



PONTIFICIO COMITATO  
PER I CONGRESSI EUCHARISTICI INTERNAZIONALI

## 52° INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS IN BUDAPEST

*«All my springs are in you» (Sal 87:7)*

5-12 SEPTEMBER 2021

### *Report*

In the video message of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016, at the *Statio orbis* in Cebu, Pope Francis said: «*At the end of the Congress, I am happy to announce that the next International Eucharistic Congress will take place in 2020 in Budapest, Hungary*». Due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, the celebration, which had been initially scheduled from 13 to 20 September 2020, was postponed to the following year and took place, in a more serene epidemiological environment, from 5 to 12 September 2021.

The scenario of the Congress was Budapest, a great city of that part of Europe where the Christian faith seems to have exhausted its vital outburst. The Hungarian capital was not new to the experience of the Congress. Actually, in 1938, the 34<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress was celebrated in this city, where Pius XI was present as Cardinal Pacelli's Legate and would shortly thereafter be elected to the pontifical throne with the name of Pius XII. This happened on the eve of the Second World War while premonitions of the imminent catastrophe could already be perceived in Hungary.

At present, Hungary counts approximately 10 million and 200 thousand inhabitants. Among these, 55% are Catholic while the rest includes Agnostics, Calvinists (16%), Lutherans (3%) and Greek Orthodox (less than 1%). After the fall of the "Iron Curtain" and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1989, the various Hungarian Churches have increased their ecumenical collaboration, especially on social issues that challenge the country. Budapest, the capital, has about 1,700,000 inhabitants within a metropolitan area that gathers more than 3 million people. Its position in Central Eastern Europe and its history have helped to transform the city into a popular tourist destination, which is visited annually by more than five million tourists, without considering the current pandemic period. By immersing itself in the Hungarian reality and history, the International Eucharistic Congress has privileged the perspective of the new evangelization that involves the renewal of faith, the pastoral commitment of both catechetical and liturgical nature, the

sincere attention to charity in the social context, the education of mature lay people, a greater effort towards the intensification of the ecclesial communion and the ecumenical journey.

The subject chosen for the Eucharistic meetings, *"All my springs are in you"*, urged us to rediscover, in the Eucharist, the source of the life of the Church and the evangelical mission in the post-modern and globalized society. Having dismissed the glories of a not too distant past, after an inevitable confrontation with reality, the Congress - with its celebrations, meetings, studies and testimonies – has offered the possibility of envisioning new evangelical springs.

From a numerical point of view, this international event has been significantly affected by the limits imposed by the pandemic on international travel. Nevertheless, this has not prevented the representatives of 75 countries of the world from gathering together. Most of the pilgrims came from countries where it was possible to reach Budapest without particular restrictions thanks to Covid containment measures and the introduction of the *Green pass*. Moreover, due to the long preparatory phase, the Congress enjoyed an orderly development and the increase of religious and cultural proposals.

### **The theological symposium (2-4 September 2021)**

The introductory phase of the Congress coincides, traditionally, with the theological symposium whose purpose is to gather theologians and pastors in order to deepen the subject of the Congress and suggest new paths for the journey of the Churches. The St. Adalbert Centre, located in Esztergom, was chosen as a venue for the meeting. Here, in the afternoon of Thursday, 2 September 2021, the participants met together. The city of Esztergom, little more than 50 kilometres north of Budapest, was the first capital of the Hungarian State and the millennial seat of the Cardinal Primate of Hungary. This city is dominated by a huge basilica that, from a rocky spur, dominates the bight of the Danube that currently separates Hungary from Slovakia. Its historical importance has suggested, from the very beginning of the Congress preparation, the idea of holding the theological symposium here.

The two-day meeting examined the Eucharist from different points of view thanks to the help of twelve speakers from Europe, Africa and Latin America. About 300 people - mostly scholars, professors of the country's seminaries, theologians, pastoral workers, some nuns and students of theology - enrolled. According to the welcome speech by Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and Primate of Hungary, this meeting should have answered the question: *«How can the Eucharist offer life and hope to the man of the twenty-first century, who lives among fears, who would like to protect creation but does not exactly know how, aware that without Christianity the world would be poorer, but who is currently incapable of making this extraordinary force vital and effective for humanity?»*.

