including fatal illnesses. The capacity to hope is indispensable in order to keep up in a profession, research, art. Hope, because it is antagonistic to despair, knows evil and can confront it with lucidity and courage.

The discouragement which seizes us sometimes must not have the last word. It could be a moment to stop which allows us to reflect, to correct the errors, to centre ourselves on what is essential. But then, it is necessary to hand ourselves over again to hope. Then comes into play our creative capability. Obstacles stimulate it. We have within us unsuspected resources. The God of the Kingdom is within us. The person who recaptures hope is like an artist of life: of that which apparently does not exist, it causes a new and beautiful reality to emerge which offers meaning and reasons for living for those who contemplate it.

2. Not only to let ourselves be led by hope, but “to be” hope

Hope does not define itself only by its exterior content - what we hope for - but also by the consistency of the subject who hopes. What I am and as I make of myself, a person who hopes or despairs, who dreams or who is disappointed, utopian or settled down. In the strength of soul is found the subjective root of hope. Thus hope is “*gratia gratum faciens*” (the grace one has making them grateful).

Francesco Alberoni in his work on Hope indicates a whole series of virtues belonging to hope³⁶. I transmit them for those who wish to contemplate the precious panorama which opens up to those who want to work on hope in truth. I limit myself only to some virtues which seem to me to be fundamental in maintaining this gift alive.

- The first virtue of the one who lets himself or herself be led by hope is *enthusiasm*. The enthusiast sets out, in faith, feels an uplifting strength, which makes he or she seek for what is of value, that which is beyond the usual and the ordinary. It is an impulsion towards the future, trusting in his or her own possibilities. Enthusiasm makes us convincing. Cynism is the opposite of enthusiasm. The cynic lives only in the present, closed in on their own selfishness, their own laziness, and neither believes or hopes in anything because he or she lacks fantasy and generosity. There are cynics everywhere who threaten the enthusiasm of others, especially those who are younger and who arrive full of faith and values. These grim people fear the innovations which put their position of power in crisis. This is why they wound, humiliate, extinguish those who carry new potentialities. Therefore they destroy a precious human and social richness.
- The second virtue of hope is - according to Alberoni - even if it seems paradoxical, *remorse*. This arises in us like a bad dream, a mortifying reminder of what we have done which was bad. Remorse condemns us but also modifies the present when it arises. It offers us new keys of morality. It prepares a future which is pure. Without morality there is no future. Remorse assures the morality of hope. The domain of morality or ethics always extends further: it is the individual, communitarian, collective, political, social, ecological, planetary, transcendent ethics.

³⁶ Cf. FRANCESCO ALBERONI, *La speranza*, Rizzoli, Milano 2001, pp. 73-104.

- The third is pity: it is the virtue of compassion in relation to the suffering of the weak. Pity is the opposite of rivalry or of jealousy or political hatred. Pity makes us feel a bit more alone when someone dies. Pity is the spontaneous force which impels us to make the life of others better, to make the world better for all. Pity is also compassion, proximity, hospitality.
- The fourth is *humility*: it opens pathways of hope that places us in a right place before the world, before others, before ourselves, before God who made himself humble, who had need of all, finds himself in all. In the totality he finds his fullness and not in self-worship. Intellectual, spiritual, loving humility opens us to horizons of hope.

Someone told me, with reason, that today religious are not so much recognised by their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience but more by the virtues which prove that they are men and women of the Covenant.

3. Hope for all

The surrounding individualism cannot close off the horizon of hope. The Gospel is characterised by its proposals of Catholic hope, hope for all. The promise of Salvation, the new Covenant is destined for "all". This is why Christian hope is collective. It is hope for humanity and hope for the earth.

People called to exercise leadership of human communities must not forget this imperative task of offering messages of hope for all. It is the same for those who exercise the service and the leadership of authority in our religious Institutes! Pallid collective states, states of division and confrontation, of generalised criticism, kill hope. When the leader is not able to let hope be reborn, he should leave and give the place to another who is able to re-found hope within a certain group of the church.

The time when collective hope shines the most brightly is at the time of foundation. In this there is an eruption of life. All is reborn together. There is no doubt that the event of the Second Vatican Council brought to birth a collective hope of great power!

