Press Release - May 13, 2021

After eighty-three years, Hungary can once again host the International Eucharistic Congress (IEC). According to the original plans, the world event would have been held in September 2020. Last year, however, due to the pandemic, Pope Francis, having consulted the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and the Hungarian organizers of the Catholic world event, decided to postpone the event to autumn 2021.

In the history of the Congresses since 1881, only the two World Wars had caused involuntary interruptions. This is the first time that a worldwide epidemic has thwarted the event.

"What does it mean to celebrate a Eucharistic Congress in the modern and multicultural city, where the Gospel and the forms of religious affiliation have become marginal?" asked Pope Francis when welcoming the organizers of Eucharistic World Congresses. He then made the following wish: "May the Budapest Eucharistic Congress foster processes of renewal in Christian communities, so that the salvation whose source is in the Eucharist will find expression in a Eucharistic culture capable of inspiring men and women of good will in the fields of charity, solidarity, peace, family life and care for creation."

The events of the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress:

Theological Symposium, Esztergom

Between September 2 and 4, 2021, Esztergom will host the Theological Symposium, a scientific research conference to precede the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress. The event will feature lectures by Hungarian and foreign (both European and overseas) theologians on the Eucharist and its adoration. The event is subject to registration and ticket purchase.

Joint Concert in the Synagogue

As part of the Jewish-Christian dialogue, a joint concert will be given on September 4, in the Dohány Street Synagogue by the Solti Chamber Orchestra, the Albertfalva Division of the Budapest Singing School, the ETUNAM Mixed Choir, András Gábor Virágh, as well as László Fekete, Péter Dobszay, and Dániel Rudas.

Triple Feast in Heroes' Square

The 52nd International Eucharistic Congress will commence on September 5, 2021 in Heroes'

CÍM: 1071 Budapest, Damjanich u. 48.
POSTAI CÍM: 1397 Budapest, Pf. 523
TELEFON: +36 1 605 4972
E-MAIL: titkarsag@iec2020.hu

Square (Hősök tere) with a large-scale opening ceremony.

Among other performers will be the orchestra of the Weiner Leó Music School and a choir of nearly a thousand singers consisting of the united choir of the Singing Schools, the choirs of the Kodály Zoltán Hungarian Choral School, and a children's choir.

The event will also be the opening of the school year in the archdiocese, while hundreds (perhaps thousands) of registered children will receive their First Communion here.

September 6–10, Hungexpo

Lectures, testimonies

Hungexpo Budapest is the main venue of the International Eucharistic Congress from each morning to afternoon. For five days, lectures, testimonies, and workshops will be presented by guests from all over the world.

"The Kid," the bulletproof cardinal, and Csaba Böjte

On **September 6**, Cardinal Josip Bozanić will celebrate the morning prayer. We can listen to Cardinal João Tempesta, too, also known as the bulletproof cardinal, the Archbishop of Rio, who has survived two street shootings and an armed robbery. He is doing his best to help marginalized people to rise from the periphery of society.

Konstantin Szabó will come to the IEC from Subcarpathia. Father Kosztyu, as many call him, studied and was ordained in secret. In 1945, Stalin decreed that Greek Catholic priests must merge into the Orthodox Church. Many, however, resisted and were either executed or sent to the Gulag. Konstantin Szabó was born into a dynasty of priests. Once he had resolved to continue the family tradition, he had to act with the greatest caution possible, while attending Elemér Ortutay's theological course. This is how he later recalled this period: "I visited him in secret for private tuition, but I had no idea how many others and who else he was teaching. When the persecution intensified, I took with me sweetmeats or flowers instead of my notes, as though visiting as a guest, and I invented all sorts of detours to hoodwink the secret police tracking us." His entire family took enormous risks. Priestly families were under tight surveillance throughout the decades of the dictatorship.

"There was a moment, a rupture, when I said no, I can't continue, I give up. Then Father Elemér sent me a scrap of paper: 'Kid,' – that was my codename – 'watch out not to slam the door because it may sometimes be very difficult to open again.' That thought has stayed with me ever since," Konstantin Szabó later remembered the four tough years of his education. He had to wait until as late as 1989 to celebrate his first liturgy on his own.