Remarkable insights into the subject of the Congress were offered by Mgr. Pierangelo Sequeri ("The Eucharist, Source of Christian Life"), by the Cameroonian Bishop Joseph-Marie Ndi-Okalla ("Theological Characteristics of the Eucharistic Liturgy in Africa"), by Hungarian scholars such as Lajos Dolhai, Rector of the Theological College of Eger and President of the Theological Committee of the Congress, by Károly Hafenscher, President of the Synod of the Hungarian Lutheran Church ("The point of view of the Ecumenical Council on the Holy Communion"), by the

Grand Master of the Dominican Order Gerad Francisco Timoner ("The Eucharistic Synaxis, Paradigm of Synodality"), by the Apostolic Exarch of the Greek Byzantine Catholic Church Nin i Guell, by the Brazilian Franciscan Antonio Luiz Catelan Ferreira, by the Austrian Professor Marianne Schlosser ("Theology of Adoration") and by the Auxiliary Bishop of Zagreb Mons. Ivan Šaško ("Eucharist and Sacrament of Reconciliation"). In the afternoon of the days devoted to the symposium, the workshops that took place in the premises of St. Adalbert's Center involved the participation of other distinguished scholars who presented some selected topics related to Theology, Pastoral care, Biblical exegesis, History and Eucharistic ecclesiology.

The celebrations took place in the huge Primatial Cathedral dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption and were presided, day after day, by Cardinals Péter Erdő, Gerard Lacroix and Mgr. Piero Marini, President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

On Saturday, September 4, while the theological symposium was closing, a joyful agape was held in John Paul II Square in Budapest as well as in other dioceses of the country, which brought together more than 5 thousand needy people. In the capital, also the Cardinal Primate, together with some ministers, participated in the agape. Sitting at the table with about 600 guests - needy families, elderly and lonely people - the ecclesiastical and political authorities consumed the beef *goulash* and the dessert of the Eucharistic Congress prepared for the occasion.

The event, whose practical organization was entrusted to religious orders, *Caritas* and ecclesial movements, was aimed at showing God's gratuitous love to the little ones and the poor. The table represented a space of communion and feast aimed at hosting people who otherwise would not have been able to participate in the Congress.

Moreover, that same night, on the eve of the celebration, the Jewish community of Budapest invited the bishops and the guests of honour of the Congress to attend a musical performance in the Great Synagogue in Dohány Street, with the aim of emphasizing the strength of the Jewish/Christian dialogue. In the great nineteenth-century building of Moorish-Oriental style, surmounted by two high towers, after the greetings of the Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop, the concert was introduced by the bare voice of a soloist who, amid the general silence, sang the prayer *Shema Israel*.

The dialogue between these two religions turns out to be even more significant if we consider that Budapest is one of the European cities with the highest number of Jews and that citizens of the Jewish faith have played a fundamental role in the construction of modern Hungary.

Nowadays, despite the tragedy of the Shoah and the distances created by the communist nomenclature at the time of the "cold war", the relationships between Catholics and Jews are friendly and cordial and the Church, starting from its leaders, does not cease to emphasize that anti-Semitism «is not Christian, but profoundly inhuman and totally unacceptable».

## **2. The Congress week (5-12 September 2021)**

On Sunday, September 5, the 52<sup>o</sup> International Eucharistic Congress was inaugurated at Heroes' Square, the ideal centre of the capital, with a great welcome party and with the solemn Mass, which was attended by the most prominent State personalities.

The proper activities of the Congress began on Monday 6 September at *Hungexpo Budapest*. The *Hungexpo*, the exhibition centre of the Hungarian capital, is on the immediate outskirts of the city, though being well connected to the centre. The pavilion used for the Congress could accommodate about 15 thousand people; the other pavilions, connected to each other by a spacious roofed structure, hosted afternoon workshops, reception and catering services, the press room and various exhibitions.