The art of hope consists in maintaining the rhythm of waiting. That which is promised and is in a state of germination does not happen at once. It is decisive to regulate the waiting for communities. Those who let themselves be led by impatience can produce monstrous and bloody situations. Good leaders know how to measure out hope.

In order to survive hope needs an institutionalisation. In these institutions hope survives, is active. The specificity of institutionalisation is to be proud of one's own hope, of giving it a future to its own life in such a way as to break the chains of monotony. In the processes of re-organisation that our institutes are in the process of carrying out now, are there mediations which institutionalise hope?

In this second part we have been confronted with Christian hope and, in a special way, we have highlighted the eschatological dimension of the Christian message and of ecclesial communities. The apocalyptic gives us important keys for interpreting the present moment and to situate ourselves decidedly on the side of hope.

The apocalyptic is above all a spirituality of the Covenant with God which conquers evil and routs the dragon and the beasts who want to dominate the world. The apocalyptic will give rebirth to our spirituality. It invites us to use it as a key for new virtues and to learn of it in new contexts.

PART THREE: SERVICE – THE GOSPEL OF HOPE

In these times of deep changes, society needs someone to tell it new stories which have hope in them. We religious can tell these alternative stories, capable of letting us dream. We already know the old stories of money, power and sex. We can tell the story of the Kingdom, the story of Jesus as a new human being.

It is told that when Alexander the Great left Greece to conquer Asia, he left all his patrimony to his friends. Perdicca asked him: "Have you kept something for yourself?" Alexander answered him: "Yes, hope!". Then, Perdicca renouncing the part left to him exclaimed: "So, we who are going with you to fight by your side, let us share this hope".

Mission is service, an apocalyptic struggle. We accompany the Spirit of our Master. This is the consecrated life: the following of Jesus in the Holy Spirit, to struggle with Jesus so that the Kingdom of God comes.

Therefore we ask ourselves, how to bring about the task of transmitting hope in our European context? How to make hope our true mission?

I. DIMENSIONS OF THE MISSION

I think that in these post-conciliar times one of the most important changes going on concerns precisely the domain of "mission". Mission is not work, or apostolate (such as understood by "apostolic works"). Mission does not identify itself first of all by what we do, but rather with that in which we mysteriously collaborate. This is why today we speak of "missio Dei", of "missio inter gentes", of shared mission. And religious life is especially sensitive to all this.

1. "Missio Dei"

Mission is our entire reason as religious. Mission does not confuse itself with the activities we carry out with our charismatic zeal, or with the work that we have going on. The mission to which we refer ourselves consists in the grace granted to us of sharing the "missio Dei". We know and we feel ourselves to be participants in the mission of the Holy Spirit -sent by the Father and the Son- to renew the earth and to lead to the fulfilment of the work of creation and redemption.

In this context the mission reveals itself as this mysterious presence of the Spirit of God who guides the eco-evolutionary process of humanity towards a new future which is more human and less hominidae.

God maintains his Covenant with this humanity and with planet earth and does not want its destruction. The Holy Spirit moves the process of planetary humanisation with its breath.

The affirmation of the primacy of our God is fundamental in our understanding of the mission. However, if our God is the first, he is not in isolation. From the time of creation he has wanted to share the mission with us. God the Creator has created his creators. Creation transforms itself also, in a moment, in a sending on mission, a task entrusted to all human beings without exception. But not only to humanity; in some way we must confess that the whole evolutive process functions from a creative and missionary sending forth. So, step by step is accomplished the stages of a mission inherent of the cosmos. With the human being this mission becomes awareness, cordial and responsible.

All human beings are responsible for the mission received from the Creator, as a responsibility for the propagation of the species, of the education of new generations, of the organisation and structure of societies. This is why God has sent to humanity the gift of fathers and mothers, educators and politicians without making any exception in people because of their beliefs, religious or cultural. The evolutionary process of nature and the human species responds to the mission received from the Creator.

The mission has also a "redemptive" or "liberating" aspect. The mysterious presence of evil has broken covenants, deformed and destroyed life, deteriorated the planet. However, in nature and in history there are redemptive, therapeutic and liberating movements. The great liberation arrived when

the Son of God incarnated himself through the work of the Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It introduced into humanity a redemptive principle which links us again to the sources of Life and to the Creator. The forces of Evil have no future. Little by little redemption takes on the most unhealthy and dying zones humanity in order to care for, heal and give a future. This missionary strength which comes from God meets the collaboration of those who have as their main preoccupation the liberation of the human being in the political, psychological, spiritual, physical or biological domain and by exorcising evil wherever it is met.

