



**Mr Herman Van Rompuy shares some personal thoughts at the Ecumenical Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Chapel for Europe
22.09.2021**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

It is a pleasure and an honour to be invited here for the 20th Anniversary of the Chapel, not “of” Europe, but the Chapel “for” Europe. The Chapel for all European Christians, actually for all Europeans of different religions and convictions.

It is a place and a space for reflection and meditation. A place of stillness, so far from what’s happening a few metres from here.

It has to be still if you want to reflect.

All great ideas, all pieces of art are born in stillness. It is also in stillness that you can make a distinction.

Our director is a Jesuit, so he knows this concept of distinction very well, made by St Ignatius of Loyola.

A distinction between what is important, for Europe and for us, and what is not important. What is meaningful and what is not meaningful. A distinction between good and bad. It is only by reflection and meditation than you can go to what really matters.

This is a place and a space also of unity. The word “unity” was some days ago in one of the letters of St Paul [in the lectionary of daily readings for the Church, ed.]. This means unity among us, among Christians, among people of different religions and convictions. Unity also among the 27 member states of the European Union and its 445 million Europeans.

You can reach unity only by cooperation, only by respecting each other, by listening to each other.

Unity is a fruit of dialogue. It is a result of conversation. Democracy is a conversation. If there is no conversation, there is no democracy. If there is no conversation, there is no unity.

And we badly need unity now, in our western world full of polarisations, full of enemy-thinking. That’s the opposite of respect and conversation. I am an enemy of enemy-thinking, and an enemy of polarisation.

This is a place and a space for prayer. Prayer is an act of love, as simple as that. You can not pray without this drive for love.

It is also a recognition of transcendency. God is a loving God, but God is also bigger than we are.

Praying is an act of humility, an act of modesty, also needed in these days, actually needed in every time, in a long history of mankind.

This Chapel is a place and a space of reflection and meditation, a symbol of unity, and a house of prayer. Let's continue this work. The caravan of the European Union continues. With 27, 28 [Member States, ed.] but I think, sooner or later with 30, or 35. As this caravan continues, the role of the Chapel is all the more important.

Let's continue this work. All those who founded it 20 years ago are still active here, whether as staff or as volunteers, and they are doing good work.

Europe is much more than a common market. Europe is much more than simply the European Council or the European Commission or the European Parliament. There is a dimension that Europe should not forget, otherwise Europe is not Europe anymore.

Your role is much more important than you think. Even if you are sometimes discouraged, or even desperate, let me say to you: continue this great work!

Thank you very much.