The typical congress day began with the celebration of the morning Lauds, led by a bishop, and continued with a general catechesis followed by the experience of people witnessing their faith. After a break animated by various performances (folk dances, choral songs, music or other forms of entertainment), the Eucharist was celebrated at 11.30 am on the large central podium. Lunch marked the end of the morning. In the afternoon, starting from 2.30 pm, workshops, made more enjoyable by simultaneous translations and video transmission on large latest-generation HD screens scattered everywhere, were held in various rooms.

The general catecheses, entrusted to cardinals, were inaugurated by Cardinal João Tempesta who, due to the difficulties of the pandemic, connected by videoconference from Rio de Janeiro to speak about the Eucharist as a source of active love. In the following days, representatives of all continents were involved: Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Québec, reflected on the Eucharist as a source of peace; the Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, Louis Raphael Sako, reminded those present of the difficult conditions faced by Iraqi Christians; Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon (Myanmar), former Pontifical Legate of the International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu, recalled the challenges that his particular Church is facing and developed the topic of the Eucharist as a source of patience; Nigerian Cardinal John Onaiyekan presented the post-conciliar Eucharistic doctrine; Card. Dominik Duka, Archbishop of Prague, explained that the only Church that can become attractive to people of our time is the Church of the Eucharist.

Among the testimonies that immediately followed the most significant catecheses, we cannot fail to mention that of the Ukrainian priest Konstantin Szabó who, clearly moved, retraced the long history of persecution and resistance that has left an indelible mark in the Greek-Catholic community of his country. Then other speakers intervened: the Brazilian Moysés Azevedo, who talked about the birth and the development of the *Shalom* community, which is now scattered throughout the world; Barbara Heil, former Protestant missionary; Mary Healy, theologian and biblical scholar. The President of the Republic of Hungary himself, János Áder, offered his own testimony and experience as a politically committed Christian.

The afternoon sessions, which took place in different pavilions of the *Hungexpo*, were limited to about an hour in order to give the pilgrims the opportunity to enjoy other activities. The words of men and women of the Church, bishops, religious and laypersons resounded there; they were able to illustrate ideas and activities as well as to propose reflections and initiatives closely linked to the Eucharist and its various aspects.

The ecumenical dimension of the Congress - absolutely normal in a country in Central Europe where different beliefs and religions have always intertwined and in which the historical Churches of different confessions have coexisted - was manifested in various ways.

The Metropolitan Hilarion, President of the Department of External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, participated in the Congress by presenting a noteworthy report in which he highlighted

that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, despite their imperfect communion, are bonded together by the same faith in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Moreover, the presence of Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, who spoke on different occasions during the Congress, as reported below, was substantial.

Finally, it is necessary to briefly dwell into the daily liturgical celebrations. The morning Lauds and the Eucharistic celebration were presided by bishops from different countries and continents and were animated, in a very lively way, by choral and instrumental ensembles, able to underline the value not only of the widespread musical culture of Hungary, but also of the liturgy, which continues to be highly respected by the devoted population.

### 3. Special events

#### *The opening Mass on Sunday, September 5*

The inauguration of the Congress took place in the large stage erected in the central Heroes' Place. The place, rich in political and historical elements, houses the Millennium Monument with the statues of the leaders of the seven tribes that founded Hungary at the end of the ninth century and other characters of the Hungarian history. The construction of the memorial, which began with the celebration of the first millennium of Hungary (1896), ended only in 1929. In the shadow of the monument the cenotaph dedicated "*to the memory of the heroes who gave their lives for the freedom of our people and our national independence*" can be found. The monument is surmounted by a column on which the statue of the archangel Gabriel holds the crown of St. Stephen and the apostolic cross of the Magyar kingdom.

In this square, on 29 May 1938, Cardinal Pacelli, the Pope's Legate, celebrated the conclusive Mass of the 34<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress, on the eve of the Second World War which, once again, would upset the physiognomic structure of Central Europe.

Waiting for the inaugural Mass, the opening ceremony staged a rich event that, under the generic title of "*Hungary, land of Mary*", presented the Christian popular traditions of the Carpathian basin, which link the faith of the modern Hungarian people to a millennial religious tradition.