The Monday evening mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Piero Marini, who was a close

associate of Saint John Paul II's for decades. The President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses has been to Hungary several times. The archbishop praised the preparations for the world event in Budapest: "Though I have already attended some Eucharistic Congresses, I have never ever experienced such a widespread interest and large number of registrations as in case of the Budapest Congress."

Also in the Monday programme, we can meet Franciscan friar Csaba Böjte. Lectures on the Eucharist will be given by Bishop Joseph-Marie Ndi-Okalla from Cameroon, theologian Mary Healy from the USA, and Damian Stayne, founder of the Catholic charismatic community Cor et Lumen Christi, whose service has contributed to the healing of many thousands. Among the Congress participants we can greet Cardinal Robert Sarah, author or popular books on spirituality, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Travelling on a donkey, rebellious hippy turned community founder

On **September 7**, at the Hungexpo, we can meet Archbishop Csaba Ternyák, as well as Cardinal Gérald Lacroix, who used to serve in drug-war-stricken Columbia for years, often travelling on donkeys from one country parish to another.

Patriarch Louis Raphaël Sako comes from Iraq. He has spoken up courageously for the protection of the persecuted Christian community during the devastations of the Islamic State and ever since.

The Tuesday mass will be celebrated by José Palma, Archbishop of Cebu City, representing the Philippines, where the previous IEC was held. Among the presenters will be mathematician Jean-Luc Moens, father of seven, former moderator of CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service), as well as Johannes Hartl, who went from rebellious hippy to leader of a Catholic movement; they share will their thoughts about the Eucharist. We can also listen to Barbara Heil; the formerly protestant preacher found her place in the Catholic Church after a long missionary service.

To remain and renew

On **September 8**, we can pray together with the extremely outspoken Polish Cardinal, Stanisław Gądecki. Then, we can listen to the thoughts of Charles Maung Bo, the first cardinal in Mianmar. A church notability coming from this Asian country, he represents a persecuted Christian community, which was able to grow and develop even in the face of the military oppression lasting since 1962.

Moyses Azevedo, the Brazilian founder of the Catholic Shalom Community, also participates at the IEC. He and his companions conduct an indirect mission: they run inviting cafés and sandwich bars, which young people love. On the pretext of the curiously named items on the menu, conversations start between the missionary employees of the place and its guests.

At age 13, Moyses Azevedo declared that he would not go to church again. Some years later, a spiritual retreat changed his life. In 1980, he was invited to greet Pope John Paul II at a National Eucharistic Congress and to think of a proper present for him. Azevedo decided to offer to dedicate his entire life to the evangelization of the young. He opened his first café two years later. His community is present in numerous countries today, and that includes Budapest.

Among the presenters, we can hear Bishop János Székely's lecture on the care for creation, as well as Michael White, who came up with a blueprint for reorganizing parish life. Justo Lofeudo will talk about the renewal of communities, while David Maria Jaeger will give a presentation on *The Holy Land, the Land of the Eucharist*.

Faith, faithfulness, love

On **September 9**, we can meet Archbishop Stanislav Zvolenský and the Nigerian Cardinal John Onaiyekan at the Hungexpo. Bishop Massimo Camisaca will give a presentation about *The Martyrdom of Italian Priests after World War II*. János Székely's topic will be the Eucharist and the pastoral care for gypsies. Bishop Joseph Pamplany will provide an insight into the Syro-Malabar Church. Cardinals Jean-Claude Hollerich and Angelo Bagnasco will share their views under the heading *Eucharist, Evangelization, and Social Commitment in Europe*.

The Power of Faith

The **final day of the Hungexpo events** will open with the prayer led by Bishop András Veres, President of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference, after which we can hear Oswald Gracias, a man of excellent humour and outstanding problem-solving skills (say his fellow priests), who will come to the Hungarian capital from India. President János Áder of Hungary, Chief Patron of the IEC, will make a personal testimony.

