



## **With Charlemagne Prize, Pope Francis Delivers 'I Have a Dream' Speech for Europe**

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**The Holy Father had accepted the Charlemagne Prize on Friday in recognition of his efforts to unify Europe.**

VATICAN CITY — As he received the prestigious Charlemagne Prize Friday, Pope Francis laid out his vision for a renewed European continent in what could easily be his own version of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

In the May 6 address, Francis said "I dream of a new European humanism," one based on a fresh ideas and a revamped economy that promotes integration and respect for human dignity.

Europe has become tired and "entrenched," he said, and voiced hope that the continent's leaders would be able to "draw inspiration from the past in order to confront with courage the complex multipolar framework of our own day."

He asked that European leaders "take up with determination the challenge of updating the idea of Europe," a Europe capable of giving birth to "a new humanism" based on the core abilities to integrate, dialogue and generate new ideas and solutions to complex modern issues.

"I dream of a Europe that is young, still capable of being a mother: a mother who has life, because she respects life and offers hope for life. I dream of a Europe that cares for children, that offers fraternal help to the poor and those newcomers seeking acceptance, because they have lost everything," he said.

He expressed his desire for a Europe "where being a migrant is not a crime but a summons to greater commitment on behalf of the dignity of every human being," and where youth can "breathe the pure air of honesty" in a culture that is "undefiled by the insatiable needs of consumerism."

The Pope said he also longed for a culture in which “getting married and having children is a responsibility and a great joy, not a problem due to the lack of stable employment. I dream of a Europe of families, with truly effective policies concentrated on faces rather than numbers, on birth rates more than rates of consumption.”

“I dream of a Europe that promotes and protects the rights of everyone, without neglecting its duties towards all,” he said, and voiced his hope for a Europe “of which it will not be said that its commitment to human rights was its last utopia.”

Pope Francis received the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen inside the Vatican’s Sala Regia as an award for his efforts toward the unification of Europe – an event which drew leaders from across Europe to discuss the state of the European Union.

Founded in 1950 by Dr. Kurt Pfeiffer, the Charlemagne Prize is “the oldest and best-known prize awarded for work done in the service of European unification,” according to the organization’s website.

## **Renewing Europe’s Soul**

In his lengthy, wide-spread speech, Pope Francis echoed ideas similar to those he expressed during his Nov. 25, 2014 visit to Strasbourg where he spoke to both the European Parliament and Council, urging a “grandmother Europe” go back to her foundational values.

He told the various political leaders and heads of state present that “creativity, genius and a capacity for rebirth and renewal are part of the soul of Europe,” but that the energetic efforts for unity that arose after World War II and the Cold War have since deflated.

“There is an impression that Europe is declining, that it has lost its ability to be innovative and creative, and that it is more concerned with preserving and dominating spaces than with generating processes of inclusion and change,” he said.

Rather than being open to new social projects capable of engaging all individuals and groups, the continent is becoming increasingly “entrenched,” he said, and echoed the words of writer Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Nazi death camps, who said that we need a major “memory transfusion.”

He stressed the need to go back and listen to the voice of Europe’s forefathers, “were prepared to pursue alternative and innovative paths in a world scarred by war.”

## **Need for Solidarity**

Pointing to French statesman Robert Schuman, the Pope echoed his insistence at the birth of the first European Community that the continent couldn't be built all at once, but "through concrete achievements which first create a 'de facto solidarity.'"

"Today, in our own world, marked by so much conflict and suffering, there is a need to return to the same 'de facto solidarity' and concrete generosity that followed the Second World War," he said.

"Today more than ever, their vision inspires us to build bridges and tear down walls. That vision urges us not to be content with cosmetic retouches or convoluted compromises aimed at correcting this or that treaty, but courageously to lay new and solid foundations."

Francis pointed to the ability to integrate, dialogue and generate, which he said are key capacities that will assist in the "update" of the European continent.

He stressed the need to combine various levels of diversity in order for a "healthy coexistence," explaining that "forms of reductionism and attempts at uniformity, far from generating value, condemn our peoples to a cruel poverty: the poverty of exclusion."

"Far from bestowing grandeur, riches and beauty, exclusion leads to vulgarity, narrowness, and cruelty. Far from bestowing nobility of spirit, it brings meanness," he said, and stressed the need for an integral solidarity based on Europe's "dynamic and multicultural identity."

## **Cultural Integration Necessary**

The Pope also stressed the importance of cultural integration, rather than merely resettling foreigners geographically, allowing European peoples to overcome "the temptation of falling back on unilateral paradigms and opting for forms of ideological colonization."

Francis advocated for a culture of dialogue involving "a discipline that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to."

"Today we urgently need to build coalitions that are not only military and economic, but cultural, educational, philosophical and religious," he said, and encouraged the leaders to arm their people "with the culture of dialogue and encounter."

Pope Francis stressed that "no one can remain a mere onlooker or bystander" in the process, but that everyone, from the smallest to the greatest, has an active role to play.

Youth in particular have a special role, he said, and encouraged the creation of new employment opportunities for the youth as well as a just distribution of the earth's resources.

### **New Economic Vision**

To create dignified, well-paying jobs “requires coming up with new, more inclusive and equitable economic models, aimed not at serving the few, but at benefiting ordinary people and society as a whole,” he said.

Doing this “calls for moving from a liquid economy to a social economy,” he said, and pointed to the social market economy described by St. John Paul II's Nov. 8, 1990, speech to the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany.

“It would involve passing from an economy directed at revenue, profiting from speculation and lending at interest, to a social economy that invests in persons by creating jobs and providing training,” he said, adding that “we need to move from a liquid economy prepared to use corruption as a means of obtaining profits to a social economy that guarantees access to land and lodging through labor.”

The Church also has a role to play in this regard through her mission of proclaiming the Gospel and binding the wounds of humanity, Francis said, adding that the effort Christians put toward full unity is “a great sign of the times and a response to the Lord's prayer that they may all be one.”

Pope Francis closed his speech by voicing his dream for “a new European humanism” based on the welcome for foreigners, care for the poor, and respect for human life and dignity.

### **In the Footsteps of St. John Paul II**

The announcement of Pope Francis' selection for the 2016 prize was initially made in December 2015.

Pope Francis is the second religious leader to receive the prize, the first being St. John Paul II, who in 2004 was awarded an “extraordinary” version of the prize, while the ordinary version that year was given to Irish politician Patrick Cox.

While the ceremony for awarding the prize is typically held in Aachen on the Feast of the Ascension, an exception was made for Pope Francis, who requested to hold festivities in the Vatican. The same was done for St. John Paul II when he received an extraordinary version of the prize.

Present at Pope Francis' reception of the Charlemagne Prize were Marcel Philipp, mayor of Aachen; Martin Schulz, president of European Parliament; Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Donald Tusk, President of

the European Council, who had a private audience with the Pope before the conferral ceremony began.

Schulz, Juncker and Tusk met with Pope Francis in a private audience before the ceremony began. They each offered brief remarks at the beginning of the event before the Pope himself spoke.

Other guests present included past winners of the prize such as Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio community; King Felipe of Spain; Dalia Grybauskaite, president of Lithuania; and Patrick Cox, former president of European Parliament and German chancellor Angela Merkel, who was awarded the prize in 2008, and who also met with the Pope in a private audience before the celebration.

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