At 4.00 pm, on a splendid sunny Sunday, the celebration of the Eucharist began. The Mass was presided by Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President of the Council of Conferences of Bishops of Europe (the Holy Father did not consider it necessary to appoint a Legate in view of his presence at the final celebration of the *Statio orbis*). About sixty bishops and several cardinals concelebrated this Mass, including Lacroix, Porras Cardoso, Hollerich, Onaiyeke, Soo-Jung, Fitzgerald, Sarah, Kambanda, the Maronite Patriarch Boutros Rai, the Greek-Melkite Patriarch Absi. Together with the highest authorities of the State, numerous representatives of the Catholic schools of the archdiocese as well as 1,200 boys and girls, who attended the Mass of their First Communion, were present.

In his opening speech, the Primate Cardinal Péter Erdő, after thanking God for the possibility of attending this celebration, underlined the essence of the Eucharistic Congress *«I thank the Divine Providence that today we can officially open the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Eucharistic Congress. After last year's postponement, we feel that our lives do not depend only on our human efforts. I thank the*

*Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses for its help and work; the Hungarian organizers for their great support and the whole Hungarian society for its generous availability... In these days, May the Lord God give us the opportunity to perceive that Christ is with us in the Eucharist. He does not leave the Church, the peoples, humanity alone. All our strength and hope come from Him. The Eucharist is the source from which the nourishment of our Christian life, our mission, springs. Lord God, stay with us! Give us the strength and light for our mission in today's world! Grant us to live together with you here on earth and then in eternity!»*

In his homily, Cardinal Bagnasco greeted the children who were ready to receive the First Communion, encouraging them to find in Jesus a loyal friend. Then he addressed the young students of Catholic schools inviting them to live their formative experience without prejudice towards the religious and Christian dimension. *«Today - he said - the difficulties of faith originate also from the great weakness of thought. Faith, in fact, is not the enemy of reason, but seeks it, just as reason needs faith to be truly itself»*. And he drew the students' attention to the fact that their lives will be beautiful if they become useful.

Finally, the cardinal addressed the assembly *«for a renewed and heartfelt invitation: all of you who most strongly feel the weight of the cross, you who weep, you who are persecuted for justice, you who feel voiceless and homeless, you the suffering strangers ... regain your courage, the Lord is close, he is next to every heart that is open to Him. He came into the world not only to share the human condition, but above all to raise us to the Trinity. Although this mystery is great, it is here on this altar and will remain with us until the end of time»*.

After the Mass, the guests of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Congress were invited to participate in a reception in the castle of Vajdahunyad, which is located in the adjacent city park. This is a partial copy of a Transylvanian castle, which was built for the millennium exhibition (1896) and has become very popular.

### *Traditional activities*

Other activities, which have presently become traditional within the Congress week, have been carried out. For instance, on the evening of Wednesday, September 8, the Holy Mass was celebrated in various national languages in the different parishes of Budapest. The celebrations were followed by a fraternal agape and other musical or cultural events.

On the evening of Thursday, September 9, the faithful met in St. Stephen's Basilica, where a solemn hour of communal Eucharistic adoration was held, animated by the "new communities" and by movements and associations, which actively participated in the realization of these international Eucharistic days.

On Friday, September 10, at the Sporting Arena László Papp, with a capacity of 12 thousand seats, the evening was dedicated to the youth and was enlivened by music, testimonies, reflections and prayers. This is another event that, since the 2004 Guadalajara Congress, has become a traditional appointment.

Finally, in the morning of Saturday, September 11, the meeting of families was held on Margaret Island. This island, which contains the remains of the monastery where St. Margaret lived, is located in the middle of the Danube and includes a park that is very crowded in summertime thanks to the two bridges that connect the island to the shores. Families were able to participate in

debates, musical events, lectures of famous people while children were engaged in craft programs, treasure hunts, geocaching, sport climbing and various games. More than 70 gazebos offered the participants endless opportunities to learn and talk.

During the whole congress week, some kiosks were placed in St. Stephen's Square where the works and the activities of congregations and religious groups were displayed, these including typical agri-food products of Hungary, examples of the Hungarian natural heritage, industrial and technical solutions, cultural and sports activities. Moreover, a stage was set up on the square to present the programs of the *Ars Sacra* festival. In the same context, the "St. Stephen's Book Week", a prestigious meeting of Catholic publishers, who presented their most recent publications, was also held.

