

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO LUXEMBOURG AND BELGIUM
Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
Meeting with the Authorities, Representatives of Civil Society
and the Diplomatic Corps
Luxembourg, Cercle Cité
26 September 2024

Your Royal Highnesses,
Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society,
Esteemed Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am pleased to make this visit to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and I thank Your Royal Highness and the Prime Minister most sincerely for the cordial expressions of welcome you have extended to me.

Because of its particular geographical location on the border of different linguistic and cultural areas, Luxembourg has frequently found itself at the crossroads of Europe's most significant historical events. Twice, in the first half of the last century, it had to endure invasion and the deprivation of its freedom and independence.

Since the end of the Second World War, your country has drawn upon its history and distinguished itself in its commitment to building a united and fraternal Europe in which each country, be it large or small, might have its own role, and where the divisions, quarrels and wars that have been caused by exaggerated forms of nationalism and pernicious ideologies may finally be left behind.

It must also be acknowledged that when the logic of confrontation and violent opposition prevails, the areas on the border between conflicting powers end up being heavily involved against their will. Yet when they finally rediscover the ways of wisdom, and opposition is replaced by cooperation, then those same areas on the border become best placed – and not merely symbolically – for identifying the needs of a new era of peace and the paths to follow.

Indeed, Luxembourg is no exception to this principle, for it was a founding member of the European Union and its predecessor Communities. It is likewise home to numerous European institutions, including the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Auditors and the European Investment Bank.

Moreover, the solid democratic structure of your country, which cherishes the dignity of the human person and the defence of fundamental freedoms, has been essential in allowing Luxembourg to play such a significant role in the continental context. Indeed, it is not the size of the territory nor the number of inhabitants that serve as indispensable conditions for a State to play an important part on the international stage, or for it to become an economic and financial nerve centre. Instead, it is the patient creation of wise institutions and laws, which, by

regulating the lives of citizens according to the criteria of fairness and respect for the rule of law, place the person and the common good at the centre, preventing and counteracting the dangers of discrimination and exclusion.

In this regard, the words spoken by Saint John Paul II on his Visit to Luxembourg in 1985 are still relevant: “Your country, at this important crossroads of cultures, remains faithful to its vocation to be a place of intense exchanges and cooperation between an ever increasing number of countries. I fervently hope that this desire for solidarity will increasingly unite national communities and extend to all the nations of the world, especially the poorest” (*Address at the Welcome Ceremony*, 15 May 1985). In making these affirmations my own, I especially renew my call for the establishment of fraternal relations between peoples, so that all may become participants and protagonists in an organized process of integral development.

The Church’s social doctrine highlights the characteristics of such progress and the ways for achieving it. For my part, I have been following the path of this teaching by expanding upon two major themes: care for creation and fraternity. Indeed, for development to be authentic and integral, we must not plunder or degrade our common home. Likewise, we must not abandon peoples or social groups on the margins. Let us not forget that having wealth includes responsibility. Thus, I ask for constant vigilance so that the most disadvantaged nations will not be neglected, and that they be helped to rise from their impoverished conditions. This is one way to ensure a decrease in the number of those forced to emigrate, often in inhumane and dangerous conditions. With its particular history, and its equally particular geographical location, with just under half of its inhabitants coming from other parts of Europe and the wider world, may Luxembourg be a help and an example in pointing the way forward in welcoming and integrating migrants and refugees.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the re-emergence, even on the European continent, of rifts and enmities that, instead of being resolved on the basis of mutual goodwill, negotiation and diplomatic efforts, are resulting in open hostilities, leading to destruction and death. It seems that the human heart does not always remember the past and periodically goes astray and returns to the tragic path of war. To heal this dangerous syndrome, which causes nations to become seriously ill and risks throwing them into exploits that bring with them immense human costs and further useless massacres, we need to raise our gaze upwards. We also need the daily lives of peoples and their leaders to be motivated by noble and profound spiritual values. This will prevent reason from succumbing to foolishness and our lapsing into making the same mistakes of the past, mistakes made even worse by the greater technological power that human beings now possess.

As the Successor of the Apostle Peter, and on behalf of the Church, which is an expert in humanity, I am here to testify that the Gospel is the life source and the ever fresh force of personal and social renewal. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone that is capable of profoundly transforming the human soul, making it capable of doing good even in the most difficult situations, of extinguishing hatred and reconciling parties engaged in conflict. May everyone, every man and woman, in full freedom, know the Gospel of Jesus, who has reconciled God and humanity in his Person, and who, knowing what is in the human heart, can heal its wounds.

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Luxembourg can show everyone the advantages of peace as opposed to the horrors of war, of the integration and promotion of migrants as opposed to their segregation, the benefits of cooperation between nations as opposed to the harmful consequences of hardening positions and the selfish and short-sighted or even violent pursuit of one's own interests.

Indeed, there is an urgent need for those in authority to engage resolutely and patiently in honest negotiations in order to resolve differences, together with a willingness to find honourable compromises, which undermine nothing and can instead build security and peace for all.

"Pour server", "To serve": this is the motto of my visit here and it refers directly to the mission of the Church, which Christ, the Lord who became a servant, sent into the world as the Father had sent him. Please also remember that for all of us this call "to serve" is the highest title of nobility, the principal task, the way of life to be followed each day. May God enable you always to serve with a joyful and generous heart.

May Mary *Mutter Jesu, Consolatrix Afflictorum, Patrona Civitatis et Patriae Luxemburgensis* watch over Luxembourg and the world and obtain from Jesus her Son peace and every good.

May God bless Luxembourg!