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**ADDRESS OF POPE LEO XIV  
TO PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S  
PARTY**

*Clementine Hall*

*Saturday, 25 April 2026*

**[Multimedia]**

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,  
Peace be with you,

*Distinguished Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I warmly welcome all of you to this gathering. In a particular way, I greet your Chairman, Mr Manfred Weber and Mrs Mairead McGuinness, the European Union Special Envoy responsible for promoting freedom of religion or belief outside the European Union.

Our meeting follows those that were held with my predecessors, **Saint John Paul II** and **Pope Benedict XVI**, as well as the **Message that Pope Francis** sent to you in June 2023, when he was unable to receive you personally because of his hospitalization. I am therefore pleased to continue this dialogue with the European People's Party, which draws its political inspiration from figures such as Adenauer, De Gasperi and Schuman, who are widely regarded as the founding fathers of modern Europe.

**Like Benedict XVI twenty years ago**, I too “appreciate your Group’s recognition of Europe’s Christian heritage.” [1] The European project, which arose from the ashes of the Second World War, was certainly born out of the practical necessity to prevent such a conflict from ever happening again. However, it is equally imbued with an ideal vision, namely the desire to foster a cooperation that would overcome centuries of division and enable the peoples of the continent to rediscover the human, cultural and religious heritage they share. The founding fathers were inspired by their personal faith, and considered Christian principles to be a common and unifying element that could help bring an end to the spirit of revenge and conflict that had led to the Second World War.

**Pope Francis** coined a beautiful and simple expression that summarizes this idea: “unity is greater than conflict.” [2] Indeed, the search for unity has the courage to go beyond the surface of conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. [3] In this way, it becomes possible to create something new and constructive, whereas conflict highlights differences, fosters the pursuit and assertion of power, and ultimately leads to destruction.

The primary task of any political action is to offer an ideal vision, for politics requires a broad view of the future, without fearing to make difficult and even unpopular choices when necessary for the common good. In this sense, politics is the “highest form of charity” [4] because it can be completely committed to the building up of the common good.

However, pursuing an ideal does not mean glorifying an ideology. Indeed, ideology is always the result of a distortion of reality and a kind of violence imposed upon it. Every ideology twists ideas and subjugates people to its own agenda, stifling their true aspirations, their desire for freedom, happiness and personal and social wellbeing. Modern Europe itself arose from recognizing the failure of the ideological projects that had destroyed and divided it.

As De Gasperi noted, pursuing an ideal means placing the human person at the center, “with his spirit of evangelical brotherhood, with his reverence for the law inherited from antiquity, with his appreciation for beauty refined over the centuries and with his commitment to truth and justice, sharpened by millennia of experience.” [5]

This is the framework within which politics can still be practiced today, and to which political activity must be brought back. Your party is called the European People's Party. The people are at the heart of your commitment, and you cannot set them aside. They are not merely passive recipients of political proposals and decisions; they are, above all, called to be active participants sharing responsibility for every political action. Being present among the people and involving them in the political process is the best antidote to populism, which seeks only easy approval, and to elitism, which tends to act without consensus. Both of these are widespread tendencies in today's political landscape. An authentically "popular" politics requires time, shared projects and a love of truth.

One of the main problems of politics in recent years has been the steady decline in harmony, cooperation and mutual engagement between the people and their representatives. A genuine sense of "the people" needs to be recreated, involving personal contact between citizens and their representatives, so as to respond effectively to people's concrete problems in light of an ideal vision. We could metaphorically say that in the era of the "digital triumph," political action that is truly oriented to the common good requires a return to the "analogue."

Perhaps this is the real antidote to a politics that often shouts, consists only of slogans and is incapable of responding to people's actual needs. Moreover, to overcome a certain disaffection with politics, it is necessary to win people back by reaching out to them personally and rebuilding a network of relationships in the areas where they live, so that everyone can feel that they belong to a community and share in its future.

What does this mean in practical terms for those who base their actions on Christian-democratic values? First and foremost, it means rediscovering and embracing the Christian heritage from which you come, while still maintaining the necessary distinction between prophetic religious witness – reserved to the ecclesial community – and Christian witness expressed through concrete political choices. **[6]** Being a Christian in politics does not mean being overtly confessional; instead, it means allowing the Gospel to guide the decisions that have to be made, even those that may not attract easy consensus. It means working to preserve the connection between natural law and positive law, and between Christian roots and political action.

To be a Christian engaged in politics requires a realistic perspective that starts with people's concrete concerns. This perspective should seek, above all, to foster dignified working conditions that will encourage people's ingenuity and creativity in the face of a market that is increasingly dehumanizing and unfulfilling. Such an outlook must enable people to overcome the fear of starting a family, of having children, a fear that seems to be particularly prevalent in Europe. It also needs to address the root causes of migration, caring for those who suffer, while also taking into account the real capacities for welcoming and integrating migrants into society. It likewise requires confronting in a non-ideological way the great challenges of our time, such as care for creation and artificial intelligence. The latter offers great opportunities, but it is also fraught with danger.

Being a Christian engaged in politics also means investing in freedom – not a trivialized freedom reduced to mere personal preferences, but one rooted in the truth, which safeguards religious freedom as well as freedom of thought and of conscience in every place and circumstance. At the same time, fostering a “short-circuit” of human rights [7] must be avoided, for it ends up giving way to force and to oppression.

I leave you with these brief points, hoping that they will form a starting point for reflection in your work. In expressing my good wishes for your service to the people of Europe, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Thank you.

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[1] BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Members of the European People's Party on the Occasion of the Study Days on Europe* (30 March 2006), AAS 98 (2006), 344.

[2] FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 228: AAS 105 (2013), 1113.

[3] Cf. *ibid.*

[4] PIUS XI, *Audience with the Leaders of the Catholic University Federation* (18 December 1927).

[5] A. DE GASPERI, *Europe, Our Homeland. Address to the European Parliamentary Conference*, 21 April 1954 in: *Alcide De Gasperi e la politica internazionale*, Rome 1990, vol. III, 437-440.

[6] Cf. MARIALUISA L. SERGIO in: ALCIDE DE GASPERI, *Diario 1930-1943*, Bologna 2018, 24.

**[7] Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See** (9 January 2026).

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