### *The Eucharistic Procession*

In the afternoon of Saturday, September 11, at 3.00 pm, on the large stage prepared in Kossuth Square, in front of the Parliament, the program to introduce the celebration of the Mass and the Eucharistic procession along the streets of Budapest began.

Before the celebration, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, greeted those present. He pointed out that the Church, in its holy liturgy, gathers the faithful in a single body, without any distinction of race, sex, age and regardless of social, cultural or financial status. He then stressed that the Church's initiatives for the protection of the natural environment and the culture of solidarity are rooted in the Eucharistic experience and theology. The life of the Church itself, he added, is ecology and concrete solidarity and for this reason *«every misuse and exploitation of Creation and of our neighbour distorts cosmology and Christian anthropology»*. Moreover, Bartholomew has long since advocated the reconciliation between the Eastern and the Western Church: *«The Eucharistic fulfilment of the Church in the common chalice and in the shared Christian witness in the world is our common desire and dream. Christians of East and West, in fact, belong to the same spiritual space»*.

The Holy Mass was presided by Cardinal Peter Erdő who, as highlighted in his homily, considered the possibility of celebrating the Eucharist together in a place so significant for his nation as a special gift of God's Providence. He then underlined the peculiar worship of the Magyar people for Mary Mother of the Church, recalling an episode of the life of King St. Stephen, who, having no heirs, offered his crown to the Virgin to protect the Hungarians who, just included into the community of European nations, had to face countless threats. Cardinal Peter Erdő added that the Virgin Mary accepted this offer and, since then, for nearly a millennium, Hungarians and Christianity have been walking together on the path of history.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the Eucharistic procession began. *«This evening - the Primate said - we light our candles because we are, once again, gathered together with Jesus at his banquet of life, because his words continue to resound in the homes of families, in churches, in prisons, in labour camps, secretly or publicly. And, after the Mass, we will begin our journey with the Blessed Sacrament to proclaim the miracle of Jesus' presence to the city and to the world and to ask for his blessing on all of us»*.

After a 4.5 kilometre parade along the central Andrássy Avenue, the procession arrived in Heroes' Square. The head of the procession reached its destination in an hour and a half while the

end of the parade was still leaving Kossuth Square. The object of devotion was the Eucharist positioned in a 1.60-metre-high monstrance placed on a special float, at whose feet the Cardinal Archbishop, the President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and the Apostolic Nuncio were kneeled. This procession, illuminated by thousands of torches, was enlarging gradually, between two wings of devoted people, as it moved forward. Over two hundred thousand people participated in the event, praying and singing, including tens of thousands of young people. The faithful's deepen participation was facilitated by a perfect and well planned organization, including an efficient sound system covering the entire path of the procession. This sound management made it possible the broadcasting of live songs and prayers whose words were projected onto large screens scattered along the avenue, at a distance of a few hundred meters from each other. The conclusive benediction with the Blessed Sacrament was followed, as usual, by the singing of the hymn of the Congress, after which the assembly gradually dissolved.

#### *The Statio orbis on Sunday 12 September*

For the first time since 2000, the Pope has started again to preside over the *Statio orbis* of the Congress. After his arrival at Budapest airport at 7.45 am, Pope Francis was greeted by the Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén as well as by two children in traditional dress who offered him flowers. From there he went to the Museum of Fine Arts located on the western side of Heroes' Square where he was welcomed by the President of the Republic, János Áder, and the Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. Together they went to the Romanesque Hall, where a meeting took place, which was also attended by the Vatican Secretary of State and the Secretary for Relations with States.

Then the Pope went to the Renaissance Hall, where a meeting with 35 local bishops took place. In his vivid speech, in which he expressed many ideas on how the Church should be present in the Hungarian society, Pope Francis asked the prelates to *«preserve our religious roots and our past history, while not keeping our gaze fixed only on the past, and looking to the future, looking forward to find ever new ways to proclaim the Gospel»* and to make the episcopal ministry *«a prophetic voice»*. In order to perform this task, the Pope asked the bishops to be, first of all, heralds of the Gospel, without being tempted *«to retreat into a defence of our institutions and structures»* and to *«be witnesses of fraternity»* because *«Your country is a place where men and women from other peoples have long lived together. Various ethnic groups, minorities, religious confessions and migrants have made yours a multicultural country. This is something new and, at least initially, can be troubling. Diversity always proves a bit frightening, for it challenges our securities and the status quo»*.