A particular aspect of the mission of redemption is its “apocalyptic” dimension carried forward by those who are apocalyptic watchmen, by those who, in the midst of the most miserable, threatening and poor situations of the world, proclaim the consolation of God and discover the new heaven and the new earth. They carry out the prophecy of resistance. They oppose themselves decidedly to the Beast and its masks. They are decidedly in favour of the new Jerusalem. They are prophets of hope.

The mission of the Spirit incarnates itself in each one of the charismatic tasks that the different groups and individuals carry out in the world and in the Church. In them there is manifested the creativity of the Spirit and how it leads all reality towards its fulfilment in the Kingdom of God. Particularly sensitive to this mission are religious communities who discover, day after day, the missionary challenges which they are ready to take up.

Reference to common and shared aspects of the mission must not allow us to forget the importance of the whole of humanity in the “Christian” ministerial dimension within the shared mission. This consists in that which it has been given to us to know of the “mysteries of the Kingdom” (Mk 4:10-11)³⁷. The gift of revelation makes the disciples of Jesus blessed because this has allowed them to interpret reality from a more complete aspect, because it has been given to them to open the book of the seven seals, of the interpretation of all that happens (Lk 10: 23-24)³⁸.

To we, Christians, it has been revealed to us that the mission is not ours but that it is shared with our God himself. It has been revealed to us that all has been created in Jesus Christ, that the Spirit of God fills the earth, that we have nothing that we have not received (1 Cor 4:7). This revelation does not invalidate the mission carried out by millions of people who did so without knowing it, since at the last judgement the king will also call them blessed³⁹.

Then human beings will understand the meaning of their service. Christians understand this during their life. From this comes the urgency to transmit and propagate revelation, to which all human being has a right. It is the “good news” that the whole world is waiting and hoping for. To evangelise, this is then to proclaim to the world the meaning of all that we are, live and do. To evangelise is then the first duty of the Church.

Each group in the Church participates in the mission of the world and the Church in a special way. The Holy Spirit acts through a Congregation and its communities in an admirable way. It is then of radical importance that institutes of consecrated life do not only programme their mission, which is quite normal, but discover towards where the Spirit is calling them so as to be true instruments of the Spirit for the mission.

2. The Mission “inter gentes”

It therefore becomes necessary to recover a model of mission which is not so much attached to helping others, which today can often be perceived as a presumptuous and superior attitude, but it concerns being together with others, supporting them, being sponsors at the birth of a new human being. From the “missio ad gentes” or “contra gentes” to the “missio inter gentes”.

³⁷ “When he went apart those around him with the Twelve questioned on the parables. And he told them: “The mysteries of the Kingdom of God have been revealed to you; but to those outside all comes through parables”.

³⁸ «Happy the eyes which have seen what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings have wanted to see what you have seen and have not, to hear what you have heard and have not heard”

³⁹ “I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink...”. Surprised they said to him: when did we see you hungry and we fed you, thirsty and we gave you to drink? He will tell them: Whenever you did what you have done to the least of my brothers and sisters you did it to me...”

The mission here is not understood first of all as “missio ad gentes”: a mission which consists in giving to others what we have: the light, faith, moral teachings, hope which is lacking... Each day we are more aware of what the mission must be in our times, above all “missio inter gentes”: it is the mission of dialogue, of inter-action, of Inter-activity. The mission understood in this way is a context where we all grow together and together we experience redemption, the grace of salvation. The burning question of the mission is not in the content of the message but in the credibility of our witness, in our capacity for inter-relations and hospitality with regard to those who are different, of what the Spirit causes to arise in the context of dialogues in life.

3. To proclaim Jesus Christ, our Hope

We must not minimise the importance of religious communication and its influence in the taking of decisions as citizens. What influences our citizens most is not only the content of the message; we stress more and more the role of the emotional content. Basic emotions such as enthusiasm or fear influence the taking of decisions. That which provokes enthusiasm mobilises. That which relates to fear introduces uncertainty and paralyses.

