

Conference of European Commissions *Iustitia et pax*

Belgrade, 26-30 September 2008

ROUND TABLE
Saturday, 27 September 2008

Excellencies and Eminences
brothers in clergy,
brothers and sisters monks/friars and nuns,
ladies and gentlemen,
dear friends,

Here we are again after the strenuous research during the day. I welcome you most cordially once again (*in particular ...*). The joy of encounter – especially when we discuss fundamental existential matters – is always great. However, it is also demanding in terms of contents. Every authentic encounter usually seeks a specific deep transformation of all participants. Perhaps, in the family of mankind, no one else is so much qualified for that process of transformation as are precisely the peoples of the Churches and religious communities. Aware that general truth, general objectiveness and reality are beyond us and above us, we are experiencing that process of transformation as a **process of liberation** and as a **process of accomplishment of the goals of life** which is – full unity.

1. Our own anthropological, historical and theological experience confirms that seeking and finding of peace and conciliation **is possible**, that it is **necessary** and even **indispensable**. In a great many individual historical cases conciliation has been one and unique way for leaving behind the dark of **earlier enslavement** and for entering the world of new possibilities and opportunities. Entrance into the world of new possibilities is at the same time entrance into the world of greater creation and, accordingly, of higher responsibility and stronger cooperation.

2. The Catholic Church in Serbia is – sociologically speaking – a minority Church. However, precisely from the sociological point of view, it is very experienced because in this region it has been either historically present or in permanent contact with the majority nation, primarily through highly diverse national minorities. Those national minorities, with the richness of their respective cultures, united with their parent countries, and above all in unity of the universal Church can give, *inter alia*, an extraordinary theoretical and practical contribution.

3. I believe that for all of us are important the most elementary life experiences, such as:

a) **One who seeks a solution for a whole will find a solution for himself;**

one who seeks a **way of coexistence** and, thereby, a way of peace and conciliation for all nations in the region will also find a way for himself. Only if (I am speaking in alphabetical order) the Albanians, the Croats and the Serbs – as well as all others

- will be seeking the right solution for all, they will find it for themselves. One who wishes to find a solution for himself only, will not find it either for himself or for others. In a transparent global solution all particularities will be able to flourish.
- b) Future belongs to the one who is the **first to show initiative**, who makes the first step, who is the first to offer a solution for all, who acts from authentic freedom rather than from stubbornness or spite.
 - c) A community (state or any other) wishing to take a route to peace and conciliation must be in itself devoted to truth, to historical and co-existential truth; it must be in itself united and undivided. It must not be simultaneously turned both to the visions of the past and to the visions of the future. Particularly dangerous is to have one thing written in official documents and to have unwritten tradition take a different route. Each and every civilizational schizophrenia must be overcome over and over again and organic and integral progressiveness has to be aspired for.
 - d) Achievement of organic and integral progressiveness needs something that largely exceeds the mere natural psychology and tradition.

No being, no community, no nation, no state can progress without permanent forgiveness and conciliation. Whether we wish to admit it or not, *mysterium iniquitatis* (mystery of iniquity) has been present in history. Nevertheless, that mystery of iniquity, which has caused countless wounds and deaths, does not have a final say. The final say in history has **forgiveness**: the forgiveness we give and which we receive.

There is no doubt that absolute sign and act and power of conciliation is the death of Jesus; in that death the Subject of conciliation broke with the strength of love through the wall of division; put aside the curtain of division and brought resurrection into graves. This secret represents also a unique crossroad of history; represents the paradox able to convert the entire and the most difficult problems into new circumstances; into conflicts and complementarities; able to transform the graves into strength of the most potent vital energy, and the past into the most dynamic future.

For each believer this paradox is the most fundamental canon of credence and, therefore, the greatest moral obligation.

4. The duty of the Churches and religious communities is to invest all their efforts in enlightening their believers in that spirit. And as precisely the Churches and religious communities are called upon to exist as light, as yeast, as salt, as a voice of prophet, their duty is to enable such enlightenment and sensibilization in an integral and continuous dialogue with the society as a whole (or with different societies) and with the protagonists of power, so as to make at least the majority part of the population able for making such decisions, i.e. for the process of peace and conciliation.

5. Accordingly, the protagonists of conciliation can be the persons who are mature and prophetic, having ethos and responsibility, who are dedicated to integral organic development (meaning the religious development as well), and ready to give their life for the community and not to seek personal benefits or momentary popularity. Authentic historical realism and authentic religious prophetism will necessarily capacitate the factors responsible in the society, in the Churches and in religious communities for finding the ways of conciliation.

I deeply trust that the time has come for the people of faith in our region to indicate and to point to the new signs of peace and conciliation.

Also, we - participants of this Round Table – would need to find the persons who would really and concretely identify and point to the ways of coexistence in everyday life among us.