Finally, he recommended *«to always show, together with priests and pastoral collaborators, the true face of the Church: a face that is welcoming to all, including those coming from elsewhere»*.

In the adjacent room, the Marble Hall, the meeting with the representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches and with some Hungarian Jewish communities took place. Pope Francis made a long speech, which was deeply permeated by concepts like spirit of evangelical brotherhood and integration, focusing on the image of the Chain Bridge that connects the two halves of the city.

*« The bridge does not “fuse” those two parts together, but rather “holds” them together. That is how it should be with us too. Whenever we were tempted to absorb the other, we were tearing down instead of building up».*

Before celebrating the Eucharist, Pope Francis went out into the square and took a ride among the crowd with his popemobile. In his homily, which was a comment on the Sunday Gospel, he called for the *«renewal of discipleship»*, progressing from the admiration for Jesus to his imitation.

At the end of the Mass, Mgr. Piero Marini, President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses addressed a greeting speech to the Pontiff, expressing his gratitude. Finally, after the conclusive rites of the Mass, Pope Francis recited the Angelus, expressing his final desire: *«The word “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving”, and at the end of this celebration that concludes the Eucharistic Congress and my visit to Budapest, I want to thank you from my heart. I thank the great Hungarian Christian family, which I would like to embrace in its rites, its history, its brothers and sisters, both Catholic and those of other confessions: all journeying towards full unity... In renewing my gratitude to the civil and religious authorities who welcomed me, I want to say “köszönöm” [thank you]: thank you to you, the people of Hungary. The official song of the Congress has reminded you: “For a thousand years the cross was the column of your salvation. Now may the sign of Christ be for you also the promise of a better future”. This is what I wish for you: that the cross be your bridge between the past and the future».* And he ended his speech in this way: *«Isten, áldd meg a magyart! [May God bless the Hungarian people!] ».*

The Holy Father's words uttered in the local language touched everyone also owing to the fact that they constitute the first sentence of the Hungarian national anthem.

After the Mass, Pope Francis headed to the airport, where the farewell ceremony took place before his departure to Bratislava.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The celebration of the Budapest Congress, which took place in the heart of a secularized Europe where the Gospel and any forms of religious affiliation have become marginal, has seriously challenged the organizers. How can the Eucharistic celebration be a source of life for everyone, the expression of the Gospel that makes it possible to meet God in the humanity of the Lord Jesus for both assiduous and occasional believers? How can the celebrated Eucharist be an inclusive and not an "exclusive" place, which can encompass different spiritual paths and represent a sign of communion and mercy of the "Church that is going forth"? Can the "social dimension" of the Eucharist be recovered by activating historical growth processes that, starting from the sacramental celebration, could commit Christian communities to humanizing the world? In a few words, how can the Church become the place of communion with the "whole Christ" in the sacrament, in charity and in the mission, without separating Christ the Head from his Body, that is, the sacramental communion with Christ from that with his members?

These challenges were faced to the greatest extent possible by means of the gestures and opportunities that the Congress offered to the participants, despite the limits imposed by the pandemic time.

The ecumenical openness of this nation, based on a well-established tradition, proceeded in this direction. This positive attitude, which was wholeheartedly experienced and valuably witnessed, has peculiarly pervaded the times of the Congress. In addition to this, a particular interaction with the liturgy and the customs of Catholics of the Eastern Church has occurred, also thanks to the Divine Liturgy celebrated with the participation of 50 Catholic bishops of the Eastern rite in St. Stephan's basilica.

