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The Current State of the European Union

Pope Francis

Europeans must not see their rich history simply as a fond memory of a time long gone, but they must look to it as a guide to overcoming divisions and challenges aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis said. The pope reflected on the current state of the European Union in a letter marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the EU, the 40th anniversary of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community and the 50th anniversary of the presence of the Holy See as a permanent observer at the Council of Europe. The letter to Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, was released by the Vatican Oct. 27. The pandemic, the pope said, "emerged as a

"Do not be afraid of your millenary history, which is a window open to the future more than the past."

kind of watershed" moment when countries can choose either to yield "to the temptation to autonomy," which leads to more disagreement and conflict, or "rediscover the path of fraternity that inspired and guided the founders of modern Europe." The pope laid out a vision of a future for a Europe that does not lose its heritage and deeply rooted ideals in an age of rapid change, which "can bring with it a loss of identity, especially when there is a lack of shared values on which to base society." The pope's letter follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

this year the Holy See and the church in Europe celebrate several significant anniversaries. Fifty years ago, cooperation between the Holy See and the European institutions that arose in the period following World War II took concrete form by the establishment of diplomatic relations between the then European Community and by the Holy See's presence as an observer at the Council of Europe.

In 1980, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Communities (COMECE) was founded, composed of delegates from the bishops' conferences of all the member-states of the European Union, for the sake of promoting "closer cooperation between those episcopates with regard to pastoral questions related to the development of the areas of competence and activities of the union."¹

This year also marked the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, an event of

continued on page 406



contents

- 405 The Current State of the European Union
by Pope Francis
- 408 *Scripturae Sacrae Affectus*: Letter on the 1,600th Anniversary of St. Jerome's Death
by Pope Francis
- 415 Immigrants Should Be Included in a Coronavirus Stimulus Bill
by Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville
- 420 Datebook
- 420 On File

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