Our society is thirsty for covenants, above all the great Covenant with God. We are – and it is thus we should appear – as a small realisation of the community of the new and definitive Covenant. We are then the spokespeople of Jesus and of his Gospel. This is why we celebrate the sacraments of his presence and covenant. This is why we want to prolong his messianic and liberating acts. This is why we welcome suffering, the cross overcoming all hopelessness because we believe in the Promises of God.

Religious life in Europe cannot be content on seeing in how many places in Europe the Gospel is forgotten and not proclaimed in many places, an unexplored territory. It is necessary to reorganise our strengths for a new phase of evangelising mission. We must go beyond all kinds of frontiers. The Gospel of Hope is becoming very necessary.

II. THE MISSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN A PROGRAMME OF MISSION-HOPE FOR EUROPE

1. Towards a different world

It is possible to create a different world when we act on the cultural codes which control the spirit, if not the institutions of society reproduce their norms and disciplines. In order to bring about social change in a network society it is necessary to re-programme the networks of communication which make up the symbolical environment.

“To create a new content and new forms in the networks which link together the spirits and their communicative environment amounts to re-linking our spirits”⁴⁰.

“The greater the autonomy of communicating subjects the greater the relation to the controllers of the centres of social communication, the greater will be the possibility for introducing messages which question dominant values and interests in the networks of communication”⁴¹.

When we truly believe in the possible transformation and improvement of the human being, we discover the importance our implication has in the educational process. The space of culture, of education (the European Educational Space) is the big stage offered to us today. Not just to religious, but above all to the Church with all its forms of life. But we religious should forge ahead, finding places, going beyond frontiers.

When hope determines our mission:

- We collaborate with those movements which offer the possibility of creating a different world, other different churches, a different religious life, distinct from the reproduction of the norms and practices incorporated into the institutions of society;
- We leave more place for questions than for answers;
- We discover the need to act on cultural codes which control our spirit and which impede a new vision, a new awareness;

⁴⁰ M. CASTELLS, *Comunicación y poder*, Alianza editorial, Madrid 2009, p.531.

⁴¹ M. CASTELLS, *o.c.*, p- 531.

- We bring new information, new practices, new participants in the political, ecclesial and religious system ; we defend that the now is not inevitable;
- We contribute to the modification of existing relationships of power and introduce new sources for taking decisions.

Society which is the one receiving hope as mission is a network society. In order that hope supports and transforms it, it is necessary to re-programme the network of communication which constitutes its symbolic environment: it is necessary to create a new content and new forms in these networks which connect the spirits with their communicative environment. This is the equivalent of re-linking our spirits. When we start to feel or to think in a different way, by acquiring new significance and rules for understanding them, then we are acting in a different way and this will lead us to change the way society functions⁴².

The mission of hope must introduce messages which question the dominant values and the interests reigning in society, the Church or religious life.

2. The praxis of the species

In our world awareness is growing of the human species. Not only do we contemplate ourselves as history but also as pre-history. We ask ourselves what is in the process of happening to the species. We discover in the midst of us a new expansion of awareness. The laws of the atom and the universe make us understand ourselves in a different way. We are in the process of approaching an awareness of a world citizenship. In this context we want to “see” what the mission will be in these times.

How to bring about humanisation?

- In gathering together the diversity which has arisen during the last 2.5 million years of evolution,
- synthesising the information that different societies, ethnic groups and cultures have accumulated over the years of experience which has allowed them to survive.

It is time now to set in motion, in action *the praxis of the species*. We need a new social practice. Never has the human being had at their disposal such a great potential or power to transform themselves, or a power for destruction such as today in full scientific and technical evolution.

Words and writing are not enough. It is necessary to build. This is done with hands and head, of experiences, of attempts and errors, of patience and perseverance, above all by believing in the project.

The XXI century came with great possibilities for planetary transformation:

- The development of knowledge and its application
- with some horizons of bio-cultural transformation at its disposal in an unprecedented way.

Until just a short time ago it was thought that ethics concerned only the human domain in its personal and social dimension. But in reality, scientific advances are in the process of obliging the human being to include in its *ethical obligations* many other aspects which had not been taken into account up until now, amongst other things, all that concerns the biosphere.