Another peculiarity of this event was the focus on the Romanies, representing 10% of the Hungarian population. This kind of attention has remote origins, even in consideration of the fact that the Episcopal Conference provided for the translation of the Bible into the *lovári* (Romani) language, and more recently also of the Ordinary of the Mass. In this regard, it must be remembered that, on Wednesday 1 September, in St. Stephan's basilica, the first performance of the "Romani Mass" in the *lovári* language was held in the form of a concert. This was composed by Gergő Oláh Patrik specifically in view of the Congress, with the participation of the National Philharmonic Orchestra and two renowned soloists. Among the listeners, the President of the Hungarian Republic should be mentioned. The same Mass was proposed again during the celebration that took place on Thursday 9 September at *Hungexpo*.

The Congress encouraged the meeting between the community of Hungarian believers and the guests coming from all over the world. Cardinals and bishops from different countries alternated in the presidency of the various liturgical celebrations and in the presentation of the most important catecheses. Among the testimonies, some stories of suffering were narrated: that of the persecuted Christians of the Middle East; that of the Greek-Catholic Churches under the communist yoke as well as those concerning the hospitality of abandoned children, drug addicts or homeless people. Even illustrious figures from the artistic or political world witnessed their faith in a concrete way.

In addition to the charitable initiatives characterizing the days of the Congress, the construction of a structure aimed at helping families in difficulty, marriages in crisis, disabled and ill people as well as other needy individuals has represented one of the most concrete actions carried out as a memorial of this event. This structure will be a stable supply of services and, with the help of psychologists, doctors, social and pastoral workers, will respond to all those needs recently highlighted on the occasion of the Synod on the Family. Finally, it seems useful to recognize the progressive rediscovery of the Eucharistic adoration that the Congress has promoted. Certainly, the Eucharist is primarily a celebration. However, the re-evaluation of the Eucharistic adoration, organized in different churches of the city, in a more or less permanent way, has increasingly spread especially among young people and various "new communities". On several occasions the General Secretariat has called for a worldwide adoration, in which many parishes and communities throughout the world have participated.

The forced delay in the celebration of the Congress, due to the pandemic, has urged the organizers to follow with greater attention the development of this event, significantly affected by the crisis of tourism and travel. The participation of foreign people, which at the beginning of 2020 was expected to be massive, was actually decimated, even if, despite everything, as many as 75 world countries were represented. Undoubtedly, most of the pilgrims were Europeans who, thanks to the *green pass*, were able to reach Hungary easily.

Other factors influenced positively the success of this "difficult" Congress: the massive participation of the Hungarians, the unity of the Bishops' Conference and, finally, the brief visit of Pope Francis who flew to Hungary specifically for the *Statio orbis* of the Congress. In the conclusive celebration, attended by more than 100,000 faithful, it was possible to experience the universality of the Church, the immense family of the baptized who gathered around Peter. Nourished by the Word as well as by the Body and Blood of Christ, those present bore witness of the communion they had experienced and were sent as good witnesses of God's love.

The work of thousands of volunteers, mostly young people, belonging to movements and associations (scouts, etc.) was very important. Their involvement has been a sign of the vitality of local communities and leads us to hope for an ever more active and generous Church in the future. Fundamental was also the collaboration between the Church and the Government which, in view of the event, allocated funds to be mainly used for the restoration and construction of new churches. In addition to the work of the Secretary of State for Religious Affairs, the agreement with the Police Forces and the Budapest City Hall was essential. Other small but significant signs of participation came from the National Bank, which minted a commemorative silver coin depicting a Eucharistic subject, with a nominal value of 10 thousand florins, and the Post Office, which issued a 900 florin stamp illustrating the logo of the Congress.

The experience of communion with the poor, art, science, music; the touching testimonies; the different ethnic groups; the model devotion and enthusiasm of believers coming from all continents: all of this has conveyed a message of recovery, hope, renaissance, after the difficult months of the pandemic. This has represented a strong injection of confidence.

The Congress also gave the opportunity of debating and discussing the biggest problems of the world in a truthful and generous way: the limits of the Earth's resources and the mankind's alarmed attempt not to make the world inhabitable. The meeting with other Christians, with people of other faiths and worldviews has rekindled the desire for full communion! For all these things, the Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, starting from the Eucharist, the source of every gift, has introduced into the veins of Hungary, Europe and the world new forces of renewal that the Spirit will make fruitful.

*Isten, áldd meg a magyart!* [God bless the Hungarian people!]