

To

- § *the President and officers of the European Confederation*
- § *Fr Marc Rotsaert, delegate of the Society of Jesus to the European Confederation*
- § *the members of the Committee of the European Confederation*

21st February 2005

18 days away from the meeting in Gdansk and 150 days from the European Congress in Lisbon, I presume to take an initiative, which could allow us, if there is still time, to organise the Congress.

Portugal, charged with welcoming us, has fulfilled its task – except for the question of expense. We have information about the general organisation, and a programme which allows for the pilgrimage to Fatima and for days reserved to the Congress.

There remains the equally urgent task of defining, for this Congress which is open to all the alumni of Europe, the content of the Congress as a whole and of the individual workshops.

This Congress describes itself explicitly as European – and therefore linked with Europe's present and future. At the heart of this European entity, we are asked to enter into dialogue both with the official representatives of the European Union and with those who bear witness by their engagement in the construction of Europe. This general objective was defined three years ago in our Confederation. And so there will be a dialogue in which our Confederation will be active participant or where we might wish to share our concerns and our ambitions with those of the 'European Institutions' with the support of committed European citizens or witnesses – especially among our alumni.

1. The future of Europe – this will be the general theme

There will be a general introduction to this vast subject; such an introduction might be made by:

- § a major personality of the European Union
- § one or two alumni, addressing the fact of the Europe that is being constructed and at the same time expressing our willingness to participate in the progress of the Union and of the citizens of Europe. A synergy.

I propose therefore that each of our federations presents:

- § some names of eminent European personalities
- § some names of spokespersons from committed alumni
- § all of these capable of introducing or animating the four days of the Congress
- § either in person, if they are available, or by some form of video presentation
- § also required will be people to lead the small groups (mentioned in No.2 below)

At Gdansk we can make an informed choice, on the basis of information sent by each Federation to the secretary of the Confederation.

2. Sub-themes for use in workshops and small discussion groups. These flow from the committees created two years ago by the Confederation, even though not all have been totally effective. Some themes are contained in the new European Constitution, e.g.:

- § The European Constitution and connected themes (the roles of philosophical movements and Christian movements)
- § Education, culture, multilingualism
- § Economic and monetary union, and socio-economic policy
- § Justice and home affairs (very technical)
- § Foreign policy of the European Union

Others are outside the scope of the Constitution, e.g.:

- § Faith and justice (as understood in the Church, on Fr Arrupe's model)
- § Value systems
- § Professional ethics

For the pilgrimage and the Congress, teams will need to be appointed to take charge of times and places of prayer, recollection and liturgy.

The evenings will be the time for social and free-ranging discussion and debate.

Much of this follows the lines established in Brussels, Sydney, Oxford and Malta. We are now 150 days away from Lisbon – but so far we have no news of a full programme, no bulletin for the alumni, no website. At least, not in southern Belgium.

This programme has to be drawn up, by the Confederation and Portugal working together. It has to be translated. It should comprise the theme, the sub-themes, the names of some guests. There must be an application form, with details of costs. And this must be distributed within 50 days, at the latest. No waiting for the holiday season. Urget nos caritas.

Let each of us take responsibility for his or her part.

In friendship,

Maurice Pilette sj

PS: All other suggestions very welcome – perhaps via the Secretariat.