

First Special Assembly for Europe - So that we might be witnesses of Christ who has set us free (28 November-14 December 1991)

First Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops

In Session: 28 November - 14 December 1991

Synod Fathers: 137

Topic: "So That We Might Be Witnesses of Christ Who Has Set Us Free"

On 22 April 1990 during an Apostolic Visit to Velehrad, Czechoslovakia, the site of the tomb of St. Methodius, co-patron of Europe with Saints Cyril and Benedict, the Holy Father announced his desire to convoke a Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops so as to discern the *kairos* of the situation created by the great changes taking place in Europe and to consider the role of the Church in the efforts on the continent towards renewal and reconstruction.

The special nature of the Synod and its brief preparation period required various modifications to Synod procedure, e.g., instead of the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum laboris* documents, a brief guide to reflection (*Itinerarium*) and a synopsis (*Summarium*) were prepared; special criteria were devised for episcopal delegates so as also to give substantial representation bishops from Central and Eastern Europe, etc. One of the noteworthy events in the preparation was a pre-Synodal symposium sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Culture which gathered intellectuals from both eastern and western Europe in a common reflection on the Synod topic.

Likewise, representatives from the Orthodox Church and major Christian communities in Europe were invited in a spirit of ecumenism to participate for the first time in a synodal Assembly as "fraternal delegates". The work of the special assembly culminated in the publication of a *Declaratio (Statement)*, in which the Synod Fathers outlined a program for the new evangelization of Europe and made an appeal for universal solidarity among all European citizens. Subsequently, a group of members from the special assembly was appointed to devise ways of implementing the conclusions of the ***Declaration*** through a strengthening of the *Concilium Conferentiarum Episcopaliū Europae (CCEE)* in light of the present circumstances.

President-Delegates

S.Em.R. il Sig. Card. Jean-Marie Lustiger, Arcivescovo di Paris (Francia)

S.Em.R. il Sig. Card. Józef Glemp, Arcivescovo di Gniezno e Warszawa (Polonia)

S.Em.R. il Sig. Card. Eduardo Martínez Somalo, Prefetto della Congregazione per il Culto Divino e la Disciplina dei Sacramenti(Vaticano)

General Secretary

S.E.R. Mons. Jan Pieter Schotte, C.I.C.M., Arcivescovo tit. di Silli (Vaticano)

General Rapporteur

S.Em.R. il Sig. Card. Camillo Ruini, Vicario Generale di Sua Santità per la Diocesi di Roma (Italia)

Special Secretary

S.E.R. Mons. Miloslav Vlk, Arcivescovo di Praga (Cecoslovacchia)

S.E.R. Mons. Karl Lehmann, Arcivescovo di Mainz (Germania)

Documents of the First Special Assembly for Europe

Dichiarazione: «Ut testes simus Christi qui nos liberavit»

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II ALLA CONCLUSIONE DEI LAVORI DELL'ASSEMBLEA SPECIALE PER L'EUROPA DEL SINODO DEI VESCOVI - 13 dicembre 1991 [IT - LA]