



Pope Francis delivers a message "to all the citizens of Europe" at the European Parliament

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Safeguarding human dignity was a key theme of the formal address delivered by Pope Francis to Members of the European Parliament on Tuesday. Immigration, protecting the environment, and promoting human rights and democracy were among the topics stressed in a speech that enjoined "Europe to rediscover the best of itself".

Opening the formal sitting, Parliament's President Martin Schulz said that the loss of confidence of people in politics, both at national and European level, is "tremendous", stressing that no institution can operate if it lacks support. "We therefore all need to cooperate to regain this lost trust", he said.

Mr Schulz stressed the "common goals" of the EU and the Catholic church in promoting "the values of tolerance, respect, equality, solidarity and peace", and that "The European Union is about inclusion and cooperation rather than exclusion and confrontation".

Human rights and dignity

"I would like to offer a message of hope and encouragement to all the citizens of Europe", Pope Francis told MEPs. He said that dignity was the pivotal concept in the process of rebuilding Europe after World War II and praised the fact that "the promotion of human rights is central to the commitment of the EU to advocate the dignity of the person", both within the Union and in its relations with third countries.

The European Parliament has the "responsibility of keeping democracy alive for the peoples of Europe": democracies should not be allowed to "collapse under the pressure of multinational interests which are not universal", said Pope Francis. He added that "The time has come to promote policies which create employment, but above all there is a need to restore dignity to labour by ensuring proper working conditions".

Environment and migration

"Europe has always been in the vanguard of efforts to promote ecology", stressed the Pope. Respecting the environment means not destroying it, but also "using it for good purposes", such as providing food to those who need it and not wasting it.

Pope Francis also addressed the issue of the migration flows to the EU. He said: "We cannot allow the Mediterranean to become a vast graveyard", stressing that the people who arrive by boat need "acceptance and assistance". Europe will be able to confront the problems linked to immigration "only if it is capable of clearly asserting its own cultural identity", he added.

Watch the video recording of the address and check our live Twitter coverage at @EuroParlPress (links on the right)

Background information:

The Pope was invited by President Schulz, on behalf of the European Parliament, when he paid an official visit to the Vatican on 11 October 2013. This is the first visit to the

Press release

Parliament by a sovereign pontiff in 26 years. Last time was in 1988, when Pope Jean Paul II delivered an address to Parliament, just one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Pope arrived at the European Parliament in Strasbourg at around 10.30 and was received by President Schulz, with a welcoming ceremony comprising the two anthems and a flag raising ceremony. After the ceremony, President Schulz introduced the Pope to the members of the Bureau and Conference of Presidents of the EP. The Pope continued his visit to the Council of Europe.

The European Parliament is the only directly-elected EU body and one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world. Its 751 Members represent the EU's 500 million citizens. They are elected once every five years by voters from across the 28 Member States.

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