



## 1st International Conference of the Lazarite Academy of Saint Louis IX, King of France

### ECUMENISM: MEANING AND PROSPECTS

Pontifical Theological Faculty of Sicily - January 23, 2026, 4:00 PM



### The New Ecumenical Charter

Charter 2025 Guidelines for the Growth of Collaboration Among Churches in Europe

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#### 1. Context and Official Signing

- **Date and Place:** Officially signed on November 5, 2025, in Rome, at the Abbey of Tre Fontane.
- **Signatories:** Signed by the presidents of two major European ecclesiastical bodies:
  - CCEE (Council of the European Bishops' Conferences)
  - CEC (Conference of European Churches)

- **Historical Significance:** The signing coincides with the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, marking a symbolic step towards visible unity among Christians.
- **Importance:** Represents a significant moment in the history of European ecumenism, with concrete commitments for collaboration among different Christian denominations.

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## 2. Vision: A Necessary Update

- The New Charter does not annul that of 2001, but deeply updates it to respond to a radically changed Europe.
- **Secularized Europe:** An increasingly detached Europe from traditional religious references, with new challenges for the presence of Churches.
- **Fragmented Europe:** Divided into numerous denominations and Christian currents, with a need for dialogue and collaboration to face new challenges.
- **New Conflicts:** Marked by new tensions and social challenges that require a united and coordinated response from Churches.

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## 3. Main Objective: Living Unity

- **Words about Unity:** Actions for unity.
- **Life of Unity:**
  - **Central Theme:** Moving from "words about unity" to "living unity" in a concrete and pastoral way.
  - **Nature of the Document:** A "call to conscience" based on shared faith, rather than a simple program.
  - **Tone:** More pastoral, urgent, and concrete compared to the 2001 version, with personal impact.

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#### 4. A Common Faith, A Common Mission

- **Ecumenical Synodality:** The synodal path is inherently ecumenical, accompanying Churches on their journey towards unity.
- **Commitment to Listening:** Churches commit to listening to each other and discerning together, not limiting themselves to mere coexistence.
- **Luxury of Division:** Divisions among Christians are a luxury that no one can afford in contemporary Europe.
- **Christian Unity:** Common mission.

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#### 5. Rereading History to Heal

- **Invitation to Reread:** Looking at our history through Christ's eyes, not to judge, but to understand.
- **Objective:** Recognizing the wounds of the past not to complain but to heal collective memory.
- **New Identity:** The Christian identity in Europe is active yeast for society, not a museum piece.
- "History must become an opportunity for growth, not resentment."

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#### 6. Peace as an Imperative

- **Prophetic Voice:** Commitment to being a prophetic voice against violence and for peace in all forms.
- **No More 'Holy Wars':** The Charter is categorical: no war can be sanctified. Condemnation of the use of religion to justify aggressive nationalisms.
- **Grassroots Diplomacy:** Commitment to becoming actors of diplomacy and rejecting the rhetoric of hate. Promoting dialogue and understanding among peoples.
- **Contrary Values:** Rejection of the religious instrumentalization in armed conflicts. Churches commit to promoting a culture of peace.

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## 7. Dignity and Service

- **Human Dignity:** Reaffirmation of the defense of the dignity of every person, the foundation of all our common action.
- **Welcoming Migrants:** Working together to ensure dignified reception and support for migrants seeking new life opportunities.
- **Defending the Poor:** Concrete commitments to economic justice and reducing poverty, promoting a more supportive society.
- **Digital Loneliness:** Addressing the digital divide and combating loneliness caused by a lack of connectivity and real interaction.

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## 8. Stewardship of Creation (Eco-Ecumenism)

- "Compared to 2001, this section is much broader and more urgent"
- **Spiritual Crisis:** The climate crisis is also a spiritual crisis that deeply concerns us.
- **Environmental Sin:** Destroying the environment is a sin against God and against neighbor.
- **Ecumenical Urgency:** Eco-ecumenism becomes a shared commitment of Churches for the protection of creation. Caring for the planet is an integral part of the Christian faith.

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## 9. Commitments to Ecological Justice

- **Spiritual Duty:** Ecological commitment is defined as an urgent spiritual duty, not a trend.
- **Integral Faith:** Caring for the planet is an integral part of the Christian faith.
- **Joint Promotion:** Commitment to jointly promote sustainable lifestyles and ecological justice policies.

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- "The climate crisis is also a spiritual crisis that calls us to reconsider our relationship with creation."

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## 10. Evangelization in a Secularized Europe

- "The Churches admit that Europe is now a mission land."
- **Europe as Mission:** Modern Europe, marked by secularization, requires a new missional approach.
- **Common Proclamation:** Commitment to proclaim the Gospel together, avoiding aggressive proselytism among denominations.
- **Modern Language:** Seeking a common language that speaks to modern man, often distant from faith.
- "The mission in Europe requires a new sensitivity and communication appropriate to the times."

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## 11. Key Differences (2001 vs. 2025)

- **2001 Charter:**
  - **Context:** Post-Wall optimism, EU enlargement.
  - **Focus:** Mutual recognition, theological dialogue.
  - **Tone:** Programmatic and institutional.
- **2025 Charter:**
  - **Context:** Fragmented Europe, climate crisis.
  - **Focus:** Common action, synodality, integral ecology.
  - **Tone:** More pastoral, urgent, and concrete.

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## 12. A New Pact for Difficult Times

- **A Trench Charter:** A realistic and courageous text that requires joint action among all Christian denominations in Europe.

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- **Urgency:** Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Anglicans must act together to be credible in times of crisis.
- **From "Neighbors" to "Companions":** The commitment is to become "traveling companions," not just "tolerating" each other while respecting diversity.
- **Credibility:** Unity is not the final goal but an indispensable means to be credible today in the challenges we face.
- "May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, for to this you were called in one body."

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### **13. Questions for Community Reflection**

Here are some questions to stimulate reflection and action within the community:

1. **Artisans of Peace:** What is the 'seed of peace' I could plant this week, defusing a conflict or harsh judgment?
2. **Stewardship of Creation:** What concrete habit (consumption, waste) am I or our community called to change today?
3. **United to Serve:** How could we 'walk together' with other Christians in our city to respond to a specific need?

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### **14. Spiritual Conclusion and Invocation**

**Colossians 3:12-15:** "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body."

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- **The Essential:** Living according to the values of the Gospel: compassion, kindness, humility, and patience.
- **The Bond:** Love is the bond that unites all Christians, transcending differences.
- **The Call:** To be protagonists of peace in a divided world, united in the body of Christ. May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts...