The presentations will range over most diverse topics. Étienne Vető will discuss the themes of the Jews, Israel, and the Eucharist, Cardinal Baltazar Porras from Venezuela will lecture on *Saints among God's Chosen People and in the World: Lay Believers' Call to Holiness*.

In 2014, Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-Jung became the first Roman Catholic leader to cross the border to the North Korean dictatorship. As Archbishop of Seoul, he has long striven for the reconciliation between the two Koreas. He has raised a media empire and opened a kitchen for the needy, where he often serves the food himself. At the Congress, he will talk about the situation of Korean Christians.

Georg Schwartz and Andrea Dellatore will introduce the work of the Cenacolo Community. Georg rebuilt his life with the support of the community himself. "At a certain point I gave up everything I had been taught by my family and my faith. I became a slave to alcohol," he

recalled his past. Cenacolo is based on Christian values; it is not a therapeutic institution but considers itself a self-help "school of life." The cure is the community itself. The young people rectify their own ways without the assistance of doctors, social workers, or psychologists. In addition to work and true friendship, prayer plays a central role in the lives of those patronized. Currently, the Cenacolo Community has more than sixty houses in eighteen countries. From former support seeker, Georg Schwarz now provides support himself, helping young people heal and start all over again.

Concerts, Musical Programmes

Weekday evenings will not pass without programmes, either. The IEC is invariably a prime opportunity for the organizing country to present the life of its Catholic community as well as to give a taste of its culture and traditions.

During the week of the Congress, concerts will be given by the Csík Band, the Saint Ephraim Male Choir, and the Budapest Gypsy Orchestra. The Choir of the Moscow Patriarchate will provide what promises to be a magnificent musical experience at the Academy of Music.

A special event of the IEC will be the mass celebrated in Lovari in St. Stephen's Basilica. This will be the debut of the Lovari-language Ordinary of the Mass, the work of a very young composer called Patrik Gergő Oláh.

Also during the Congress week, the Budapest Mass will premiere in Rózsák tere, the church of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

Ifjúsági Est – ForrásPont [Youth Evening – BoilingPoint] will give a grand concert in the Papp László Sports Arena.

Exhibitions, Podium Talks

September 6, St. Stephen's Basilica – Mission in Africa

Missionary doctors Réka Fodor and András Csókay established a special and deep connection between the Catholic communities of Onitsha and Hungary, respectively. Hungarian believers and monastic communities helped their Nigerian brothers and sisters in several solidarity actions. Archbishop Valerian Okeke expressed his gratitude repeatedly and in many ways. A relentlessly promoter of the happiness of his community, he will also visit Budapest.

Exhibition and Podium Talk on the Persecution of Christians

The exhibition *Kereszt-tűzben / In Cross-Fire*, co-organized by Hungary Helps and the Hungarian National Museum, will address the persecution of Christians. It aims to draw attention to the recent developments in the Middle East and in Nigeria, the oppression of Christian communities there, and their desperate situation.

Related to this issue, there will be a podium talk on September 7 in the National Museum, where Beatrix Siklósi, director of the film *Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven*, and Jesuit Father Szabolcs Sajgó will join Csaba Böjte (both featuring in the film) in conversation. This documentary presents the history and sufferings of one of the most ancient Christian communities, the Chaldeans of Iraq. Incidentally, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Raphaël Sako will also participate at the IEC.

The Expectation

One of the most expected event of the International Eucharistic Congress is the High Mass in Kossuth tér on September 11, which Cardinal Primate Péter Erdő is projected to celebrate, followed by a candlelit procession. The Hungarian national meeting of acolytes will also be held that day.

The closing event of the IEC will be held in Heroes' Square. The Statio Orbis High Mass, said for the city and the world, will commence at 11.30 on September 12. We hope to meet Pope Francis there. In addition to the orchestra and chorus of the Opera House, a choir of more than 2,000 singers will also perform.

Registration and further information are available at iec2020.hu, as well as the event's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter channels.

CÍM: 1071 Budapest, Damjanich u. 48.
POSTAI CÍM: 1397 Budapest, Pf. 523
TELEFON: +36 1 605 4972
E-MAIL: titkarsag@iec2020.hu