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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the European Forum Alpbach

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father to the participants in the European Alpbach Forum (17 to 30 August 2024):

Message of the Holy Father

Dear participants in the European *Forum Alpbach*!

I am pleased to be able to say a few words to you today. When I think of Europe, I think of it first and foremost as the continent of human rights. The majority of important universal human rights were developed here.

Currently, we are experiencing a time of crisis in Europe, which like every crisis brings with it dangers and opportunities; a time in which various populist movements are enjoying great popularity. The reasons for this reside principally in economic and political factors. We therefore see that in Europe, as a result of this “wave” of populism, some ideals have vanished and some principles, with regard to behaviour towards the weaker members of society, have been sidelined.

These ideals and principles, among which those of *human dignity* and *fraternity* deserve special mention, have always been connected to the Gospel matrix. Today the cultural context has changed, and the Church is required to live within a secularized society; this should neither surprise nor frighten us, because we are well aware that God is present there. Rather, with renewed motivation, we strive, as Christians, to contribute the wealth of Catholic social doctrine, with its claim to universality. Even the European Union, ever since its founding, has universalistic features, and it is to be hoped that it does not lose them. In this regard, the aspect of fraternity is particularly important. It follows that European societies are called to find ways and means to reduce the polarization within them, and to remain open towards the surrounding world.

Dear participants in the European Alpbach Forum, thank you for your commitment in the midst of the social challenges of our time, and I hope you can be “contagious” witnesses of European ideals. I bless you heartily,

and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!

Rome, 21 August 2024

FRANCIS