3. Towards a new ethical praxis

There are three main fields which seem to demand special attention on the part of ethical reflection:

- *In the social domain*, the phenomenon of globalisation which imposes on us a new world ethic which regulates and establishes a dialogue between cultures and religions;
- *In the domain of biology and genetics* (identification of the human genome, assisted fertilisation, genetic engineering), a new way of confronting ethical questions imposes itself on us (bioethics), a field full of huge difficulties and dangerous consequences while at the same time with splendid realisations full of promise;
- *In the ecological domain*, phenomena such as over-population, the advances of the techno-industry and the progressive deterioration of the environment, have led us to discover the possibility that the progressive and strong impact of our species on the planet where we live, can lead to consequences which are so deadly that they can include the disappearance of our species

⁴² Manuel Castells, *Comunicación y poder*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2009, p. 531.

and even the whole planet. This presumes a new domain of responsibility of which we were not aware some decades ago; a responsibility which does not spread just to the contemporary human generation but above all for future generations.

We are in the process of arriving at what we could call a humanism which leads us much further than simply anthropology towards a trans-anthropocentric humanism. We are recognising that our planet will soon be an urban reality, a “global village”, a “common house”. This is why we use the terms of “oikos” or “oikia”: ecology, economy, ecumenism and also of city, politics, civilisation or civilisations.

4. The importance of the educative mission: towards a new model

Humanity will enter into this period of mutation for which it was not prepared. We do not feel prepared either. It is not easy to exercise the art of educating in a world in mutation for which society is not yet prepared. But we are discovering that our most important task consists in establishing serious processes of education and to contribute to the appearance of generations of free men and women, able to understand by themselves, the universe surrounding them and its significance⁴³ and able to support by their life the “spirit of the times”. Education is an art and not a science. No social question is more essential than that of education.

The space of world education is like a big laboratory for mission, where the Church experiments and verifies the validity of its propositions for all domains and dimensions of its mission; where it discovers what models of mission are useful for the society of today and those which are obsolete and out of date. To situate the mission in a context of respect of lay institutions and of dialogue with them leads us to purify our ideas and proposals and to renounce fundamentalist, dogmatic or presumptuous attitudes.

The *educative mission* is one of the most serious of the dimensions and fields of the evangelising mission of the Church. In it we are in the process of operating our social importance, our capacity to influence the process of structural transformation and improvement both locally and worldwide, our contribution to the emergence of a new society which is more just, more peaceful, more in solidarity and more ecological. In the educative mission the Church must invest a big part of its wisdom, its prophetic heritage and its best spiritual and human resources.

The educative mission becomes more passionate and creative when important changes are coming about in human society. This is what is happening to humanity now. This is why the educative task today is particularly passionate and complex. It demands a lot of lucidity and wisdom.

To educate is “neither to teach or to clone. It is something else: it is to grow in relationships and together confront the challenges of collective life”⁴⁴. José Luis Corzo pursues this in asking: With what verbs are we in the process of educating? With intransitive ones! Live, grow, increase, leave, arise, flourish, fructify, enter into contact..... reply. And he continues by saying that we educate together. No one person educates any one person. In this new action there remains the possibility of the intervention of the other. From this comes the need to take care of the place, the people, the circumstances and even educative methods. This ends with the protagonism of the educator. This intransitive action is not direct action (cause-effect) of decanting from the one who educates to the one being educated. It is an ecological relationship⁴⁵.

Teachers and educators are the mystagogues who introduce into this new phase of the history of humanity and to the maïeutics which help to give birth to the “new human being” we all have within.

The Church discovers that to take part in this educative process of humanity belongs to its most intimate essence; it feels itself called to this. Since the Second Vatican Council a new mentality has introduced itself among us: the mission as dialogue, as insertion in the processes which are coming about, as incarnation in the reality, as accompaniment, enlightenment, proximity.

Consecrated life, by its belonging to international and inter-continental communities, bears within it a more catholic and world vision than that which is offered by local, provincial or national Churches. Its

⁴³ GEORGES CHARPAK Y ROLAND OMNÈS, *Sed sabios, convertíos en profetas*, Anagrama, Barcelona 2005, p.12

⁴⁴ Cf. JOSÉ LUIS CORZO, *Educación es otra cosa, Manual alternativo*, ed. Popular, Madrid 2007

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-120.

wisdom can very clearly help ecclesial communities to discover their world outlook and open out without fear to new perspectives.

