



THIRD EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL
ASSEMBLY
Sibiu, Romania
4 – 9 September 2007

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Sibiu, Tuesday 4th September 2007
19:00 to 21:00 hrs, Piața Mare
Welcoming Act

PROVISIONAL TEXT – CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The Message of His Grace Laurențiu
Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Transylvania
September 2007

“The Light of Christ” for Europe from the Transylvanian and Orthodox city of Sibiu

By the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, we have come today to the third major stopover of the pilgrimage of European Churches, witnessing for Christ’s Gospel within the contemporary world and for the Christian origin of our old continent.

This itinerary of the European Churches followed the slow and difficult process of economic and political unification and integration of the old continent during the last decades of the troubled twentieth century. Beyond all divisions that characterised twentieth-century Europe, European Churches nourished the hope for a united Europe, a home for all peoples and cultures of the ancient world. By God’s help, the iron curtain fell in 1989, opening a new perspective for the 300 million inhabitants of Europe.

Each of our Churches has been preparing in its own way these providential events, with their two preceding stages, *The European Churches Assembly in Basel, 1989* and that in *Graz, 1997*, continued and fulfilled today through the *European Churches Assembly in Sibiu, September 2007*.

The first *European Churches Assembly in Basel, May 1989*, summoned European Christians to reflect upon the political, economic, and moral lives of their societies,

results to be deduced from the *Peace and Justice of Jesus Christ*. Indeed, the year 1989 brought peace to all Europe and justice to all peoples in ex-communist countries.

The *Second European Churches Assembly, Graz, June 1997*, proposed Christians in Europe to meditate upon the dimension of the divine grace of peace between man and God in Christ and to put into practice the moral and social lessons of this reality.

The third stopover of the European Churches Assembly, Sibiu, September 2007, is calling this time all Christians in Europe to rediscover *Christ our Saviour, the Light of the World*, the unique fundament of unity for all Christians in the world.

The fact that this event takes place in an Orthodox Latin country and in a Transylvanian city, Sibiu, which shares with Luxembourg the great honour of being European Capital of Culture 2007, is exceptionally significant. The theological topic of this Assembly is both liturgical and spiritual: *The Light of Christ Shines upon All*. In Jesus Christ and in His light, Christians feel the need for unity and for experiencing the uncreated Light that Jesus Christ radiates, "Light of Light, true God of true God" as witnessed by the Nicæan Creed (325). Within this framework, "The Light of Christ that shines upon all!" is not only an exclamation, but also a proclamation full of joy and hope, which Orthodox believers have in their Church. The richness of our worship, the beauty of our icons, the brilliance of the virtues and the flame of the hesychast prayer all witness for this spiritual experience. Through them, the Holy Spirit imparts the unwaning light of God to the believers, the unwaning light revealed to the world in the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly, we all, the Christians belonging to Churches in Europe, are in harmony and praying together with our ancestors today, *Nicolaus Olahus and Samuel von Brukenthal, Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna, Father Dumitru Stăniloae*; we are witnessing to the world for our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

Therefore, numerous teachings provided by our Orthodox tradition and experience, by the well-known churches and monasteries spread all around our country, by the light of the Romanian *Philokalia*, are obviously fertile and compelling subjects for the honourable participants to reflect upon. May our Triune God - the Father of lights - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you all! Amen.