The Church recognises its educative mission now as a new areopagus, as an ecumenical place and of dialogue where it meets with science, technology, and the opportunity to bring its enlightenment, its experience of revelation, its wisdom.

To educate to a world citizenship has much to do with education for peace, to dialogue, to interculturality and inter-religious dialogue; much to do with the ethics of hospitality, much to do with the Kingdom of God - according to our revelation.

5. Consecrated life in a “mission of hope”

Consecrated life should exercise its citizenship of the new Jerusalem which descends to earth. The particular characteristics of our form of life, such as the evangelical charisms, should be interpreted and lived in terms of a new citizenship marked by the interests of the species.

The educative spaces are a *microclimate* which makes possible the learning and exercise of the new citizenship. As you can appreciate, the educative mission presents itself in our times as a big project hitherto unknown which places itself at the sources of a new society which is in the process of emerging.

- To recover enthusiasm and the creative and innovative capacity
- *Evangelica testificatio*: it is our task to make visible the “*missio Dei*”: make it seen that the protagonism of the mission and of evolution belong to the Holy Spirit and to the Risen Jesus. *Evangelica Testificatio* signifies that we want to be the transparency of the Lord in the midst of this passionate task of the emergence of a new citizenship.
- Small minority “in a shared mission”.
- “*Vision*” to *rediscover the Mission*: in a time which is characterised by its change of paradigm, and perhaps time of anthropological mutation, it is decisive to have a new vision. To have a vision is not the same thing as having ideas, as proposing sublime objectives. To have vision is to sense where things are going, to visualise a kind of model of the future which has to be built, discovered so that dreams could become reality. To have vision does not belong to just anyone, but to visionaries, to those to whom it has been given to “see”, to “sense” the future. This is very important in the domain of missionary projects. Only vision will give foundation and reason for the mission. Blind guides lead to the abyss and to chaos, undertaking a journey that leads to nowhere.

This holy temple, this dwelling of God in the Spirit, this is not only the Church. It is “*sacramentum mundi*”, a new world awareness, revelation. This holy temple, dwelling of God, is the humanity, the new city which is in the process of being built. There is a new citizenship which in this time of change, of mutation, comes as a gift from heaven. It is the city of Justice, of Peace and of attention to Creation. It is the citizenship of inter-relations, of communion of differences, of dialogue and reconciliation. It is the city of Love where hearts learn the art of loving and for our species explicitly the expansion of its new awareness.

CONCLUSION: BEFORE MARY OF CZESTOCHOWA

Histories of hope, hope for history. Here is the call. To begin histories of Hope in Europe. These histories of hope begin as little community stories, a different educative activity, a new form of evangelising through beauty and feeling.

A Church open to hope in the complexity of our times is the best news we could have. We can open ourselves to emerging situations, to new enthusiasms, setting out towards utopia. It is only necessary to let ourselves be penetrated by grace and open the doors to hope. The images of a Church which hopes, in communion of hope, is the face God wants for it at this time. Religious, especially Europeans, should not miss this opportunity of a propitious time. We can and we must revive our hope and proclaim, as the old prophets of the Nativity, that something new has come to us.

Let us call on Mary, our mother, in the Salve with these words: “Spes nostra, salve”. Her whole history was a history of hope. Even her body transformed itself into a land of hope from which came the blessed fruit of her womb. But even more than her body, also her spirit, her heart, her intelligence, experienced the tension of hope. Jesus himself with his person and his mission placed Mary – once again – in a state of hope. He prepared her for a new maternity which revealed itself on the cross: mother of the beloved disciple. Mary of Czestochowa is the symbol of this maternity which has not yet ended. Mary, who is the Church in a permanent state of Hope, is our Hope. Our hope is born from “de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria virgine”. Communion with Mary allows us to share histories, many histories of hope and to open new chapters there.

Sisters and brothers who represent European religious life, animate your communities with a new missionary creativity. I will name it with these words from the exhortation “*novo Millennio ineunte*”, of John Paul II, “the imagination of hope”. Amen.

HOPE AS MISSION IN OUR EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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CONCLUSION: BEFORE MARY OF CZESTOCHOWA